

We might be half way through the year, but it certainly seems we are at a new beginning.

Everything is new at Bethlehem Lutheran Church. Pastor Laura Ziehl has been successfully Called and Installed as our new Pastor. She is as excited to be here as we are to have her. Pastor Laura, along with her husband Daren Erisman, and daughters Emily and Linnaea are settling into their new home and easily adjusting to our north county coastal environment.

The Installation service on June 29th was the culmination of a long process that challenged our strength and commitment as a church family. Our Church owes a great thank you to the many people who worked diligently to keep our ministries moving forward over the past year.

In the process we said goodbye to an old friend, Pastor Gene Holtz. We held a great celebration for Pr. Gene and Grace on June 1st. Thank you to the Bethlehem Women of the ELCA for organizing that event, and to all those who helped by setting up, cleaning up and bringing special ethnic foods to share. On June 29th we hosted Bishop Murray Finck for Pastor Laura Ziehl's Installation service and celebration. Thank you to Karin Kloehn, Dianne Nichols, and Lindsay Ahlgren for organizing that special welcome.

Now we look to the future. Pastor Laura is looking forward to getting to know us better. Over the next few months we will be holding small group meetings to give Pastor Laura a chance to meet us on a more personal level. These meetings will be called, "Meet and Greet: The Sequel." The meetings are being organized by the Transition Team.

Council also feels that this is a time for our Church to regroup and make an assessment of what we have and where we want to go. At the July Council meeting, Council voted to take advantage of a program called "Healthy Start". The program is designed to assist Congregations with new pastors make a smooth transition and begin to lay a roadmap for the future. We believe this program will provide us with some tools for setting our direction and vision for the future.

Though Council over the past few months has been focused mainly on planning for the smooth transition of Pastors, we have also been attentive to budget concerns and planning for upcoming events.

The Budget: Jim Cowles, our treasurer has been tracking the budget and giving the Council monthly updates. As of the end of June, we are meeting our budget expectations both on income and on spending. We are about where we expected to be at this point in the year. We had a tremendous Holy Week, both spiritually and financially, which has helped carry us through a slow month or two. We have secured the Line of Credit with Thrivent Financial Services but have not used it to date. As we enter the traditional summer vacation season we anticipate the budget might get tight, but we will make every effort not to draw on the Line of Credit.

As you recall, in January the Congregation approved a budget which surpassed our anticipated income. We built several items into the budget such as a part time Pastor, a Church financial Audit, and an organizational study of our human resources. We committed to not proceed with any of these items unless funding became available. Well, so far, those additional funds have not become available. However, we received donated services for the Church audit. That study is currently underway and should be completed by the end of the summer. For our human resources evaluation, Pastor Gene made some initial in-house efforts, and we plan to continue with Pastor Laura once she has settled in a little bit.

Our property repairs continue to present some of our main financial concerns. Roof leaks in the Child Care Center and Multi-Use Room are being addressed. Dennis Astroth is coordinating that effort. He has made many repairs himself, and we have hired a roofer to make some of the needed flashing repairs on the towers. Other types of property repairs can be made as funding is available. For instance, the sand in the pre-school playgrounds will be replenished this summer thanks to a generous donation from a member of our Congregation.

What's Coming up?

As we make our way through the summer, we are looking forward to Ministry Sunday which will happen on the first Sunday after Labor Day. It is a time for all of us to rejoin together and decide how we can commit ourselves to Bethlehem's Ministries. Please come and see the opportunities for the coming year. There will be some new and exciting programs such as the newly forming Bethlehem Men's Group.

Fall Festival: Last October we held our first annual Fall Festival. It was a one day festival emphasizing fun for children. This year we would like to continue the tradition with similar themed events. We are looking for volunteers to help organize the event. We have hopes that over the years to come this will be a major annual event and fund raiser for our entire Church Community.

Pacifica Synod Proposed B2B2B Program: With all that was going on at Bethlehem this spring, Council decided to hold off on this until the Autumn. We hope to get some fund raising efforts off the ground to help out with this very worthwhile effort. B2B2B stands for "Blessed 2 Build 2 Blessings." 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.

Some of the other issues that Council continues to discuss include the Adult Bible Study program, Endowment Funds, the BLC-Bay concept, and how to best utilize our website. There are many such issues that the Council addresses each month.

If you haven't been around Bethlehem Lutheran Church for several months, now would be a great time to get reacquainted. So many things are starting anew. It's an exciting time to witness God's great work through each of us and our Church as a whole.

On behalf of the Council, we hope you all have a great summer.

Peace be with you.

Bruce Dugmore
Council President