

October 2011

Greetings to my fellow members of the Bethlehem Lutheran Church family,

As I began planning for this year's stewardship conversations, I realized that I had never looked up the definition of the word "stewardship" in the dictionary, which is maybe something you should consider doing when you are the chairperson of the stewardship committee! When I did finally look, I loved what I found there:

"The responsible overseeing and protection of something considered worth caring for and preserving"

These words brought to mind an experience I had last fall. I had the opportunity to attend an evening event benefitting the Community Resource Center in Encinitas. The after dinner program included a slide presentation describing the various services offered by CRC for those in need. Nearly one year later, the part of the presentation I still recall clearly was how simple statistics were used to quantify the results achieved in the lives of CRC's clients. I remember being impressed with how the presentation connected the dots between the gifts of time, talent and money entrusted to this organization and how those gifts were used to achieve highly positive outcomes in the lives of the vulnerable.

I think we all want to feel confident that our charitable gifts will be used wisely toward positive outcomes. We at Bethlehem Lutheran Church are blessed to see evidence of this same kind of responsible stewardship of time, talent and money every time we are on the church campus. A very partial list:

- Beautiful worship music of all kinds
- Educational opportunities and fellowship for all ages
- 100 sleeping bags provided for the homeless of San Diego
- Food, shelter and fellowship provided on our campus for two weeks for homeless guests
- Over 1600 children clothed in warm flannel pajamas
- Over 80 people facing serious life challenges comforted with handcrafted shawls and quilts
- 120 children and more than 50 volunteers enjoying Vacation Bible School
- 40 high school youth providing 500 hours of service in San Francisco during their summer vacation
- 170 congregants providing over 340 hours of service in one morning during Bethlehem Serves
- Support of our global neighbors by providing LifeStraws to ensure safe drinking water

The work of our congregation is entirely self-funded, meaning that the only financial resources available to support these ministries are those that are given by us. During our worship services in October, the time we devote to the stewardship conversation is intended to illustrate, through pictures and words, the tangible and intangible blessings that are ours when we give of ourselves in response to God's love, and how those blessings multiply when we give together as a community. **Every one of us has something to give which will be a blessing to others.** Thank you for your generous support this past year, and please consider continuing your commitment to Bethlehem Lutheran Church in 2012.

If you are a member of Bethlehem Lutheran Church, you will find a 2012 commitment card enclosed with this letter. If you are a friend of the congregation, we provide this letter to keep you informed of our ministry and vision. There are commitment cards available at the church should you choose to make a pledge.

I invite you to join me in doing the following:

- **Please take time to consider how you will support the work of our congregation in 2012.** If you do not currently give offerings, please consider committing to giving an offering as you are able. If you

currently give offerings as you are able, please consider committing to giving regular offerings on a weekly or monthly basis. If you currently give regular offerings, please consider increasing your pledge.

- **Please complete your commitment card and bring it with you to church on Sunday October 16th. If you will not be able to attend worship on October 16th, please return your commitment card to the church by October 23rd, whether you plan to make a pledge or not.** Your prompt response will allow the congregational council to complete the budgeting process in a timely manner, and allocate financial resources with confidence.
- **Please be faithful to the commitment you make.** Our congregation does a fantastic job of following through on the pledges made on the commitment cards. Thank you, and keep up the good work!

It is my prayer that we will always be mindful and thankful to God for the blessings we receive and the blessings we give as members of this body of Christ. Thank you for your continued commitment to Bethlehem Lutheran Church, a community truly worth caring for and preserving!

Sandy Lakey
Congregational Council Stewardship Chairperson