



THE BETHLEHEM STAR

T O K N O W C H R I S T . . . T O M A K E C H R I S T K N O W N



PASTOR'S MESSAGE

MEGAN FRYLING

Pastor

pastor@bethlehemplutheran.net

Not everything works out exactly as planned. Sometimes it's tragic, sometimes it's frustrating, and sometimes there're ways to find joy or solace in changed plans.

The past many months have been full of changed plans and changing plans and uncertainty. The pandemic has been a global tragedy and we've lost so many good and wonderful people far too soon. We've had to rely on both science and our faith in these difficult times. We've had the words of scripture and the peace and comfort that we know we have in Christ, along with our prayers for God to continue to be a work in the hands of the scientists, doctors, nurses, and medical staff.

We've followed best recommendations to keep ourselves and others safe. We've been frustrated and puzzled by the changes and updates as they've learned new things and we've had to further change the way we live and the way we worship. We've moved much of what we do online, we've offered drive-through options, we have outdoor in-person worship, online worship, we've collected canned goods, toys, and clothing to donate, and we've tried a variety of other ways to offer each other community and connection in this time.

Have we done it perfectly? No, I suppose not. We've had multiple mini-disasters with online worship not starting on time, technology malfunctions, Zoom issues, difficulty keeping things updated or printed or mailed out in time. We've had to close the childcare center twice in order to do the best to keep staff, students, and families healthy and safe. We have church staff working strange hours and a mixture of working from home and working in the building. All of these things we have done differently and imperfectly, but it's been done because we care for each other. We care for our wider community, for the health and safety of all. While we all so desperately long to go back to the way we could worship and learn and enjoy fellowship before March of 2020, we know that the church is the people and not the building. We know that we can be community for each other even when we're apart. We continue to find ways to donate our time, talents, and finances to the church and the world around us. We continue to check in on each other and we continue to follow Jesus' command to love one another. It just looks different right now. We do this for the sake of everyone around us. I'm reminded of the Christmas children's story, "Why Christmas Trees Aren't Perfect" by Richard H. Schneider, where the little pine tree realizes that caring for others is more important than absolute perfection.

"So if you walk among evergreens today, you will find, along with rabbits, birds, and other happy things, many trees like Small Pine. You will see a drooping limb,

SUNDAY WORSHIP:

TEMPORARY COVID-19 SCHEDULE

9:00 AM – IN-PERSON WORSHIP

10:00 AM – ONLINE STREAMING

STAFF:

PASTOR:

REV. MEGAN HUNT FRYLING
pastor@bethlehemplutheran.net

DIRECTORS OF MUSIC MINISTRY:

VICENTE DITTO
MARISA RAWLINS-BRADFIELD
MATTHEW A. KESSELL
vicenteditto@bethlehemplutheran.net
marisabradfield@bethlehemplutheran.net
matthewkessell@bethlehemplutheran.net

YOUTH DIRECTOR:

JENNIFER ADKISON
youthdirector@bethlehemplutheran.net

BOOKKEEPER:

KAREN MEIER
finance@bethlehemplutheran.net

BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR:

WANDA MORENO
admin@bethlehemplutheran.net

FRONT OFFICE ASSISTANT:

EVELYN CULAJAY
office@bethlehemplutheran.net

PRESCHOOL DIRECTOR:

MARY ASHDJIAN-KANDILIAN
director@bethlehemplutheran.net

CONTACT BY PHONE:

CHURCH: 818-360-4777

PRESCHOOL: 818-368-6947

FAX: 818-360-5559



which gives cover, a gap offering a warm resting place, or branches ragged from feeding hungry animals. For, as have many of us, the trees have learned that living for the sake of others makes us most beautiful in the eyes of God."

So may we continue to strive to care for others above all things. May we strive to follow Jesus in the ways that we love and serve others today and in the days ahead.

In Christ,
Pastor Megan

SLATE FOR THE CHURCH COUNCIL

Position:	Candidate:
President	Janet Puchlik
Vice President	Randy Miller
Social Ministry	Mary Fisher
Fellowship	
Building & Grounds	Gerry Puchlik
Stewardship	
Evangelism	
Faithful Steward	Ken Cave, Beverly Compton
MEFT	Jan Maseda

ANNUAL MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

Dear Fellow Members of Bethlehem,

At the December Council meeting, the Council chose January 31, 2021 as the date for the annual meeting. Please mark that date in your calendars. We will be holding elections for council members and other elected positions. And we will be approving the working budget that we have been using so far this fiscal year. But first, before any of that, we will be voting to change our Constitution to allow us to conduct our congregational meetings virtually. The current Model Constitution for Congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (as most recently amended by the Churchwide Assembly), contains language allowing for that, but our Constitution has not yet been amended to coincide. So Council approved the model language at our last meeting and voted to submit the language to the congregation for approval. The section reads as follows:

C10.08. This congregation may hold meetings by remote communication, including electronically and by telephone conference, as long as there is an opportunity for simultaneous aural communication. To the extent permitted by state law, notice of all meetings may be provided electronically.

There are a couple of details about the meeting yet to be decided. We are working to figure out the best way to assure a meeting in which all members have "an opportunity for simultaneous aural communication" while keeping everyone as safe as possible from the coronavirus. We may, if we can work out the details, have a combination of virtual meeting and outdoor in person meeting. But we have to be sure the technology is there to make sure everyone can hear, ask questions and vote. Once we have that worked out, we will update you on the details of how we will meet and at what time. Thank you for your patience. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to email me or give me a call.

Blessings,

Sarah Karzel

DECEMBER COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

By Marilyn Fursman, Secretary

Management

1. The Annual Congregational meeting was set for January 31. The election will include nominees for vice president and fellowship plus non-council positions: stewardship and evangelism.
2. Voted to recommend that the congregation adopt a continuing resolution to conduct annual meetings in digital format.
3. Agreed by consensus to purchase gift cards for staff members with donations from members.
4. Increased expenses and decreased offerings resulted in a November operating loss of \$61,560.
5. Members will be advised in a letter of the need to continue financial support of Bethlehem.
6. Authority to disperse \$2,475 in undesignated memorial funds will be decided in January.
7. Dwayne Schmidt has recommended implementation by January 1 of a new counting system called Breeze.
8. Pastor Megan will be on vacation December 27 to January 2.

Ministry

1. The Council took time to meet some of the new members joining the church in January: Chriselle Almeida, Sarah Eyelands, Eric Eyelands, Olivia Eyelands (age 7), Eli Eyelands (age 3).
2. Nancy Hall will oversee continuing member care through sending of specially made greeting cards.
3. Nancy and Pr. Megan are coordinating volunteers to deliver Christmas gift bags to homebound members.
4. Dec. 21, 4:30 p.m.—6:30 p.m., "Love & Light for the Longest Night" will be a low-key time of meditation outdoors at the church for those grieving the losses of the past year.
5. Christmas Eve will include a 5 p.m.—6 p.m. drive-through to pick up communion and a care bag with supplies for a later service (live stream at 7 p.m. with a play, story and music; in-person 8 p.m. singing of carols, story and communion; or live stream traditional service at 9 p.m.)
6. Our "12 Days of Christmas" video was watched over 100K times and shared 252 times on Facebook, with an additional 1,096 views on YouTube. So far it's the widest viewing of anything we've put together.
7. Wednesday night Advent discussions on names of Jesus are attended by about a dozen persons.
8. The virtual congregational Christmas party had more than 100 participants and took a great deal of coordination.
9. Confirmation meets with five other churches via zoom on 1st and 3rd Sundays; Bethlehem has three participants.
10. Low attendance at the 9 a.m. in-person service, about 13 persons, is attributed to colder weather and an increase in cases of Covid-19. Currently the Synod and Health Dept. advise against indoor meetings.
11. A prayer session was held via Zoom led by Pam Shea.
12. Pr. Megan conducted an outdoor funeral for Betty Griffith.



MUSIC NOTES

VICENTE DITTO

Senior Music Minister

vicenteditto@bethlehmlutheran.net

I want to thank Paul St. Michel for decorating the church exterior for the Christmas Eve drive through event. I asked him if we could borrow one of his inflatable decorations and I was totally surprised when I showed up to Bethlehem on Christmas eve and saw lights everywhere. Tres bien! It was awesome. And I thank Greg for organizing volunteers Cookie, Ron, Hannah, and Lisa Chow in joining Pastor, Suzanne, and I in the Christmas wind handing out gift bags and communion.

I appreciate everyone's patience with our 9 p.m. Christmas Eve service. The 7 p.m. service went off without a hitch and the in person 8 p.m. service was enjoyed by thirteen people in the courtyard despite the noisy disruptive wind. While the 9 p.m. service was interrupted, the only thing we had to bypass was Pastor Megan's story. Other than that, we were able to broadcast the entire service...just in two parts. Ah well, won't be a problem next year.



SCHOOL NEWS

MARY KANDILIAN

Preschool Director

Director@bethlehmlutheran.net

This past month we made the tough but necessary decision to temporarily close our doors for the health and safety of our Bethlehem family— an extended winter break if you will. We were blessed to have many parents retain the options which were previously shared with you all. Many families agreed to continue tuition payments to guarantee their spots for the January return and a good number continue to pay partial tuition to have priority registration! This will be very helpful in supporting all the facility wide expenses during the closure.

We're so excited to return in January, once the seasonal spikes subside and it's a bit safer— while we will continue to follow and increase our safety measures, we will terribly miss the sounds of laughter in the classrooms, the little feet running in the hallways, and the eyes of our kiddos glistening as they are learning new things. But as always, safety first.

I look forward to keeping you all updated with how things are progressing— we continue to remain diligent and pray for this virus to see its exit and for all those who are affected in many ways during these tumultuous times. I hope you all had a wonderful and safe holiday season and we look forward to seeing you all very soon!

2021 SCRIPTURE-CENTERED BREATHING SESSIONS BY PAM SHEA

Leading our Sunday evening Scripture-Centered Breathing Sessions has been a blessing for me, and I very much enjoy the fellowship shared with other Bethlehem members on our Zoom meetings. Looking ahead to 2021 I am planning on adding some simple movement exercises to coordinate with prayers and short petitions to give us a more full-body experience. If you have any questions, suggestions, or input, feel free to contact me at pamelasheapoet@gmail.com. Join us Sunday evenings at 7:00 p.m. on Zoom: Meeting ID: 852 2906 5708; Passcode: 083416.

In service,
Pam Shea

PRAYER SESSIONS

To enter the New Year on a prayerful note, we will be having Prayer Sessions on the first Sunday of each month at 6:30 p.m. starting 1/3/2021. We will include prayers listed in the weekly bulletin as well as those posted in the comments on the Sunday morning livestream church service. Additionally, prayer requests can be sent to pamelasheapoet@gmail.com. There will also be time for spontaneous prayers from the participants. We hold fast to God's promise that "where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them" and it is especially powerful to do so with fellow members of our Bethlehem Lutheran Church family.

Zoom: Meeting ID: 852 2906 5708; Passcode: 083416.

Pam Shea and Judy Cave

NEW SCOUT REPRESENTATIVE

Much thanks to Carla Cross for volunteering to take the position of Charter Representative for the Troop and Pack 104 Scouts at our church. Thanks to Beverly Compton for holding this position during the past year. Carla's term begins at the end of January when the new council representatives for church are nominated.

AN UPDATE ON THE TAYLOR'S FROM THEIR SON, STEVE

Although my father, Richard Taylor, did regain some of his strength while at a local skilled nursing facility, our family decided to bring him home where we can care for him in a loving family environment. This past week we moved both Dad and Mom (Richard and Meredith) to Salinas where their daughter Audriane is now their primary caregiver. Their two sons, Matthew and I (Steve), take turns traveling to Salinas to visit them and to assist our sister in their care. Thanks to everyone for your prayers and your kind and thoughtful phone messages; you have been a blessing to all of us in the Taylor family.

Their new address:

568 River Road
Salinas, CA 93908
(831) 320-2488
imnaud1@hotmail.com



YOUTH NEWS

JENNIFER ADKISON

Director of Youth Ministry

youthdirector@bethlehmlutheran.net

Happy New Year Bethlehem friends! I pray that 2021 will be full of love, joy, grace, and blessings for us all.

In December, the youth group had a virtual (due to the rise in COVID-19 cases in our community) Christmas party via Zoom. Those who came had a good time, and enjoyed the goodie bags of hot cocoa mix and popcorn that they picked up at Bethlehem before the party.

Due to the rise in COVID-19 numbers, youth group will continue to meet virtually for the foreseeable future via Zoom. I look forward to hearing all about everyone's Christmas and time off from school!

If you have any questions or concerns, please email me at youthdirector@bethlehem.net or call/text at 425-281-1413.

YOUTH & ED.—HAPPY NEW YEAR, FAMILIES!

Everyone involved in our Youth and Education Ministries would like to wish everyone a Joyous 2021. We have put our trust and faith in God and have been able to stay connected to our congregation, take part in some heart provoking book studies and were even able to make some new friends along the way. This pandemic has made us grow in ways that we will forever be better for.

2020 will be remembered for the year of CREATIVENESS, COLLABORATION and ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETINGS.

For Sunday school, we had a Staycation Bible School (VBS) July 12-July 16 done via Zoom, we purchased a new Sunday School format and collaborated with American Lutheran Church in Burbank. We have 27 children between the ages of 4-11 years old enrolled. Emily Carlson, Nicole Hernandez-Liva and Emily Stoll (Youth Director at Burbank) led the classes. We used the Sparkhouse Whirl All Kids curriculum, created Family faith kits filled with arts and crafts supplies, a beautiful advent calendar, a handmade prayer square, and a bible purchased by our congregation for each of our children. We also had 2 Saturday events; a Magic Show for Halloween, and a Puppet Show for Christmas.

Our Adult Education program held numerous on-line and Zoom Bible studies.

- On-line Lenten study, Wendell Berry and the Sabbath Poetry of Lent, facilitated by Pr. Megan Fryling.
- Book of Acts, co-ed class, with 4-12 participants, led by Pr. Megan Fryling,
- A life review class, Remembering your Story, led by Marilyn Fursman.
- Intergenerational Jonah Bible Study.
- A discussion of the Rev. Lenny Duncan's book "Dear Church--A Love Letter from a Black Preacher to the Whitest Denomination in the U.S." with Shepherd of the Valley in Simi Valley, via Zoom, facilitated by Pr. Jennie Chrienne.
- Study of the New Testament book of Ephesians.
- Book study of "Love Without Limits by Jacqueline Bussie led by Marilyn Fursman.

Our youth group, has been holding meetings two times a week, engaging in fun activities via Zoom with our youth director, Jennifer Adkison. They had two fundraisers; "Chalk Art Your Neighbor's Driveway" and sold masks with the Bethlehem Logo. Both fundraisers did well and helped raise funds for the ELCA Youth Gathering in Minneapolis that has been postponed to July 2022.

NEWS FROM OUR SPONSORED MISSIONARIES

Dear friends,

We write, having settled back into life here on the campus of Tumaini University Makumira. We are grateful to be back in our home, back teaching, and back supervising student research. This last helps form the basis of our reflections this month. We're so grateful for and proud of our students. We hope you enjoy hearing of their work.

We can share that the Covid-19 infection rate is lower here than in much of the US. We have heard hard stories of life, suffering, and death in April-June of this year in the Arusha area. Now, as the tourist economy has collapsed and shows little sign of coming back soon--that is, there are a few tourists here but nothing like a year ago December--much of the suffering here is economic, leading to the host of health and social problems related to and emanating from poverty. We ask you to hold the people of Tanzania in your prayers.

We come to the end of the year with gratitude for good health, good work to do, and good friends who pray for and support us. Thank you!

Read what they're up to in Tanzania on their blog at <https://mcintz.wordpress.com/>

Your support makes a world of difference!

To help your congregation fulfill its covenant sponsorship, give directly through your church. You can include your missionary support donation in your weekly offering just indicate on your offering envelope how much is being contributed to the missionaries.

HOW TO CONTINUE SUPPORTING BETHLEHEM

Ways to Financially Support Bethlehem

- Mail in your check
- Through your bank's Bill Pay Donate
- On-Line through our church website (www.bethlehemplutheran.net) Enter through the Church site and locate the orange DONATE NOW button at the top right. You can set up an auto pay or one-time donation.
- Download the GivePlus+ app on your smartphone. Find Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Granada Hills, CA and donate.

Ways to Care

- Pray for our world, our leaders, our doctors and nurses.
- Follow the guidelines of the CDC.
- Check on family, friends, and those most vulnerable in our community during this time.
- Be generous in your giving of financial & material resources. Many people are in need and we want to be a blessing to them.



WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

JOURNEY WITH ANGELS: LOOKING UP

What comes to mind when you hear the word “angel”? Since we just celebrated Christmas, perhaps the angel, Gabriel, comes to mind, or maybe the song titles “Angels We Have Heard on High” or “Angels From the Realms of Glory” ring in your ears. Still you might be thinking of angel decorations on the Christmas tree or a “guardian angel”. What do your angels look like? Do your angels have wings or halos? Are they dressed in white, fluffy gowns? Or do they look more like a cherub? Are your angels singing, appearing in a vision, or proclaiming a message? Do you believe in those angels that you picture? Do such angels still journey among us today?

Even though angels are numerous in the Bible, they are not a major focus of Scripture. However, they seem to show up at pivotal moments. During the next four months, GATHER Bible studies will focus on a journey with angels. In the January lesson, we will be introduced to angels in the Bible. All are welcome to watch and listen for descriptions of angels as we look for angels above us, beyond us, and among us. Share in the experiences and unique insights of others.

Go on an adventure of noticing and learning from God’s heavenly creatures by zooming in to the January Gather Bible study on Tuesday, January 19th at 4:00 P.M. Just click on the link that Pastor Megan gives in the January 18th weekly schedule.

ADULT EDUCATION RESUMES

Courageous. Trailblazing. Diverse. Action-oriented Lutherans.

When people think of the various Christian churches, those words might not be ones they attach to the Lutherans—but they should be! Yes, they have roots in northern Europe, but the people called Lutherans offer liberating insights into Christian faith, encompass a worldwide reach, and tell a story that goes back 500 years while pointing to the future.

“Together By Grace”, by Kathryn A. Kleinhans, takes readers on a journey across this broad landscape of faith and time. Over two dozen gifted writers—scholars, pastors, leaders, activists—paint a colorful map for this journey. Newcomers will find intriguing entry points, and lifelong Lutherans will discover new dimensions. Whether it's a passion for a grace-filled theology, worship and music that lift spirits, or a deep concern for wholeness and justice, Lutherans are engaged in the world, alongside other Christians and those of various faiths.

Join our online Zoom group (note link in Monday email schedule) for courageous, trailblazing, diverse, action-oriented discussions led by Pr. Megan Fryling beginning Wed., Jan. 13, at 6:30 p.m. Books are still available in the church office. In preparation for the first session read the articles in “The Faith We Confess,” pages 9-45.

NEWS FROM LUTHERAN SOCIAL SERVICES

Happy New Year! Thank heaven it's a New Year, full of hope and promise, as only the Lord can give us.

Every year at this time, we can't say Thank You enough to the members of Bethlehem and other churches, non-profits, our City Councilmen and other organizations for your generous donations during Thanksgiving and Christmas. Lots of food for our Pantry, and we had toys galore for our Toy Store this year. It looked the same, but we had to make a lot of changes due to COVID, all of which worked out well. Many, many families were able to provide their children with toys under their trees (if indeed they even had one) thanks to your generosity.

Thank you also to Thrivent Financial this year, who gave us a grant to purchase brand new toys for our families also. Thanks to Linda Zurich for making this happen.

A special thanks to all of the individuals and families who were able to either bring food and/or toy donations to the church, or used our drive through events to drop off those items. Many of you were able to give a financial donation also, which helped us purchase toys and food during this holiday season. Thank you, thank you.

And so we begin our New Year. The Clothes Closet/Thrift Shop is in the process of being revamped, a project that has needed to be done for a couple of years. Since we cannot have anyone in our facility for the foreseeable future, this is a good opportunity to do this. We will most likely continue to hand out food bags for the next several months, instead of having our guests being able to come in and shop. Hopefully, this will change before Summer and/or the vaccine, and families will once again have the opportunity to shop for what they want.

A huge thank you to our volunteers during the month of November and December, who helped us pack hundreds of Thanksgiving food bags, and organized our Toy Store. We couldn't have done it without you.

If you are interested in volunteering at LSS this new year, please give Jan a call and we'll make the arrangements. One day a week, one day every other week, once a month – we are very flexible!

God's blessings on all of you for your continued support of LSS/San Fernando Valley.

Jan Maseda/Director/LSS San Fernando Valley (818)288-7054



MEN'S MONTHLY BREAKFAST

The men's breakfast group will not meet due to the updated LA County restaurants restrictions that prohibit outdoor dining.

LIKE US ON FACEBOOK!

If you would like to stay in touch and get updates of events happening at Bethlehem, please visit www.facebook.com/BethlehemGranadaHills and like us!

Also, check out our preschool Facebook page at www.facebook.com/bethlehemplutherschool. Bethlehem's teachers and staff have been sharing videos of readings on the school Facebook page. If you have children in your lives or you would like to share with friends and family who have children, please do so!

BOOK CLUB

Book club will resume via zoom, dates TBD. You can contact Pastor Megan by text or phone for details 610-680-7220.

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

- 5 Ken Cave
- 8 Kathy Vasquez
- 12 Pastor Megan Fryling
- 14 Charlize Steelman
- 17 Ron Van Deest
- 19 Christine Foster
- 22 Richard Taylor
- 23 Max Stark
- 27 Marisa Bradfield
- 28 Ron Goodman
- 29 Dwayne Schmidt
- 31 Betsy Kalusa



JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES

- 7 Nate & Tiffini Traylor (2012)
- 22 Greg & Deborah Imlay (2005)



DECEMBER STATISTICS

December offerings \$25,278.07
budget \$20,833
Revised November offerings \$18,317.64
budget \$20,833

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
27 9AM In-Person Worship 10AM Online Worship 11AM Zoom Fellowship 7PM Scripture Breathing Sessions	28	29	30	31	1 	2
3 9AM In-Person Worship 10AM Online Worship 11AM Zoom Fellowship 11:30A Virtual Sunday School 2PM Confirmation Class 6:30PM Prayer Session 7PM Scripture Breathing Sessions	4	5	6	7	8	9
10 9AM In-Person Worship 10AM Online Worship 11AM Zoom Fellowship 2PM Confirmation Class 7PM Scripture Breathing Sessions	11	12	13 6:30PM Wednesday Night Bible Study	14	15	16
17 9AM In-Person Worship 10AM Online Worship 11AM Zoom Fellowship 11:30A Virtual Sunday School 2PM Confirmation Class 3PM Council Meeting 7PM Scripture Breathing Sessions	18 Office Closed 	19 4PM WELCA Bible Study via Zoom	20 6:30PM Wednesday Night Bible Study	21	22	23
24 9AM In-Person Worship 10AM Online Worship 11AM Zoom Fellowship 2PM Confirmation Class 7PM Scripture Breathing Sessions	25	26	27 6:30PM Wednesday Night Bible Study	28	29	30
31 Annual Cong. Mtg- Time TBA 9AM In-Person Worship 10AM Online Worship 11AM Zoom Fellowship 11:30A Virtual Sunday School 2PM Confirmation Class 7PM Scripture Breathing Sessions	Feb. 1	2	3 6:30PM Wednesday Night Bible Study	4	5	6



Bethlehem
LUTHERAN
CHURCH & SCHOOL

12227 Balboa Blvd., Granada Hills, CA 91344