

April 2008

### A Message from the Congregation Council President

This is the first in what I hope to be a quarterly message from the Bethlehem Lutheran Church Congregation Council. It's a newsletter of sorts. I know before I joined the Council I had little idea of what the Council did and what was going on in the church at the decision making level. My hope is that this quarterly letter will give you some insight into what is happening at our church and what decisions are being made about our future together.

The Council is a group of 12 people, made up of 11 lay members and the Pastor. The Council has 4 elected executive positions which include President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary. They make up the Executive Committee which oversees the general business operation of the Church. Each of the remaining lay Council members acts as a Chair of a Church Committee. The Council is an umbrella group that oversees every type of committee or activity that exists at Bethlehem. The Council meets once per month, but more often if issues warrant.

It's only early April and it's already been a busy year at BLC. We've called a new Pastor, we had a brief opportunity for a land purchase, we continue to look at a future construction project to replace the Family Center building, and we face ongoing budget challenges and opportunities.

On March 30, 2008 our Congregation voted to extend a call to Pastor Laura Ziehl. She has accepted the call and will arrive with her family around mid June. The Council is very thankful and believes that Pastor Laura will guide our church to a great future. One must think that God is beginning to reveal his plan for us.

For the past two years the budget has been the main focus of both the Executive Committee and the Council as a whole. Pastor Gene has been a guiding light on this matter. Two years ago with your generosity we eliminated a \$55,000 shortfall in the matter of a few months. Last year we were in good shape, but by October we again struggled with a shortfall. Again your generous giving turned it to a year end blessing.

As of the end of February this year, we are on budget once again. However, we face a number of challenges as several property issues have arisen. With the rain this year we had roof leaks in the Family Center, the Childcare Facility, and the Multi-Use Building. There is a mold problem in the Multi-Use Building. Limited roof repair was done to the Family Center and that problem is resolved for the moment. Repairing the Multi-Use Building and the Childcare Facility is potentially more expensive. Dennis Astroth has been working hard to detect and repair the leaks. We won't know the extent of his success until it rains again. We also face ongoing termite infestations. We will likely need to tent both the Childcare Facility and the Sanctuary. We need more sand in the playgrounds to meet our legal requirements for accreditation, and there are a number of landscape and irrigation issues to be addressed.

While not all of these repairs need action immediately, we need to plan on probably \$30,000 to \$50,000 worth of repairs over the next several years. We will start fundraising this year to cre-

ate a contingency fund to handle these items. We now have our Line of Credit Loan in place, but will make every effort not to use it.

Those are some of the struggles we will face soon enough, but let's get to some of the more fun and exciting things that Council has been discussing this year. These are all new developments in addition to all the other great things that BLC does.

**ADULT BIBLE STUDY:** We are looking at ways to re-invigorate our Adult Bible Study program. We aim to generate new interest and excitement about this program. Matt Dickerson is the Council member overseeing this program in addition to the Men's Group (below).

**MEN'S GROUP:** We would like to start (or re-start) a men's group in the Church. A men's ministry could have great potential for support, outreach, and friendship.

**ENDOWMENT FUNDS:** Over the years endowments have been given to the Church, but we have had no clear procedures for processing them. Dennis Astroth has researched the funds and appointed a committee to draft a set of procedures for handling them. Keep this in mind, as endowments are a great way to contribute to the Church with potential long term benefits.

**BLC-BAY:** Our Stewardship Chair, Jim Behun, came up with this fundraising idea. In concept, instead of having a garage sale or selling things on e-bay or Craig's List, you would list them on our web site for sale to our church family. Some or all of the money made on the sale would be donated to BLC. We will be working with our webmaster to see how such a program could be accommodated, and may seek out additional assistance from the Congregation if needed.

**KID'S SPORTS CAMP:** How about a week long summer sports camp for your kids. It would likely focus on several different sports, and possibly a different sport each day. Jim Behun is willing to organize such a program if there are enough people interested.

**WELCOMING COMMITTEE FOR VISITORS:** The Lord blessed us with 29 new members in February and we will welcome additional new members in May. Even though this growth reflects a healthy congregation, we want to make sure that all visitors leave with a feeling of being welcomed. In this effort, Dianne Nichols has recruited over 25 people in a new committee to assure all visitors are properly greeted and provided any information they seek.

**PACIFICA SYNOD PROPOSED B2B2B PROGRAM:** It has nothing to do with future space travel, but a lot to do with spiritual growth and expanding the Lutheran Church. B2B2B stands for Blessed 2 Build 2 Blessings. You will hear more about this in the coming months. It is a fund raising program for our Pacifica Synod's Mission Training Center, and a Lay training facility for our rapidly expanding sister Synod in Ethiopia. At the same time we may tie in some fundraising for our own facilities repair and development here at BLC.

**WEBSITE USE:** Jim Murphy has done a great job developing and maintaining our website over the past few years. Karin Kloehn is now our Council representative to work with Jim in overseeing the website. The goal is to have everything you could possibly want to know about BLC on the site. Please go to the home page and sign in with your email address so that you can re-

ceive church notices directly from the website. If nothing else we can save some money on postage!

**FUTURE SPECIAL EVENTS:** How about a formal sit down dinner fund raiser catered by a local fine restaurant? How about a silent auction of goods and services from our congregation members? How about a bigger and more wonderful Fall Festival complete with dinner and live auction? We could easily raise \$10,000 to \$15,000 from such an event. Just think of all the opportunities to get involved!!

**A SPECIAL EVENT FOR PASTOR GENE:** Speaking of Blessed to have 2 Blessings, what good fortune we have had with 2 interims with this gentleman. Planned for Sunday June 1<sup>st</sup> we are considering a bratwurst and apple strudel extravaganza following his final Sunday services.

**PASTOR LAURA'S INSTALLATION:** Bishop Finck will be on hand for Pastor Laura's official installation. The installation and welcoming party are tentatively planned for June 29<sup>th</sup>.

As you can see, it's a busy year at Bethlehem. We will obviously need a lot of help to carry on these new programs and events along with everything else we do. Don't be shy, if you see something that sparks your interest please let us know.

These are just some of the issues that the Council discusses each month. We do our best to keep on top of it all. We thank you for your support, as it is you that makes it all happen.

Peace be with you.

Bruce Dugmore  
Council President