

The Star of Bethlehem



June 2020

Dear Friends in Christ,

It's an understatement to say we are living in an unusual season. Who would have believed our reality could shift so dramatically in such a short period of time.

In the midst of all of this, I am as hopeful about the future of the Church as I have ever been; maybe even more so. These words from the author of Hebrews come to mind: "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and steadfast" (Heb. 6:19). Each of us is reminded that our hope rests on God and everything else is unsteady. People are desperate for firm footing, which means this is the perfect opportunity for the Church to step up and share the hope of the Gospel.

Though we are in a season of turmoil and uncertainty, we will get to the other side of it, and when we do we can anticipate that there will be many, many hurting people. I predict people will flock to the Church in larger numbers than we have been seeing, and so we ought to be preparing now for that; we cannot let up, even as we are in a challenging season. One positive sign of this happening is that, even when we were not gathering for public worship, between fifty and seventy people came into the sanctuary privately on Sunday mornings between 8 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. for prayer, a brief devotion and the Lord's Supper. This was a powerful testimony to the work of Jesus in our Bethlehem family . . . and our need for His presence in our lives.

To that end we are making adjustments to keep our Church-support strong so that we are prepared for the other side of this season:

- Our weekly on-line (Live Stream and YouTube) worship gatherings will continue without interruption. What a blessing to live in a time of unprecedented virtual connection. Our aim is to leverage technology to protect our most vulnerable communities from the spread of disease while staying fully engaged in community.
- Beginning May 31st (Pentecost Sunday) we will resume our public worship gatherings at our regularly scheduled times. Please read the guidelines included with this Newsletter. These guidelines were adopted by the Pastors and the Board of Elders to ensure the spiritual and safety benefits for all worshipers as we reignite on Pentecost Sunday.
- As important as it is to gather in person (Hebrews 10:25), the Church is the people, not the building. Therefore, we continue to support our missions abroad and locally.
- Our small groups and discipleship will continue but will be modified to accommodate healthy social distancing as recommended by the CDC and our governmental authorities. Your small group leader will be in touch to let you know the adjusted plans for your group for now. Now that restrictions are being lifted, some may choose to meet in person while others may decide to continue with Zoom meetings.
- We have to stay financially strong. The ongoing ministry of our church is dependent on the tithes and offerings of our people. Electronic giving is the best way to do this. Many of you are already on our giving platform. If you are not giving electronically, this would be a good time to do that. You can sign up here: blcjaxbeach.org and click on the Members Tab and then click on "Electronic Giving". If you prefer to make your gifts by check, you can drop them off at the church or mail it to Bethlehem Lutheran Church; 1423 8th Av. N; Jacksonville Beach, FL 32250.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all of you for your generosity. For the most part our giving has remained steady. This kind of giving has allowed us to keep everyone employed and working close to near normal hours. This kind of giving has also allowed us to purchase some necessary equipment to improve our Live-stream ministry, which, by the way, has reached nearly 5000 (five thousand) people during the past month! This kind of giving has allowed us to continue supporting our local shelter even though we could not serve in person. There are many more blessings. In fact, the blessings abound. Thank you and God bless you for your prayer and financial support!

Staying strong in worship, small groups, serving, and finances is important as we work to love and serve God and His people during this tumultuous time.

We are here for you. Let us know how we might serve you as we navigate these challenging times together.

I wake up every day honored to be your pastor, and especially so in these days.

God Bless You,
Pastor Dana Allen Brones

Bethlehem Lutheran Church
1423 8th Avenue N. Jacksonville Beach, FL 32250 . (904) 249-5418 or 249-1204 Preschool
Pastor Dana Allen Brones, Senior Pastor . blcdana@bellsouth.net
Pastor Nathan McCarty, Associate Pastor . revnathan@bethlehemlutheranjaxbeach.org
www.blcjaxbeach.org

June Birthdays & Ann.

1	Amy Adams	14	Logan and Elizabeth Dellinger
2	Christopher Junk	15	Barbara Jacobs
3	Dan Dablow	15	Blaire Matthews
4	Susan Heimbach	16	Dianne LaForty
5	Laurene Arthur	16	Andrew McGiveron
5	Tony Mazzeo	16	Lindsay McGiveron
5	Rhoda Newton	17	John and Renee Hornsby
5	Alanna Tostovarsnik	17	Polly Navarro
5	Rita Wells	17	Amber Sherrill
6	Donny Barley	18	Jose Cardona
6	The Rev. Dana Brones	18	Emma Ley
6	Maxwell Florey	18	Mary McGinnis
6	Kaitlyn Heumann	18	Alex Spock
6	Lisa Smith	19	Keith Bicknase
6	Matthew and Meagan Vesta	19	Addilyn Kline
6	Lisa Werner	21	Nina Gregor
7	Jose and Sarah Cardona	21	Jennifer McEwen
7	Erich Eischen	21	Margaret Parnaby
7	Ryan Engelstad	21	Jeffrey and Elizabeth Swatkowski
7	Jerry and Shirley Kirkman	23	Peter Bennett
7	Ryan Wert	23	Mark McGiveron
8	Dennis and Barbara Larson	23	Beatrice Pearson
8	Norman and Joan Mattmuller	23	Dan and Jan Runko
8	Stacey Pietrasiuk	24	David Bavle
9	Harry Baum	24	Chris Johnson
9	Dave and Sobra Horn	24	Norman Mattmuller
9	Gina Parrish-Parsons	24	Annette Singleton
9	Cruz Rangel	25	Jason Knapp
9	Meagan Vesta	26	Jan Sifferath
11	Ryan and Katey Wert	27	Hannah Malmind
12	Drew Carter	28	Will Romer
12	Eleanor Corbett	29	Julie and Adam Geis
12	Kevin and Jennifer Engelstad	29	Cheryl Palmer
12	Jonathan Gregor	29	Dianne Reed
12	John Jamrich		
13	Traci Almaguer		
13	Valerie Gruhn		
13	Jeffrey Swatkowski		

Stewardship

	April 2019	April 2020
Monthly Totals:	\$53,369.55	\$64,311.49
Restricted:	1,847.08	1,103.27
YTD Totals:	\$233,674.55	\$240,677.09
	\$26,228.80	\$27,271.27

April Attendance

Date	8 am	9:30 am	11am	Total
April 7, 2019	61	69	89	219
April 5, 2020				48
April 14, 2019	123	122	126	371
April 12, 2020				52
April 21, 2019	139	206	161	506
April 19, 2020				44
April 28, 2019	68	58	85	211
April 26, 2020				48



10 am—June 15-19

Livestream on BLC Facebook

Register Today: on BLC website or link below:

<https://vbspro.events/p/events/blcvirtual>

VBS Registration for children entering PreK4 thru 5th grade

Virtual VBS For Praise, Bible Times, Marketplace Craft

BLC Registration for Youth & Adults VBS Volunteers

Help to prepare VBS kits, distribute VBS kits,

Donate Walmart gift cards, sidewalk chalk, individual fruit snacks

Sunday, May 31st at 12 noon

BLC Youth & Adults Volunteers Prepare VBS kits (no children)

Sunday, June 7th

VBS kids kits distributed after each Church Service

Then at 2pm-3pm Parent Drive Thru to pickup VBS Kids Kits at BLC Front Entrance



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

SENIOR GAME DAY

Hand and Foot

Monday, June 1—TBD

Disciples Hall at 9:15 am

Talk with MaryAnn Lawrence 708-9492

Love – It Covers a Multitude of Sins

I don't know about you, but one of the things I've been learning through this crazy Covid thing is the importance of love. It seems to me like we need love more than ever. Particularly as I write this. Discussion has now begun over when the best time to resume public, corporate worship services at the church might be. And it's not just at church. Everywhere, conversations have been taking place regarding how and when to get back to work, open businesses, resume plans (or not?), you name it. It's a lot to process and people are all over the spectrum in their approach and conclusions. And you know what? That's ok.

As the church, our job is not to twist people's arm or shout them down until they agree with us. Sure, logical argumentation and healthy, constructive debate can have a place within the life of the Christian, but overall, the church is called to *love*. Even when someone makes a decision we don't agree with. We still love them. Even when things don't happen the way we want them too and we end up suffering. Still, even through suffering or offense, we Christians *love*.

For weeks, I just haven't been able to get this Scripture verse out of head: 1 Peter 4:8. "Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins." Did you hear that? *Above all!* Yes, be self-controlled and sober-minded, and many other things, but above all, *love*. Because love covers a multitude of sins. Now, *our* love can't remove sins. But Christ's can. And we bear witness to His love through the way that we live our lives. Through the way that we love.

Really, I think St. Peter is getting at much the same thing that Luther did in his Small Catechism explanation to the commandment, "Do not give false testimony against your neighbor." Luther explained this by saying that when it comes to those around us, we should "explain everything in the kindest possible way." (It's terrific counsel from a fiery reformer who didn't always follow that commandment perfectly!) It's true. Our love for everyone around us - the love that Peter says to practice *above all* - that love prompts us to put the best construction on everything. It's important. Now more than ever. It's a matter of Christian witness. It's a matter of being who God baptized you to be.

And I have good news for you, dear saints of Bethlehem Lutheran Church. There's another (non-Covid) reason this verse has been on my mind the past few weeks. I've been here as your Pastor just shy of a year now! And you have shown me love. I'm sure somewhere along the line a misplaced word or deed gave you reason for offense. Somewhere, with something, intentionally or unintentionally, through omission or commission, it's likely I sinned against you. But love covers a multitude of sins. One of the blessings of serving here for my very first year in the Office of the Public Ministry is that through it all I have sensed your love. You have supported me. You have supported my family. And it has blessed my life greatly. Thank you. Thank you for showing me the love of Christ, even when I'm less than perfect. Thank you for being the people of God! May you continue to show Christ's love to everyone you meet, emphasizing it *above all!*

Blessed to be your shepherd,
Pastor Nathan

LWML Help

These days, most of us are not meeting in person, and the biennium ends June 30! What to do?

We only need \$13,901 to meet our mite goal, but we can't do it without your help! No need to let those mites sit there getting dusty...we've added an online donation button to our website! This way, you can still make a mite donation without leaving your house. We only have six weeks left in this biennium, and we don't want to disappoint any of our grant recipients.

If you prefer to mail a check, you may mail it to our Financial Secretary, Linda Peters. Please include a note stating the name of your church, along with its city and state, so your donation can be credited appropriately.

Checks should be made payable to LWML FL-GA District, and mailed to:

Linda Peters, Financial Secretary
4090 14th St NE
St Petersburg, FL 33703

Don't wait! Our grant recipients need you!

Live Streaming at BLC

Please join us for a **live streamed service** on the **Bethlehem Facebook Page** at **11:00 am on Sunday mornings**. This service will also be recorded and will remain on **Facebook** and posted on **You Tube**. This will continue as we reignite our services at BLC.

Please know that the church office is open. The church staff and pastors are here to serve you.

2021 Convention LWML 39th Biennial

Convention Information

Date: June 24–27, 2021

Location: Lexington, Kentucky

Check lwml.org/2021-convention for more info.

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

May 13, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

To accommodate and faithfully serve God's people at BLC while complying with the health and safety guidelines of our government during these days, **our services will resume at the regular times on May 31st, Pentecost Sunday.** I prefer to call this a "re-igniting" rather than a re-opening. Why? Because the church never closed (the universal church – small c) and neither did Bethlehem (upper case C). Besides, it is Pentecost so why not use a reference to fire and flame like re-*ignite*.

I have listed some guidelines for us to follow until further notice:

1. The services will last 45 minutes in order to allow for disinfecting between services.
2. Fifty people, spaced six feet apart and seated every other row, will be allowed into the sanctuary. Of course, couples and family groups may sit together if they wish. Rope or tape will be used to insure every-other pew for seating.
3. In case of overflow (more than 50 people), Pastor Nate will be in the Disciples Hall prepared to lead an identical service (without musicians) on Pentecost Sunday. Going forward, however, whoever is not preaching in the sanctuary will be prepared for a sermon to be delivered in Disciples Hall. Normally, pastors will alternate Sundays.
4. Those who feel more comfortable using masks and/or gloves should be encouraged to do so.
5. The pastor will announce that the order of service is printed in the bulletin and projected on the screens. Hymnals and pew Bibles should not be used.
6. There will be no children's message until further notice.
7. There will be no Sunday School for children or adults until further notice
8. Please bring your offerings. However, offering plates will not be passed. On the way in or out of the sanctuary, you may place your offering into the offering plate provided on a table in the rear of the sanctuary. At this critical time I am asking you to be generous and sacrificial, if you are able, so that our ministry can continue with the proclamation of the Gospel and the care of souls. If you are unable to come to public worship at this time, contributions can either be mailed to the church or can be made online via the blcjaxbeach.org website under the **Members Tab** and then click on "**Electronic Giving.**"
9. Holy Communion will be given by the pastors only, unless one pastor is in Disciples Hall and an elder is required to assist. The servers (pastors and elders) will sanitize their hands prior to serving.
10. There will be only one communion line and those communing should remain six feet apart (unless they are a couple or family).
11. The wafer will be placed in the communicant's hand.
12. The individual cups will be placed on the chancel rail as we have been doing for private communion services during the past two months. The Common Cup (chalice) will not be used until further notice.
13. Please practice social distancing as best you are able. Do not offer/give handshakes or hugs. This goes against my nature. However, even though we may feel safe we don't want to offend or humiliate others who may feel differently or who may have underlying conditions about which we know nothing. This is not a time to test others. Besides, there are those who could be carriers of Covid-19 and be completely unaware. So could you. So let's err on the side of caution for just a little while longer.
14. These services are designed intentionally to be shorter. Consequently, some ordinary/common elements of the liturgy will not be used. These are extreme situations, and we will do the best that we are able to do, being supportive and encouraging of one another along the way. We all realize that this is only temporary and that we are continuing to try to make the best of this challenging situation. We are all praying to the Lord that He would bring an end to this dilemma as soon as possible while granting us strength to carry on faithfully and at peace in His shepherding care.
15. If you have underlying health conditions or are the primary care-giver of someone with underlying health conditions that would make it unwise for you to attend, please stay home and **watch the live-stream service on the BLC Facebook page at 11 a.m.** (also recorded for later viewing) **or on YouTube** beginning the next day accessed through the blcjaxbeach.org website.
16. Please continue praying to the Lord for an end to this disease while asking His strength and blessing for all those first responders and health care workers who are attending to folks in this trying situation. Pray for all the millions of people who through no fault of their own have lost their jobs and are struggling to care for their families. Pray also for our country and her leaders, that they may make wise and careful decisions that will keep us all safe, strong, and well.

Please know that this document has been reviewed and affirmed by Pastor Nate and the Board of Elders.

The Peace of the Lord be with you all,

**Pastor Dana Allen Brones.
Pastor Nathan McCarty
The Board of Elders**

Congratulations to our confirmands:

Ethan Barrett, Travis Hardy, Sven Helberg, Clairra Williams and Isabelle Shoemaker

Find joy - make joy - share joy!

A couple of days ago was my birthday - a day of joy! Unlike many folks, I think that 'getting old' is one of the funniest things that has ever happened to me. I love being the oldest person in the room - seniority, respect. You can just get away with more, but I digress (you get to do that as you get older...). My original point was my birthday, but at the same time we are all living through this crazy nightmare called Covid 19, not knowing where it is going or what are lives are going to be, or if we can pay our bills or teach our children and the worst part of all: are we ever going to be able to hug anyone again??? I also am fighting this equally mysterious cancer which no one has been able to be clear about.... O woe is me.....But wait, I feel so happy and laugh so much that there are those who question my sanity. I have a new kitty: Daisy; I have a Healing Garden which is new and makes me smile every day; I have Joseph who, in spite of thinking I may be a little daft, takes very good care of me; I have a very special daughter and granddaughter who call me every afternoon at 4:30 and always finish the call by saying "I love you". So, not unlike Job 8:21 "...He will yet fill your mouth with laughter and your lips with shouts of joy.", I find myself quite happy - joyful even. I once heard a great saying: "Today I can cry because roses have thorns or I can celebrate that thorns have roses." I like that.

So back to my birthday; we were eating dinner (I was finished, Joseph-not so much), when the doorbell rang. Not expecting anyone but eager as usual to find out, I went to the door. Opening it, I saw in the walkway a roll of the now famous toilet paper with an orchid perched on top of it and the orchid was sporting a mask around its pot. Talk about joy - I'm talking gales of laughter! The next thing that happened was a number of our choir members disembarked from cars, made a half circle on my lawn (Practicing social distancing) and began to sing "Happy Birthday" - okay, now tears of Joy! How blessed am I? So not 'woe is me', but "Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength." __ Nehemiah 8:10.

As I carry this joy with me, as I talk to many friends, old and new, I stroll with Daisy through my beautiful garden, as I go back and forth almost daily to my doctors in whatever costume I can dream up for that day, as I go through all my hundreds of music sheets playing great songs (and some not so great), as I realize that some things are never going to return to 'normal', I also realize that this is a good thing, because some things need to be changed - we need to grow. I see this every day as I clip the dead blooms from my plants and soon the one dead bloom is replaced by three new ones, bright and cheery and sending joy out into the world (at least my little world, but this happens everywhere). Joy changes attitude and change of attitude brings joy.

I thank you for reading my little story. The moral is joy is easier to spread than jam on a cracker, so go spread some - it will come back 100-fold.

Much love and joy,
Kathleen, Minister of Music and Mirth

PS: Can't wait till we can have choir again.....



Greetings in Christ from what is swiftly turning into "Mosquito Land". Sabra and I are in Minnesota, as I just said, and have adjusted well to Grandparenting for our two who are not in school or daycare and sending off videos to the churches with whom we were booked prior to the pandemic. At no point have we run out of toilet paper.

Nor have we run out of encouragement from those with whom we work. I'll cite just one example. A pastor in Iowa City marveled that they had more attendees at their virtual bible study than they have ever had live. Over 100 people were tuning in for the live-streamed event. That's live, not just views of a recorded video. "We have to keep doing this!", he said. When people can safely come back together he plans to keep live-streaming their bible studies and hopes to eventually make provision for the screen watchers to actively participate as well. Not bad for a new normal. Lemonade from lemons - who knew.

Other flavors of lemonade are not so immediately forthcoming, however. Many have lost their jobs because of this virus and can see no silver lining at the moment, or anywhere low on the horizon. Those jobs are most likely not going to magically reappear the moment we go back outside (inside?) again. Few things are quite so unsettling as suddenly losing a job you had come to count on. Knowing you were a valued employee and its loss is not due to your poor performance but to circumstances beyond control is sparse comfort. It's still just as gone and the bills are not.

God's people have, by and large, reacted well to the challenge of virtual church services and bible studies. It remains to be seen how she will respond to this challenge. We're going to need more than "we're going to heaven when we die" because, behold: we're still alive. But we have three years worth of Jesus' teaching on what to do when one finds themselves to be alive. We have the powerful story of the first church and how they responded to the good news of a crucified King while being alive in a very broken world. There must be something there we can use. Maybe we should read it again.

Peace to you in Jesus,
Dave and Sabra Horn

Bethlehem Lutheran, Bible Study, Children and Families, Ministry Meetings, Music Ministry, Official Acts, Outside Groups, Pastor/Staff, Preschool, Special Events, Youth and Young Adults, Christian Holidays Jun 2020 (Eastern Time - New York)

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
31 Pentecost The Day of Pentecost 8am - Liturgical Worship @ 9:30am - Liturgical Worship @ 11am - Liturgical Worship w/ 12pm - Pack VBS kits	1 Whit Monday 9:30am - Senior Game Day @	2 6pm - Bell Choir Reh.-canceled @	3 11am - Staff Meeting @ 7pm - Adult Bible Study @	4 6:30pm - Choir Rehearsal- 6:45pm - AA Meeting-check with	5 6pm - Preschool Graduation	6 8:45am - AA Meeting-check with 10am - Praise Team Rehearsal @
7 The Holy Trinity Trinity Sunday 8am - Liturgical Worship @ 9:30am - Liturgical Worship @ 11am - Liturgical Worship w/ 2pm - VBS Pickup Drive	8 Pastor Dana Out of Office 6:30pm - "So. of the Border" -TBD @	9 6pm - Bell Choir Reh.-canceled @ 7pm - Elder's Meeting @	10 11am - Staff Meeting @ 7pm - Adult Bible Study @	11 Corpus Christi 6:30pm - Choir Rehearsal- 6:45pm - AA Meeting-check with 6:45pm - Gideon's Ladies Mig-	12 8:45am - AA Meeting-check with 10am - Praise Team Rehearsal @	13
14 Second S. a. Pentecost 8am - Liturgical Worship @ 9:30am - Liturgical Worship @ 11am - Liturgical Worship w/	15 10am - Virtual Island VBS @ BLC Facebook page	16 6pm - Bell Choir Reh.-canceled @	17 11am - Staff Meeting @ 7pm - Adult Bible Study @	18 9am - Circuit Pastor's 6:30pm - Choir Rehearsal- 6:45pm - AA Meeting-check with	19 6pm - BLC supports Mission	20 8:45am - AA Meeting-check with 10am - Praise Team Rehearsal @
21 Camp Linn Haven (Sr. High)-canceled @ North Carolina, USA Feed My Sheep Sunday @ Third S. a. Pentecost 8am - Liturgical Worship @ 9:30am - Liturgical Worship @ 11am - Liturgical Worship w/	22 6:30pm - "So. of the Border" -	23 6pm - Bell Choir Reh.-canceled @ 7pm - Executive Council Meeting	24 11am - Staff Meeting @ 7pm - Adult Bible Study @	25 6:30pm - Choir Rehearsal- 6:45pm - AA Meeting-check with	26 8:45am - AA Meeting-check with 10am - Praise Team Rehearsal @	27
28 Fourth S. a. Pentecost Mites Sunday 8am - Donut Sunday @ Disciples' 8am - Liturgical Worship @ 9:30am - Liturgical Worship @ 11am - Liturgical Worship w/	29 Tami on Vacation	30 6pm - Bell Choir Reh.-canceled @	1 11am - Staff Meeting @ 7pm - Adult Bible Study @	2 6:30pm - Choir Rehearsal- 6:45pm - AA Meeting-check with	3 7am - Preschool Closed 9am - Church Office Closed	4 8:45am - AA Meeting-check with 10am - Praise Team Rehearsal @