

April 24, 2009

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Greetings from your 2009 Congregational Council. This year your Council members are: Dennis Astroth – President, Dee Smith – Vice-President, Karin Kloehn – Secretary, Jim Cowles – Treasurer, Audrey Murphy, Dianne Nichols, Matt Dickerson, Scott Anderson, Ken Christensen, Marji Wilkens, and Tim Staycer. This year we appointed a youth representative to the council, Sarah Simm.

How times does fly. Just over one year ago we extended our call to Pastor Laura. We've been truly blessed to have Pastor Laura, Daren, Emily, and Linnaea join our Bethlehem family. When Pastor Laura visited Bethlehem for the first time last year she brought daffodils with her. We planted those flowers in a space near the front of the Sanctuary and they have emerged again this year and are just starting to bloom. Look for them on your left as you enter the Sanctuary from the south parking lot.

Pastor Laura has been very busy this past year attending to Bethlehem's pastoral, administrative, and organizational needs. This year's budget includes a provision for hiring an assistant pastor to help with those needs. We are actively recruiting for this position and hope to fill it shortly.

Since we last communicated with you we have begun the Healthy Start program, completed our 2009 stewardship drive, completed a major property improvement, planned for possible water restrictions due to ongoing drought conditions, registered attendees to the Pacifica Synod Assembly in May, and received word that the results from last years Congregational Life Survey have been delayed. Also, we are organizing a Welcome Ministry for visitors to Bethlehem and we are looking to provide additional adult education classes.

As you may recall the Healthy Start for Congregations program is designed to help the Pastor and church leaders forge a productive partnership, and begin to lay a roadmap, or vision, for the future. The Congregational Council, Transition Team, and Staff attended an all-day retreat in September and two quarterly update meetings. We have two additional update meetings scheduled for this year.

We have completed work on the roof of the Childcare building and I'm pleased to report that this winter's rains did not leak into the building. And speaking of rain, we haven't been receiving enough and it is likely that we will be subject to water use restrictions this summer. We have applied for a grant with the San Diego County Water Authority for installation of "smart" irrigation controllers. Our landscaper estimates we can reduce our water usage by 20-40%. In the future we will be looking at additional ways we can reduce our water usage.

Pastor Laura, Dennis and Margo Astroth, and Mona Goetsch will be attending this year's Pacifica Synod Assembly in Riverside, California May 21-23. Look for a report of our participation and impressions.

In these difficult economic times you are faithfully supporting the ministries and operations of Bethlehem. Thank you for your financial commitments and your gifts of time and talents. It's truly a pleasure to serve you, the Congregation of Bethlehem.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with all of you.

Dennis Astroth  
Council President