

PASTOR'S ANNUAL REPORT 2017

"Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer." Romans 12:9-12

"Hold fast to what is good." The work of the church is always to hold fast to what is good; in love and grace and discipleship and hope and resurrection. The work of the church is to persevere in zeal and to gather in joy and touch the world with grace in every way that we are given opportunity. Our work is to proclaim the good news. Bethlehem is a vibrant, mission minded congregation with a unique joyous energy that reminds us that we are alive together in Christ. It is my joy to serve as your pastor. We are a congregation always reaching forward, and this year is no exception.

STAFFING:

- In May, we welcomed Constance Mithelman as the new youth director at Bethlehem. She came with exceptional gifts and a welcoming energy. Within a few weeks she had a regular group of 20 students gathering. In addition, 40 students and leaders went on the summer service trip. Our confirmation ministry is stronger than ever. Constance is half time at Bethlehem and half time at St Andrews. The shared youth position has facilitated a partnership between our two congregations that has been deeply fruitful in other areas of shared ministry. We look forward to a continuing partnership in the years to come.
- At this annual meeting, we will be voting on an associate pastor at Bethlehem. I thank the call committee for excellent, thoughtful work. We are thrilled with the qualifications and ministry gifts Pastor Sam Nelson brings. In addition, he brings a warm spirit and pastoral grace. This is Pastor Sam's first call. I know of no better congregation to train a new pastor, than Bethlehem. We have much to teach each other and we look forward to the new energy and vision Pastor Sam will bring to the congregation.
- We bid farewell to Mary Shaima this year as well. Mary has served this congregation faithfully for three decades, most recently as the diaconal associate here at Bethlehem. We thank her for her faithful preaching and teaching, her worship gifts, her voice of justice, her hospitality gifts and many other contributions too numerous to name in this report. On behalf of a grateful congregation, I thank her for her exemplary work and her partnership in the gospel. We wish her Godspeed and every grace.

CHURCH ADMINISTRATION

- This summer we completed a much needed family center renewal ensuring that our accredited preschool program has the best possible space for excellent early childhood education. The playground was updated and improved as well. Our thanks to Debi Carr and Gail Winterbourne for faithfully overseeing our most substantial outreach ministry. Through the preschool, we reach 100's of young families in our community.
- We revised our Policy and Procedure Manual to meet new California labor law standards. Our thanks to Carole Orness, Natalie Germuska and Blair Lindberg for countless hours of work.
- The endowment fund committee has worked diligently this year, and the necessary bylaw changes to the constitution are now in place, to facilitate legacy giving to the congregation. Our thanks to Bob Michelet and his committee for careful, faithful work.
- We are ending this year in the black, as well as maintaining the carry over from last year. As of this week, the council has chosen to pay in full the remainder of sanctuary remodel loan, freeing the congregation from any further interest payments. Thanks to all who faithfully met their sanctuary remodel pledges these last three years. The balance on the loan was paid for by two special gifts from members of the congregation, a portion of the carryover from last year and fundraising efforts. Our thanks to those who offered gifts and to Joanne Manzi and Roger Lakey for exceptional fundraising events.
- Thank you all for your faithfulness and generous giving. After three years of slightly diminished pledged giving, this year saw a slight increase in giving. The council is faithful and careful stewards of the resources you offer. In the coming 3-5 years a number of deferred maintenance projects must to be completed. These include a new roof on the sanctuary and multiple other projects. Your stewardship is needed and deeply appreciated. Expect to hear more about funding for this maintenance work in the coming year.

WORSHIP, TEACHING AND MUSIC

- Here is an abbreviated list of our life together this year: Multiple baptisms, 10 funerals and the support of 10 grieving families, New Member Sunday, American Lutheranism class, Lenten Soup Suppers, Holden Evening Prayer, Lenten teaching, Palm Sunday Cantata, Good Friday, Easter Vigil, Pentecost, Women's retreat on the subject of Women's Voices, 120 students and leaders at VBS Rome, 40 students and leaders on the Summer Mission Trip, Confirmation Camp, Gratitude Sunday, First Communion, Confirmation Sunday, 500th Anniversary of the Reformation and Octoberfest, Blessing of the Animals, children's Christmas Program, "A Christmas Carol", Caroling to the homebound, Comfort at Christmas Service, Epiphany sing, Stephen Ministry, Spiritual Gifts Class, women's circles, healing stations, All Saint's Sunday, . . . And so much more.
- I want to lift up Mona Goetsch and the exceptional music ministry here at Bethlehem. Each year during the Cantata, Spring Concert and Christmas Concert, I sit in the front pew simply overjoyed to serve such a congregation. These are the days I know most tangibly that I am blessed. Our thanks to Mona, Judy Collier, Mary Shaima, Kim Froke, Mark Weed and Marilyn Stenoien for blessing us beyond measure.

OUTREACH AND SERVICE

- Here is an abbreviated list of our life in the community this year: Bethlehem Serves, Mim's garden, TACO, Wounded Warriors, CGA Sustainable water projects, Helping Foster Youth, Interfaith Shelter, Ramadan Dinner, Blood Mobile, CRC Holiday Baskets Project, Es Por Los Ninos, Secret Santa, Committed Resources to Texas flood victims, Interfaith Thanksgiving Eve Service, UN Peace Vigil, Walking School Bus, Scraps and Prayers, Pajama Project, Community Library, Meditation, Tai Chi and Yoga . . . And so much more.
- Next year we are working toward a deeper partnership with Ocean Knoll students and families and the creation of an evening English Language Learning Program for adults, combined with homework help for English language learning children.

FELLOWSHIP AND WELCOME

- Our thanks to Joanne Manzi, Roger Lakey, Gail Winterbourne and many others for wonderful fundraising and fellowship events this year. More than the monies raised, you have raised our joy. Whether the Padres game, golf tournament, Octoberfest, New Year's Brunch, or high tea, we have been gifted in each other's company.
- This year we have lived into our decision to become an RIC congregation. Our mission statement has always stated, "The mission of Bethlehem Lutheran Church is to announce boldly the love of God through Christ." We are bold in joy and service and worship and welcome. It is not always easy to make bold decisions. A few people sadly chose to leave our congregation because of this decision. We miss them and wish them Godspeed. Nearly all of our visitors and new and current members tell us they are here because of the intentional welcome we extend.
- Welcome is the work of the whole congregation. If you see someone visiting with us for the first time, introduce yourself, share a cup of coffee, learn their story and introduce them to others. Small gestures of welcome go a long way.
- My thanks to Naida Malchiodi and Cynthia Heigold for taking over the ministry of hospitality for funeral families. Planning a reception and offering hospitality to a grieving family is a deeply important ministry.

My thanks to the amazing staff with whom I serve: Debi Carr, Judy Foland, Molly Hall, Chris Matthews, Constance Mithelman, Rose Moldenhauer, Laure Reynolds, Mary Shaima, Gail Winterbourne and Karen Wise. Each one of them are exceptional in their service and grace. A personal word of thanks to you for the joy and gift that it is to serve as your pastor. This year I celebrated the 20th anniversary of my ordination. I cannot imagine a more gifted group of people with whom to serve. Thank you for the tears and the joys we have shared on the journey. Thank you for your faithfulness to the gospel and your bold witness to grace in word and deed. Thank you for the unique craziness that is Bethlehem. In this 20th year of service to God's church, I am most grateful for you.

In Christ,
Pastor Laura Ziehl