

# MAY 2020



**Bethlehem**  
LUTHERAN CHURCH

Traverse City, MI 49686  
(231) 947-9880



Website: [www.bethlehemtc.org](http://www.bethlehemtc.org)  
Email: [bethlehem@bethlehemtc.org](mailto:bethlehem@bethlehemtc.org)

Building Hours: (Currently closed due to COVID-19)  
Monday – Thursday, 9am to 3pm

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Monday – Thursday, 9am to 3pm

### Worship Times:

(In-person worship currently postponed;  
offering “virtual worship” due to COVID-19)  
**See “Real Church Virtual” on website for details.**

Saturday: 5 pm Celebrate! Worship  
Sunday: 8:30 am Traditional Worship  
9:45 am Education Hour  
11 am Modern Worship  
Communion at all services

## Follow the STAR to Bethlehem!

### Our Mission...

**“We journey with God, to serve with love”**

### Our Vision...

*“As a community of believers journeying with God together, we at Bethlehem are called to serve with love by growing a premier youth ministry; enlivening Christian discipleship through lifelong learning, care, and spiritual formation; fostering a vibrant and inspiring worship experience; utilizing our natural setting and location for faithful creation care and outdoor ministry; and opening our doors always to be a “campus at the crossroads” for the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ.”*



Bethlehem friends,

First of all...deep breath. This is a new type of world we are living in right now, and a new type of “STAR” article we read and are essentially “co-writing” together. As your pastor, I have been giving a lot of thought lately to the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm and what it means to be shepherded in tough times. This is also a psalm about **place**, and how Christ meets us in our sacred spaces. More later in that regard...

For now, I would like to ask you all just **two questions** regarding the eventual re-opening of *our sacred space at Bethlehem*. (Feel free to email me at [paul.busekist@bethlehemtc.org](mailto:paul.busekist@bethlehemtc.org) or Chuck with your feedback.) These questions are being discussed by leaders at BLC, as follows: **Knowing that BLC has never been able to, nor could in the future, “guarantee” attendees won’t be vulnerable to infections of any sort while gathering,**

- 1.) **What would make you feel as safe as possible** worshipping and gathering at Bethlehem?
- 2.) **What would make you feel that our precautions would actually keep you from attending at this time?**

From there, we look at the bigger prep items and the smaller details, with BLC leadership discussing points like:

- **BLC may go to A.) just one service/weekend on Sundays for the short term**, minimizing deep cleaning needs between services, or B.) keep one service on Saturday/one on Sunday. (Option A keeps it simple for now.) **If the choice is A, when we expand to include a Saturday service** it may be outdoors (for deep cleaning needs) or we could establish a team of people to clean bathrooms and surfaces post-gathering. (Saturdays could start sometime after our “opening weekend,” **possibly resuming worship as early as Sunday, June 7<sup>th</sup>**, subject to restrictions by the Governor on timing, gathering size, etc.)
- How long should we do pre-recorded **virtual worship** before phasing into possible **live-streaming worship**? (One idea = virtual worship until September, live-streaming beyond, provided we have the resources to do it.)
- **We may not offer communion** at the outset, but afterwards place it outside the order of worship, e.g. after the end of the service in a different room (Fellowship Hall or Parking Lot) where we can spread out. (TBD) For now, **all non-communion food** – from Finger Food and Fellowship to potlucks – should be postponed.
- We will look to re-task worship leaders like ushers, etc., to help keep social distancing and minimize surface touching (e.g. worship folder distribution). We will need *plenty of education beforehand*, and **facemasks and distancing will be required**. **The hope is that all people entering the premises will bring their own facemasks and any other desired PPE, with masks made available for those who may have forgotten their own, procured with funds or made by volunteers with cloth**. These could be kept/re-used by attendees or washed in bleach by BLC (e.g. made double-layer in zip-lock bags with instructions for use/clearing). **Seating will likely** be every other pew or every 3<sup>rd</sup> pew, with 6-feet on either side of non-family pew “neighbors.”
- Bishop Satterlee and the synod recommends **canceling live, in-person VBS**, and BLC will make a decision on this very soon. Annie and Christian Education have explored a virtual alternative to VBS, and we are also exploring **staggering the openings of certain activities and building use** (e.g. maybe worship opens first, in abbreviated fashion; then regular office hours; then opening the building to other tenants/groups, etc.)

According to our local health department, extra precautions and arrangements will likely need to be in place until a good COVID-19 vaccine is in place – likely 6 months to 18 months away, depending on medical data, effectiveness and speed. We have 3 rules of thumb: Go slow and methodically. Get feedback beforehand. It’s easier to shut down than re-open...The above list **will evolve and is subject to change**, but it’s a place to start.

**Back to Psalm 23.** These are anxious times indeed, but Jesus is with us every step of the way. Psalm 23 is a song about Christ meeting us in four distinct and relevant settings: “*green pastures*” (our pre-COVID-19 days), the “*valley of the shadow*” (today’s challenges), the “*table prepared for us*” (when we next gather), and “*in the house of the Lord forever*” (now and always.) So we take comfort, my friends, that The Good Shepherd is walking with us and – with God’s help – this is how we overcome. Shalom, and do not be afraid.

-Pr. Paul

## Staying Home

Greetings to All,

I am writing from home trying to enjoy the time and working around the house. One of the things I discovered, there are a lot of left over projects I put off for a long time, now there is no excuse for not getting them done, as Chris has reminded me.

Even though we are home, many at BLC continue to work to provide all of us a connection to church via technology. The work being done by Phil, Barbara, Sharon, Anne and her husband Trent, the musicians and Pastor has provided BLC an opportunity to worship from the comfort of home. Their work has been welcomed and appreciated by all and we owe them a BIG THANK YOU!

To all the others that visit the church to make sure things are working, collecting the mail and doing all the tasks needed to keep things running, a BIG THANK YOU! To all of you.

As challenging as it has been, your continued support through donations have helped a great deal. It is true that we are behind where we want to be, but given the situation, we are holding our own. We have applied for the Small Business Loan initiated by the Paycheck Protection Program and we are working through the application process. We will update everyone once we know more. Thanks to all of you for your continued support.

This June, we will attempt to hold our Congregational Meeting to elect new members to Council. The date for the Meeting is June 21st, pending any restrictions we are required to follow. Hopefully, by June we will be in a situation where we are able to get together but we will adjust if needed. More information regarding this meeting will be sent out as we get closer to the June 21st date.

As we adjust to the challenges we are dealing with, we have started discussion at Council trying to determine what worship will look like going forward; how to hold services with distancing, what type services, do we hold multiple services, and using online services more frequently. Right now, it is a little difficult to have a plan when things are changing from week to week. On May 1st, the Governor will offer some guidelines and once we have that information we will notify you as to our path forward.

Please everyone, Stay Safe until we meet again.

Chuck

Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Traverse City, Michigan  
"We Journey with God to serve with Love."

Minutes from the Church Council Meeting of February 18, 2020

CALL TO ORDER: Chuck Ardingo, President, at 6:01 p.m.

OPENING PRAYER: Pastor Paul

ROLL CALL: Tim Fox, Secretary: In attendance: Chuck Ardingo, Pastor Paul Busekist, Phil Anderson, Jan Stretlien, Nancy Downer, Cindy Monroe, Leonard Graf, Mark McPherson, Jim Monroe, Katie Fox and Tim Fox. Excused absence: Annie Slabaugh and Paul Wiemerslage

VISITOR/S OR CONGREGATIONAL COMMENT: Jodi Kelly: Jodi addressed the Council with her thoughts/opinions on the Visions Committee and Worship Renewal Task Force. Jodi's goal with the Worship Renewal Task Force is to make well informed decisions about change. She mentioned the next meeting is 2/25/2020 and that there is not an actual "Chairperson" for the Task Force. She mentioned that they hope to get all Task Force Members on the same page but currently they are not there. Jodi asked that the Council support the Task Force as they need our support. Jodi also mentioned that at times there can be an adversarial vibe within the Task Force. And that the adversarial vibe can slow the solution process.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA: A motion to approve the agenda for the 02/18/2020 Council Meeting, motion to approve by Tim Fox, seconded by Jan Stretlien, motion carried.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM January 21, 2020 COUNCIL MEETING: Motion to approve the minutes as amended by Leonard Graf, seconded by Mark McPherson. Motion carried.

REPORTS:

PRESIDENT'S REPORT: Chuck Ardingo, President: None: Chuck gave his time for other items on agenda.

PASTOR'S REPORT: Pastor Paul Busekist: 1) Thanked everyone for their support while he was in Arizona for his Continuing Education, which was his Wilderness Responder Training by the National Outdoor Leadership School. 2) Pastor mentioned that Worship Renewal, the Synod Revive Program and Lent were on the forefront of the calendar ahead. 3) Pastor stated that Worship Renewal is not about working less but maintaining sustainability for church and pastor. 4) Synod Revive, we hope to have a Team representing Bethlehem by late Spring. 5) Pastor talked about studying the movie, Jesus' Last Days in the Desert, during Lent. 6) Pastor also informed Council that he was not taking a Saturday off in February because of his time away for Continuing Education.

**TREASURER'S REPORT:** Katie Fox: Prior to the meeting Katie provided Council with all of her financial reports as of the end of January 2020. 1) Katie stated that attendance for the full year of 2019 had an average of 141, compared to the full year average for 2018 of 153.1. 2) January income was \$25,868 compared to budgeted income of \$33,241. The result of contribution being \$6,005 under budget but we are expecting a rebound in the coming months. 3) January expenses were \$35,820 which was under the budgeted number of \$36,615. This was the result of savings on our heating bill and not having a custodian during that time. 4) January 2020 net results: January was to have a deficit of \$3,374 but BLC actually had a \$9,952 deficit. The increased deficit is primarily attributed to the lower than expected contributions in January. Katie stated that it is far too early in the year to raise alarm over the deficit as one month of results cannot show a trend.

**CONSENT CALENDAR:** Reports removed from the Consent Calendar: a) Personnel Report b) Membership and Evangelism, c) Stewardship, and d) Christian Care. Reports to be discussed under new business.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

A. A. Synod Revive (Discussed prior in Pastor's Report.)

**NEW BUSINESS**

- A. A. JANITORIAL SERVICE: Leonard Graf, Personnel Report: Leonard moved that the Council hire Happy Guy Cleaning & Maintenance as custodian effective February 12, 2020. The compensation will be \$880.00 per month. The Council authorizes the Council President to sign the necessary paperwork to accomplish this. Seconded by Tim Fox. Mark McPherson asked about the contract. Leonard stated it is month to month with a 3month trial. Motion carried.
- B. B. STAFF ADJUSTMENTS/COMPUTER REPLACEMENT: Pastor discussed the computer replacements and the costs. Data transfer to cost \$300 for the 2 computers. A motion by Chuck Ardingo to increase the costs previously approved at \$1,500 by adding \$500, seconded by Cindy Monroe. Motion carried.
- C. At this point of the Council meeting the Council adjourned to Executive Session to discuss Staff Salary Adjustments. Motioned by Leonard Graf, seconded by Tim Fox, motion carried. The Executive Session ended after approximately 15 minutes and we were called by to order per motion by Leonard Graf, seconded by Tim Fox, motion carried. We resumed our regular meeting with Leonard Graf motioning to approve staff adjustments/raises of 3% effective April 1, 2020. Seconded by Chuck Ardingo. There was discussion with Pastor Paul mentioning Worship Renewal and Saturday Worship and needing to have a solution by our April Council meeting. Leonard mentioned that Council is waiting for the Task Force's recommendation. It was then decided that Pastor Paul's raise would be 2%, on his suggestion and agreement. The original motion by Leonard and seconded by Chuck was amended and motion carried.
- D. C. MEMBERSHIP AND EVANGELISM: Cindy Monroe: 1) Cindy motioned to remove from membership: Kathy Begin, D/T Runstrom, T/T Svoboda, K/S Taylor and J Thomas. Seconded by Leonard Graf, motion carried. 2) Cindy mentioned that 4 new members have volunteered to be drivers of new members without transportation. 3) Cindy stated that the black attendance books in the pews will be removed as they are not serving their intended purpose.

D. STEWARDSHIP: Mark McPherson: 1) Stated that Carl Lehto had mentioned that if we have a budget surplus BLC should look at giving back to our community. Chuck Ardingo stated that it was a good idea but that we have to watch the 2020 budget as we move into the year.

VISITOR OR CONGRESSIONAL COMMENT: None.

GOOD OF THE ORDER: A time for general/undocumented comments by each Council Member is so desired.

LORD'S PRAYER: The Lord's Prayer was said by all.

ADJOURNMENT: Motion to adjourn by Cindy Monroe and seconded by Leonard Graf, motion carried.

Adjournment at 7:55 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,  
Tim Fox, Council Secretary

Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Traverse City, Michigan  
"We Journey with God to serve with Love."

Minutes from the Church Council Meeting of March 17, 2020

CALL TO ORDER: Leonard Graf, at 6:08 p.m. At this time Leonard stated that we did not have a quorum for an official Council meeting, as there were not enough voting Council members in physical attendance. Therefore, the following is an outline/highlights of the topics/issues discussed or mentioned at our "Council Gathering".

OPENING PRAYER: Nancy Downer

In physical attendance: Pastor Paul Busekist, Phil Anderson, Nancy Downer, Cindy Monroe, Leonard Graf, Mark McPherson, and Jim Monroe. In virtual, by Zoom attendance, Katie Fox, Tim Fox, Jan Stretlien, Annie Slabaugh and Paul Wiemerslage. Excused absence: Chuck Ardingo

PASTOR PAUL'S CONCERNS:

- 1) Building tenants for our Fellowship Hall and meeting size, 8-10 people. It was determined to keep the building closed to all.
- 2) Holy Week and Easter Planning and Post April Services: It was determined all services would be virtual thru April.
- 3) Staffing concerns for both hourly and salaried employees were discussed.
- 4) Office and Building use by parishioners and staff. There will be a determination on essential staff use.
- 5) Communications with parishioners, it was determined to communicate through email, website, Facebook, phone calls and regular mail.
- 6) Contributions/Offerings during this unprecedented time. Pastor discussed the use of PayPal. Also, Mark McPherson spoke on reaching out to the Congregation to encourage sending in their contributions.
- 7) There was further discussion on the group use of the Church facility, virtual service and web-based communications.
- 8) Lastly, there was discussion on Worship Renewal regarding Saturday Service and coverage of the Saturday Service.

GOOD OF THE ORDER: A time for general/undocumented comments by each Council Member is so desired.

LORD'S PRAYER: The Lord's Prayer was said by all.

ADJOURNMENT: 7:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Tim Fox, Council Secretary

# **ABRIDGED WITH ANNIE: A SUMMARY OF YOUTH EVENTS FOR MAY...**

Below is a summary of May Happenings as they are currently scheduled but please be aware that things may change. We are taking things one day at a time.

## **MAY HAPPENINGS ...**

We will be having a **Virtual Confirmation Retreat** for our confirmation students on **Saturday, May 2nd!**

We ask that you keep us in your prayers as we gather together virtually, learn and have fun in this brand new medium.



As of right now, **Middle/Junior High School Night** is scheduled for **Wednesday May 13th at 5:00PM**. We were planning on going to an escape room but this is up in the air. **If we are unable to gather in person we will have another virtual youth night via Google Hangouts.**

**High School Night** is currently scheduled for **Sunday May 17th at 5:00PM**. We were going to be gathering with our friends at Immanuel Lutheran Church for an end of the school year bonfire. **If we are unable to gather in person we will have another virtual youth night via Google Hangouts.**

**BLUES** is currently scheduled for **Friday May 29th at 5:00PM**. We were planning on meeting at the Commons and going on the Annual BLUES Group Hike. As with our other two youth nights, this is now up in the air. **If we are unable to gather in person we will have another virtual youth night via Google Hangouts.**

The **Chili Cook-Off Fundraiser** was originally rescheduled for this month at the May 31st Jubilee. However, due to the current climate and with the closings of Cherry Festival and other larger gatherings we have **determined that the best course of action is to reschedule it once again for the fall**. More updates on this will come later down the road.

We are still planning on having VBS this summer as of this moment. We will be having the ever-important **VBS Safety Meeting on Sunday May 31st at 12:30PM**. More information to come soon! Please let me know if you are interested in VBS so I can get you on the list and get the information out to you as it comes.

Be sure to mark your calendars for all these fun events! If you would like more information and would like to get updates as they come, please let me know.

As we go into May I ask that you keep everyone at Bethlehem in your prayers.

This is a strange and difficult time for us all but let us all remember that Christ is with us. And He loves us!

“Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you.” (1 Peter 5:7)

Cheerfully in Christ,

*Annie Slabaugh* Director of Youth and Outreach/ Bethlehem Lutheran Church



### **March 2020 Financial Results:**

March income of \$31,642 was \$1,044 under budgeted income of \$32,686.

March expenses of \$32,535 were \$3,177 under budgeted expense of \$30,402.

March was budgeted to have a surplus of \$2,284, but BLC had a loss of \$893.

### **YTD 2020 Financial Results:**

YTD income of \$90,761 was \$7,577 under budgeted income of \$98,338.

YTD expense of \$99,871 was \$3,315 under budgeted expense of \$103,186.

YTD we budgeted to have a deficit of \$4,848 as of the end of March. We actually ended March with a deficit of \$9,110 which means we are \$4,262 behind where we budgeted to be at this point in time. This negative variance is primarily due to the lower than expected contributions in January along with the challenges that coronavirus brought in March. As previously noted, expenses were below budget in March which helped the bottom line and we have a smaller deficit in March than we did in February. So there is some sunshine in this report. It is important to remember that the 2020 budget was created in 2019 based on historical performance and our expectations of 2020. Obviously, no one expected these unprecedented times and we will work through it as a congregation.

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Our Treasurer, Katie Fox, received an unexpected promotion at work in October 2019 which has increased her workload immensely on top of her Master's studies. This has created a dilemma with her trying to balance work, studies and personal life. Thus, she will be resigning as Treasurer effective June 21, 2020 to clear the way for someone with more time to devote to the role. From a time commitment perspective, the BLC Treasurer is required to attend the Finance Committee, Executive Committee, and Council Meeting every month. While there is certainly a time commitment to attend monthly meetings, the Treasurer role affords one the opportunity to gain a thorough understanding of the financial and operations of the church, and at the same time provide critical support to all committees and initiatives of the church.

We will be electing a new Treasurer at the June 2020 Council Meeting. Please reach out to Dave Pepler ([dpepler6088@gmail.com](mailto:dpepler6088@gmail.com) / 231-835-1335) or Katie Fox ([kfox513@gmail.com](mailto:kfox513@gmail.com) / 231-883-1728) for further details on the position.

We are also looking for additions to our Finance Committee which meets once a month for 1-1.5 hours. It is a great group of people with a wealth of knowledge! Several members have been on the committee for many years and feel it is time to cycle off. Again, contact Dave or Katie with any questions on committee activities.

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Have you been trying out some new recipes while you were stuck at home? Are you very anxious to share them with someone? Hoping that church will reopen on May 23/24, BLC has been advised to not have anything food related throughout the month of May. There are spots open for Finger Food Fellowship on Sunday mornings. If you can provide a treat on June 7 or 14, please send an email to Cindy Monroe at [cmonroe@chartermi.net](mailto:cmonroe@chartermi.net) and she will reserve a spot for you. And if church is not allowed to reopen, please make something you can freeze and we can have some extra treats this summer.

# Hope Spreads Further: From Crisis to New Life (Week 3)



(Weeks 1 and 2 were published in separate packets – available online or in the “Shooting STAR box” outside the church.)

**An Easter Card for All!**

April 12, 2020

**“He is Risen. Alleluia!”**

Inga and Tom



## "Home Church"

April 13, 2020

We traveled to southwest Michigan right before the "stay home-stay safe" ruling in order to celebrate 3 birthdays with our grandchildren. On Sunday morning we knew they were hosting up to 6 others for a small Hispanic group "home church" as organized by their pastor. We took our computer downstairs so we could watch Bethlehem's service while they were above us in the living room. It was rather surreal as we listened to the readings and sermon in English on our computer and we heard them all singing in Spanish above us along with the live feed on their TV. I know it is still far in the future on the church calendar, but I have never felt a better experience of Pentecost than I did right then. Yes, there is hope for a future.



Blessings,  
Cindy

## He is Everywhere!

April 14, 2020

I was lucky to go to Cornerstone University and be surrounded by professors who were open and embraced their faith in class. The professors in my theatre major were no exception. We would often start classes and shows in prayer, asking God to have our performances not only go well but also reflect our love for Him and to bless Him by using the talents He gave us to tell an amazing story--whatever that story in particular was. Nancy Wagner was one of my favorite instructors within the theatre department. I've lost touch with and don't talk to a majority of my Cornerstone Theatre colleagues--time and the busyness of life has taken its toll--but I do keep up with some of them on Facebook. I've been happily watching Nancy head to Chicago and thrive in that theatre community while also adding things to her filmography here and there...but recently she's been posting a lot about her experiences with having to stay home because of Covid-19.

Her post the other day was something that made me stop and pause to think. In a post about her early experiences with Covid-19 she ended: "God is everywhere: in the tears, in the praise, in the ventilators, in the leaders, in the prayers, in the birds, in the neighbors, in our hearts; we can choose to see Him."

*(see next page)*

*(continued from previous page)*

God is present in those moments too. I think back to another time of upheaval in my life. Writing this blog post has brought back many memories of my time at Cornerstone University. I made some lifelong friends there and have some great memories...but I also have a few negative ones. At the end of my Junior Year it had been announced that the school was going to cut their theatre program. I was angry. I felt abandoned by the university that had said that they cared about me and my future. Sure, they said that anyone who was still in the program would be able to finish if they wanted to stay at Cornerstone, but how could they actually care about my future? They were cutting my program!

Nancy is so right. God is everywhere and sometimes, for some people, it's hard to remember that. Especially during times like this...but He is everywhere! The sun is shining as I'm writing this blog and I'm sitting on my porch at my apartment with my dogs at my feet. God is in the sunshine. He is in the cool breezes that give me a burst of energy as I let the fresh crisp spring air fill my lungs. He's in the little flies that my puppy, Milo, is chasing. He's in this moment of zen. In this moment of peace and tranquility. Had I not read Nancy's post, I would have appreciated this moment sure, but I may not have been reminded of the presence of God in it. We take these moments for granted--especially during a time of upheaval and uncertainty.



I didn't acknowledge it at the time, but God was present in that moment and the moments that followed. Deuteronomy 31:6 (NRSV) says "Be strong and bold; have no fear or dread of them, because it is the Lord your God who goes with you; he will not fail you or forsake you." Although it was a time of great pain for me, God took this moment and gave to me an amazing support system; Nancy included. It was a time of struggle and of me trying to figure out my self worth, but it was also the time where I was able to truly define what I wanted in life. Throughout my entire college career I had said that my dream was opening my own theatre, or working in some sort of theatre management...when I found myself presented at these crossroads I realized I didn't want that after all. I didn't know what I wanted anymore and that left me in a strange new limbo. I was afraid and not sure how to process the pain and abandonment I was feeling from my university...but also the abandonment of what I thought was my lifelong dream.

It was around that time that God led me to my first "big girl" job at Comprehensive Physical Therapy Center in Grand Rapids, MI. During this transitional time in my life God used this position to show me the path that He had laid out for me. To serve others. To serve and love those who God has placed in this world. A few things happened here and there in between, but ultimately, this calling of service is what led me here to Bethlehem.

This time is uncertain and scary, but God is present. He's here and He's with us. Things may be different going forward but that doesn't mean that it's the end. There will be new opportunities that come from this time, although we may not see it right away. Whenever I am feeling down or upset, I take a moment to remember that God is with me and that He will never leave my side. These moments are so incredibly crucial to help me get by. If anyone reading this is feeling down, just remember...God's with you, and He will never abandon you!

Cheerfully in Christ,  
Annie Slabaugh

## Thinking about Trust

April 15, 2020

I was thinking about trust and how many times it is mentioned in the Bible. It actually appears 134 times in the Old Testament (KJV) and 13 times in the New Testament; 44 times in the Psalms. No, I looked it up on Google!

Read Psalm 9 verse 10: *Those who know your name trust in you, for you, LORD, have never forsaken those who seek you.*

Trust is the intersection of hope and fear — we want the best but think the worst can always happen.

What comes first, to trust or to be trusted?

Most of us are uncertain about whom to trust. It's not always clear when trust is appropriate. Or how much risk we should take. But, mistrust is harmful — we cannot enjoy life if we are suspicious.

Trust is the glue that holds people together — from chance encounters, to work relationships, to friendships. It's the foundation of human connections. Trust gives us permission to act freely.

Trust is a risky game. But, approaching it with a transactional mentality won't increase your odds. Focus on building relationships rather than on what others give you. You can't expect others to be trustworthy if you don't trust them first.

Trusting people is the most logical thing to do.

Put your faith and trust in God – He will never disappoint you.

One more favorite verse:

*Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid.  
The Lord, the Lord himself, is my strength and my defense;  
He has become my salvation. Isaiah 12:2*

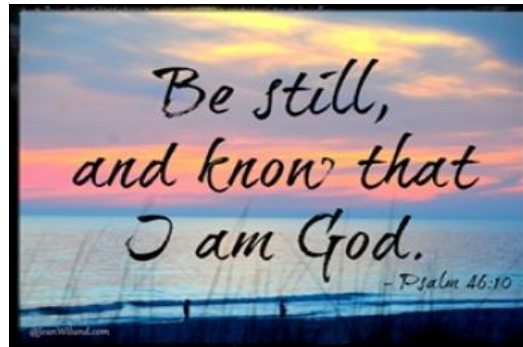
**-Phil Anderson**



## "Together..."

April 16, 2020

#TogetherAlone is a term that I have seen a lot in the past few weeks. While I am by myself at home, I have my church family to rely on. It has been comforting to talk to you. Among other things, we talk about what we have been doing, movies we have watched, and my favorite topic – food. I have learned that our church still exists. Just because we are not in the sanctuary, Bethlehem people are thriving. Our members are active even at home by walking, gardening, cleaning and cooking. Pr Paul, Sharon, Annie and Trent, Zeke and David have produced our services through Real Church Virtual. I hope you are “attending” these services. I like having the worship sheets so I can read and sing along. In my phone calls, I have heard how others are participating in the services. One member told me that she was going to dress in her Sunday finest to watch the Easter service. Another member who is still in Florida told me that she sits on a porch overlooking a lake while watching the services. What wonderful ways to be a part of worship.



A prayer from the Lutheran Book of Prayer – At a Time of National Crisis or Calamity

“Heavenly Father, I come to Your throne of mercy, bowed down and wearied by the weight of suffering and disaster visited upon our country. I beg You to protect this nation in our hour of need. I acknowledge my trespasses before You and do not deny either my own transgressions of Your holy Law or the sins of other citizens of my homeland. We are laden with iniquity, but You call us to Your forgiveness, salvation, hope, and life. Turn the hearts and minds of all to You, that they might find peace through the cleansing of Jesus’ blood. Let me not be confounded or dismayed, so that I, a child of Your grace, may courageously speak to this needy world of the hope that is within me. Make me an instrument of Your peace in a world of conflict, a witness to the power of faith in a world lost in unbelief, and a bearer of the joy that overcomes the sorrow of a fallen world. Grant to the leaders of this nation and all the nations of the world wise counsel, calm thinking, and unselfish aims. Amid the tumult of disaster, build Your kingdom and turn even more souls to Yourself. Because of Your grace, we are not altogether lost but find peace and forgiveness in You. O Lord, give me the grace to seek You, trust You, and confess You; in Jesus name. Amen.

Barbara Oster

## Empty Stadiums, Filled...?

April 17, 2020

Friends, there's no better American pastime in spring like baseball.

Yes, I know that is probably a matter of opinion. But there is something about the timing of spring training (usually in parallel with the full season of Lent), and then the Major League home opener - often within a few days of Easter morning. One a new beginning, another a resurrection.

They both have the feel of new bloom, and new life...Easter as the true source of life. Baseball as a mere sign of it...but a fun one, and full of hope, energy and promise.

But not this year.

In my most recent sermon, I mused about the brainstorming of the MLB (Major League Baseball) officials: potentially having an abbreviated baseball season, or even no 2020 season at all. If they went with the former, they may isolate all the teams and their games to two locales (Florida and Arizona) instead of roughly 30 cities all over the country (i.e. their current homes). If MLB goes with the latter option, we have no baseball for a year...Imagine if we had no church for a year? Yeah, THAT would be rough.

Yet in some strange way, you could say that MLB has it worse than the rest of us, figuratively speaking of course. At least with church, we can gather "virtually" and online in real time - still hearing the gospel, the message, the songs, and having our faith fed by the Holy Spirit. But in order to be fed "in real time" with baseball, fans are forced to watch old games, and take part in "fantasy baseball." (I never was a fan of that fantasy baseball stuff...)

And so we yearn, - as church goers, and as sports fans - for the real deal. And as believers we can rest assured that God comes to us in the real, even if virtually, in real time.

But we want "normal" back, but the new normal may be different...and that, I believe, is ok, and might just teach us something about the exercise...of faith.

So the real takeaway, as I see it, is that whenever, and wherever, and whatever that new normal looks like...We will be ready. And we will be there together...with joy...and newness of life.

May the Lord be with you...Play ball!

Pastor Paul



## A Zoom Like No Other

April 20, 2020

I have a confession for you all...I have been zooming a lot. No, I haven't broken any speed limits or made any moving violations recently. But I've been taking part in what a lot of us have been doing: meeting others remotely...from staff meetings, to committee meetings, to a session or two with old friends.

But yesterday I was blessed to take part in a Zoom online meeting that had no stated objective, and no expectations other than reconnecting willing pieces (ahem, "members") of the Body of Christ...and it was grand!

I know this probably sounds like a "plug" for "Zoom Fellowship" - the newest virtual experience BLC has put together during this era of Covid and stay at home orders. And, yes, maybe at some level it is just that. Yet I think it's more. Sometimes when you experience a moment of release from captivity, amidst others who are also experiencing both that release from cabin fever and that reconnecting with people you haven't seen in weeks (like Barbara, Marilyn, Ron, Jodi, Carolyn, the Peplers and more!) it's not a "head thing" it's a "heart thing." Agape love and true fellowship were indeed in the virtual space between us. Thanks be to God!

At one point in our post-worship gathering, Barbara Oster took these two photos of her computer screen. For those of us old enough to remember the game show "Hollywood Squares," it felt like we were all looking at celebrities of sorts: people made "famous" by somebody else, or indirectly by us. And then it occurred to me: it was a little like that...Except we were not celebrities in the entertainment sense, and if we were "stars" we were made such by the power of community and the Holy Spirit. Friends, we were not famous. We were family.

...And that is what it means to be in a ZOOM (like a ROOM), like no other!

Thanks for signing in. Perhaps we'll see you next time.

With peace, hope, love and faith,  
Pr. Paul





**American Cancer Society's 24-hour Relay for Life:** Our loyal runner, Shelly (McAllister) Carpenter, is once again looking for sponsors and donors for this **VIRTUAL** event. The date is June 20, 2020. PLEASE call or text her at 231-631-4346 or [smcallister3@hotmail.com](mailto:smcallister3@hotmail.com) to help her support this worthy cause.



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**Please note that Jacque Rossfeld has a new telephone number 231-313-8478**



**The Wednesday Morning Drop-In Bible Study** is studying the "good news" of Matthew. Come. Bring your bible and share at 9:30 on Wednesday mornings in the Youth Room. All are welcome. **POSTPONED UNTIL SOMETIME AFTER MAY 17<sup>H</sup> - LOOK FOR NEW DETAILS.**

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### **Courtesy Church Callers**

Your membership/evangelism committee was working behind the scenes during this unbelievable time with a group of volunteers to make certain that everyone who considers themselves a member was contacted by Bethlehem. Our goal was simply to make certain that everyone was doing "ok" out there. If you did not receive a phone call or voice mail or email it may mean that your church does not have your current information. Please call the church office (231-947-9880) and leave a message with your current phone number or email ([admin@bethlehemtc.org](mailto:admin@bethlehemtc.org)) so that records can be updated. Thanks!



## STEWARDSHIP MESSAGE

When we think of stewardship we most often think of money. But stewardship includes much more than money.

I have been reading a book titled, "Real Heroes". It includes short segments about 40 people who accomplished great things in spite of the difficulties in their lives. One of those written about was Anne Frank. One of the amazing things about her was her attitude of gratitude. Knowing about her life you probably wonder how she could have had such a grateful attitude.

When I think of our current situation of social distancing, it is pretty insignificant in comparison to Anne's confinement in an attic for about 2 years. The only people she could see were her protectors and the people she saw when she cautiously peeked out her attic window at the outside world.

When I started thinking about gratitude I began thinking about what it means to me. Am I grateful just for the material things with which I have been blessed? Hopefully not.

Anne's gratitude demonstrated love, joy, enthusiasm, happiness and optimism. When we practice gratitude as she did we are less inclined to have impulses of envy, resentment, greed and bitterness.

Stewardship is not just a hard, cold decision about money - how much we give away or how much we keep for ourselves. Stewardship includes sharing our love, joy, enthusiasm, happiness and optimism. When we do that Bethlehem will be richly blessed.

Dear Lord, Please let us put our trust in you so our stewardship will reflect our gratitude.

Carl Lehto, Stewardship Committee

Ps. 91:2 "You are my defender and protector. You are my God, in you I trust".

## Safe Harbor: 2019-2020 Season Overview

April 17, 2020

Safe Harbor of Grand Traverse is a seasonal, overnight shelter for those experiencing homelessness who have exhausted their other options. Beginning in 2004-2005 as a rotating shelter among area churches, we have now completed three full years of operation in our shelter building at 517 Wellington. Following is the Operational overview for the 2019-2020 shelter season.

This season we averaged 70 guests per night, up from last year's average of 67 per night. This average included 320 individuals, a few of whom only stayed for one or two nights and a few of whom stayed most of the season. Our peak number of guests was 87 on March 3 which exceeded our bed capacity of 82 with overflow guests sleeping on mats on the floor. We continue to provide guests with a warm dinner, a bed, a blanket and a tote for belongings. Showers, laundry facilities, cell phone charging and computer access are also available along with television, games and books during evening hours. In the morning, guests are provided a simple breakfast prior to departure. We continued our partnership with Goodwill of Northern Michigan to provide trained supervisory staff during all hours of operation and a second staff member during the critical early hours of each night's operation. Goodwill continued to have their Street Outreach staff present each evening to interview new guests to determine if Safe Harbor was their best option and to register them, if they wish, for a confidential homeless transition service. Through this service, a number of guests transitioned to permanent housing during the year.

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We continued our relationships with the City government, the Traverse City Police department, the surrounding neighborhood and businesses, the Library and other organizations that provide services to those experiencing homelessness, including Jubilee House and Central United Methodist Church. Safe Harbor continues to host quarterly meetings with neighborhood representatives and participates in the meetings of the North Boardman Lake District business owners.

During March our operations were impacted by the Coronavirus pandemic. We added a heated tent in the parking lot to spread out guests during dining and social activities and enable spreading the guests out more during sleeping hours. Even with these improvements, the Board made a tough decision to close seasonal overnight operations a half month early on April 1 to reduce the risk of Coronavirus exposure for our guests in close quarters. We worked closely with our Goodwill partners to provide alternative temporary housing for the most vulnerable of our guests.

In response to the closure of many services available to our guests during the Coronavirus outbreak, Safe Harbor and Goodwill worked together to open a Temporary Day Shelter at the Safe Harbor facility. This Temporary Day Shelter is providing afternoon access to bathrooms, showers, laundry, phone charging and computer access. Open three hours each afternoon this Temporary Day Shelter will continue to operate until normal services, such as Jubilee House, Central United Methodist and the Library, can resume operation.

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Prior to opening this season, the building was enhanced with sound dampening materials in the dining and social area which provided a calmer atmosphere for our guests and volunteers. (*see next page*)

*(continued from previous page)*

In addition, we added a mural to one wall of the dining room which visually enhanced the atmosphere and reduced the “institutional” feel of the building.

Twenty-two different congregations contributed to the operation of the shelter during this season, with two new congregations participating. The weekly rotation approach was preserved with greater emphasis on cooperative scheduling between multiple congregations and/or community volunteers.

The Safe Harbor Board of Directors, with assistance of a strategic planner, developed a second three year Strategic Plan during January and February. We will begin work on the goals identified in that Plan during the Summer of 2020.

We also approved a plan for moving forward on development of the adjacent property at 570 Station Street. The property will eventually be developed partially as supportive housing for those experiencing homelessness. The development and operation of that housing will be handed off to other organizations.

Safe Harbor continues to be almost totally funded by generous donations from the supporting churches and individuals from our community. We are not supported by funds from the Government or tax dollars.

The numbers from our first three seasons dramatically demonstrate the inadequacy of affordable housing in Traverse City and the functionality of a central shelter location which is walk-able from the library, the outreach services provided at Central United Methodist Church, and other services for those experiencing homelessness. The housing office in the front of the shelter has provided year-round transitioning assistance to our guests, but its effectiveness is limited by various factors, not least of which is an inadequate supply of affordable housing.

Sincerely,  
Michael J. McDonald, Chairperson  
Safe Harbor of Grand Traverse, Inc.



**Christian Education News**  
**May 2020**

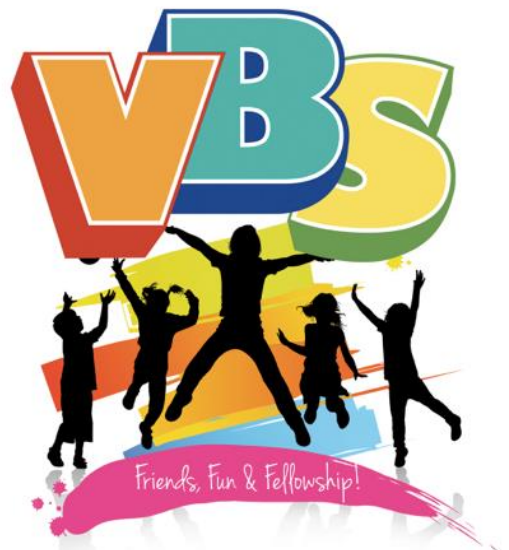


**We are fervently praying  
each and every day  
for our precious  
Sunday School children  
and their families!  
May God bless all of you  
with safety and good health  
until we can meet again!!  
Jesus loves you  
VERY much,  
and  
so do we!!!**

**Vacation Bible School (VBS)**

**Plans are in the works  
for  
an awesome experience!  
Please plan to join us  
this summer -  
more details coming  
soon...!!!**

**We need MANY volunteers  
in MANY areas 😊**





# WOMEN OF BETHLEHEM - MAY 2020

## A MOTHER'S LOVE

There's no love like a mother's. Her heart is filled with care.  
With Christ as her example, her savior's love she'll share.

A mother's love is endless, not changing for all time.  
When needed by her children, a mother's love will shine.  
God bless these special mothers; God bless them every one,  
For all their tears and heartaches and special work they've done.

When days on earth are over, a mother's love lives on,  
Through many generations, God's blessings on each one.  
Be thankful for our mothers who love with higher love,  
From power God has given and strength from up above. (Unknown)



## UPCOMING DATES:

Spring Fling: Cancelled

May Circles: Cancelled

June Circles: TBD

Triennial Convention in Phoenix: TBD

Spring is here! Spring always brings with it hope: for warmer weather, green grass, flowers, gardens, being outdoors without a jacket, outdoor get-togethers. This spring is a little different - but there is hope.

I received the following through an email - writer unknown - it is full of hope.

**SATAN: "I will cause anxiety, fear and panic. I will shut down business, schools, places of worship and sports events. I will cause economic turmoil."**

**JESUS: "I will bring together neighbors and restore the family unit. I will bring dinner back to the kitchen table. I will help people slow down their lives and appreciate what really matters. I will teach My children to rely on Me and not the world. I will teach My children to trust Me and not their money and material resources."**

THANKS BE TO GOD!



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

# ELCA GLOBAL LINKS

Stay informed. Be inspired. Get involved.

**Please pray for mission personnel, companions and our world amid COVID-19**

**An important announcement:** In light of the recent travel restrictions put in place by various national governments around the world due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the **ELCA** requested that all U.S.- based mission personnel return immediately to the United States. *That included our Young Adults in Global Mission volunteers.* (YAGMs)

**Please pray for personnel and their families, for our global companion churches as they face this pandemic in their countries, and for our world. ...**

As of April 17, companion churches of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod indicated the numbers in their countries infected with the COVID-19 virus were as follows:

Christian Lutheran Church of Honduras: 442 – with 41 deaths  
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia: 682 – with 5 deaths  
Evangelical Lutheran Church-Papua New Guinea: 7 – with 0 deaths

The ELCA has released COVID-19 response resources at [www.elca.org/PublicHealth](http://www.elca.org/PublicHealth) and the **Lutheran World Federation** has written to its member churches to offer prayers, support and encouragement during the pandemic. “By holding back from unnecessary contact, we are able to show our love and concern for those who are most vulnerable,” the letter said. “We call upon you to uphold self-discipline as a gift of God.” More information is available at: [www.lutheranworld.org/news/coronavirus](http://www.lutheranworld.org/news/coronavirus)

In line with the ELCA tag line: **God’s Work. Our Hands**, the Lutheran World Federation has suggested: “Understanding anew the vulnerability of human life,” ... may this be a moment to **recommit to prayer for and loving service of our neighbor.**”



THE  
LUTHERAN  
WORLD  
FEDERATION

# SHOP AT FAMILY FARE AND HELP RAISE MONEY FOR QUILTS!!

Shop at Family Fare, 905 E. 8<sup>th</sup> Street here in Traverse City (or at any Family Fare in the area) and help raise money for quilts!

*To warm others with more than a prayers,  
save register receipts when you shop Family Fare!  
Lutheran World Relief quilters need help from you.  
Bring Family Fare receipts to us that you could do.  
This helps raise money for the supplies it will take...  
for fabric, thread, and shipping necessary for the quilts we make!*

Questions? Please call Betty Rutila at 231-947-1013

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I would like to thank all of you for the wonderful notes, cards, prayers and phone calls from our Bethlehem family as we mourn the loss of Janet. She will be forever missed and loved.

With love and appreciation,

Neal Kibby and family

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## STAR and Bulletin Deadlines

To be sure that your article or announcement is in STAR or Bulletin issue that you want, please note the following deadlines:

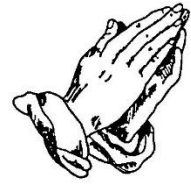
STAR: by the third Wednesday of the month  
Bulletin: by the Wednesday before each weekend

Submission by email is preferred ([admin@bethlehemtc.org](mailto:admin@bethlehemtc.org)) with either the word STAR or Bulletin in the subject line. Please write exactly what you want in the article or announcement. Be sure to include all pertinent information about your event, i.e. dates, time, location, etc. You can put it in the body of the email or as an attachment as a Word doc or .pdf. Also, please include the month(s) for the STAR issue or the date(s) for the Bulletin issue that you need your article or announcement included. If you have any questions, please contact **Barbara Oster** at [admin@bethlehemtc.org](mailto:admin@bethlehemtc.org) when she works in the office on Thursdays.

Also note that if you want an announcement on the weekly PowerPoint, please send to [annie.slabaugh@bethlehemtc.org](mailto:annie.slabaugh@bethlehemtc.org).



## Health Concerns\*



# The Power of Prayer

*Richard Fernholz, Nancy Smith, Hazel Lautner, Tom Miller, Margie Whitney,  
Jo Hasse, Ellie Tacke, Bev Attwood, Roy Stowe,  
Priscilla Thompson, Marleen Baesch, Alvin Kober,, Lynn Hoyt,  
Jan Waisanen, Molly Eastman, Harper Wiemerslage,  
Ben Farley, Jennifer Mowers, Emily Wilson,  
Roy & Marilyn Dumond, and Brenda Denoyer*

**Grand Traverse Pavilions:** Bev Attwood

**Homebound:** Hazel Lautner, Marleen Baesch

**Traverse Manor:** Margie Whitney, Marinan Bradford

**French Manor LaFranier:** Jo Hasse, Roy Stowe

**Boardman Lake Glens:** Inge Thomas, Bill & Dee Springer, Emily Wilson

**Samaritas (Acme):** Priscilla Thompson

**Hospital Visits:** Please let the church office know if you are going into the hospital for a scheduled procedure or an emergency so Pastor Paul can visit you.



**BLC's PRAYER CHAIN** is always seeking partners in prayer.

More volunteers are needed for this crucial ministry.

For more information or to set the Prayer Chain in motion, call Jan Stretlien @ 947-3265 or email [jstretlien@gmail.com](mailto:jstretlien@gmail.com)

\*If you would like your name, or the name of a loved one, to appear on this list which appears here and in the weekly bulletin, please call the church office at 947-9880.

Are you checking for the latest BLC updates at: [www.bethlehemtc.org](http://www.bethlehemtc.org)?

You saw Norm and others take the photos...be sure you see them at [www.bethlehemtc.org](http://www.bethlehemtc.org)!

Good News...and great news...at [www.bethlehemtc.org](http://www.bethlehemtc.org)...

# HONORING GOD'S CREATION

**“We do not inherit the earth  
from our ancestors, we borrow  
it from our children”**

## **Saving our Pollinators**

We all know the importance of our plants being pollinated. Our fruits and vegetables depend on pollination to mature. NEONICS are chemicals put on plants to prevent insects from attacking them. The danger in this is that all insects including bees (our most important pollinator) are killed. This is often done in the green house that grow them from seeds to the plants that we buy. Because of the danger Neonics present, many green houses have stopped using them. This includes not only the nurseries who grow their own plants from seed, but also some of the wholesalers who supply big box stores. It is easy to ask if plants were ever treated with something unfriendly to bees or if the plants were treated with neonics. This is one way we can be good stewards of our planet for our children.

There are other things to remember when we choose what to plant. One is that native plants usually not only thrive in this area, but fit well in our ecosystem benefits the insects and animals that naturally live here. Another is that nature loves variety. Having only a green lawn is not variety. Lastly we need to think about the chemicals that we put on our plants to encourage growth or discourage insects.



# Faces of Bethlehem

We look forward to seeing them in person!



These two photos were taken during our first Virtual Fellowship on April 19<sup>th</sup>.





# BLC Contacts

PLEASE NOTE SEVERAL ADDRESS UPDATES

## Church Office

Pastor Paul Busekist	<a href="mailto:paul.busekist@bethlehemtc.org">paul.busekist@bethlehemtc.org</a>
Admin. Asst. Sharon Weller	<a href="mailto:admin@bethlehemtc.org">admin@bethlehemtc.org</a>
Admin. Aide Barbara Oster	<a href="mailto:admin@bethlehemtc.org">admin@bethlehemtc.org</a>
Bookkeeper, Phil Anderson	<a href="mailto:bookkeeper@bethlehemtc.org">bookkeeper@bethlehemtc.org</a>
Sharon Weller, Music Director	<a href="mailto:sharon.weller@bethlehemtc.org">sharon.weller@bethlehemtc.org</a>
Annie Slabaugh, Youth & Outreach Director	<a href="mailto:annie.slabaugh@bethlehemtc.org">annie.slabaugh@bethlehemtc.org</a>
Website	<a href="http://www.bethlehemtc.org">www.bethlehemtc.org</a>

## Church Council

Chuck Ardingo, President	<a href="mailto:president.council@bethlehemtc.org">president.council@bethlehemtc.org</a>
Leonard Graf, Vice President	<a href="mailto:vicepresident.council@bethlehemtc.org">vicepresident.council@bethlehemtc.org</a>
Tim Fox, Secretary	<a href="mailto:lsecretary.council@bethlehemtc.org">lsecretary.council@bethlehemtc.org</a>
Katie Fox, Treasurer	<a href="mailto:treasurer.council@bethlehemtc.org">treasurer.council@bethlehemtc.org</a>
Jim Monroe, Financial Sec.	<a href="mailto:financialsecretary.council@bethlehemtc.org">financialsecretary.council@bethlehemtc.org</a>
Phil Anderson, Bethlehem Vision	<a href="mailto:Bookkeeper@bethlehemtc.org">Bookkeeper@bethlehemtc.org</a>
Jan Stretlien, Christian Care Giving	<a href="mailto:christiancaregiving.committee@bethlehemtc.org">christiancaregiving.committee@bethlehemtc.org</a>
, Christian Ed.	<a href="mailto:christianeducation@bethlehemtc.org">christianeducation@bethlehemtc.org</a>
, Fellowship	<a href="mailto:fellowship.committee@bethlehemtc.org">fellowship.committee@bethlehemtc.org</a>
Cindy Monroe, Membership/Evangelism	<a href="mailto:membershipevangelism.committee@bethlehemtc.org">membershipevangelism.committee@bethlehemtc.org</a>
, Property (Carl Lehto-Not on Council)	<a href="mailto:property.committee@bethlehemtc.org">property.committee@bethlehemtc.org</a>
Mark McPherson, Stewardship	<a href="mailto:stewardship.committee@bethlehemtc.org">stewardship.committee@bethlehemtc.org</a>
Nancy Downer, Worship and Music	<a href="mailto:worship.committee@bethlehemtc.org">worship.committee@bethlehemtc.org</a>
Paul Wiemerslage, Youth/Y2A	<a href="mailto:youth.committee@bethlehemtc.org">youth.committee@bethlehemtc.org</a>
Pastor Paul Busekist	<a href="mailto:paul.busekist@bethlehemtc.org">paul.busekist@bethlehemtc.org</a>

If you have an interest in serving on any of the above Committees,  
Please contact the Committee Chairperson(s).



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