

*“Give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put in your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.” Luke 6:38*

Sept. 22, 2009

Dear members and friends of Bethlehem Lutheran,

“A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over.” Such words describe the many blessings at Bethlehem Lutheran these days. We have just approved and received our new assistant pastor, Rev. Daren Erisman. With his position comes an expanded welcome ministry, dynamic adult education and new small group ministries. A new worship group, *The World Music Ensemble*, is beginning to lead us in magnificent praise. The fall children’s ministry and youth ministry programs are filled to capacity. Opportunities to serve our community abound, including a new congregation-wide day of service planned for the spring. Our Stephen Ministry Program is growing in new ways and we are all growing in grace.

Thank you for your faithfulness, your gifts and your joyful partnership in this ministry we share. As we do every fall, it is time to pause and consider the gift of stewardship God has given us. God made us stewards, not as a burden, but to offer us a gift. Luke 6:38 says, “Give away your life; you’ll find life given back, but not merely given back--given back with bonus and blessing.” (*The Message* translation) This is the heart of God’s intention in our stewardship. God intends to bless us. Stewardship is not something we do once every fall; it is a way of life. It is a responsibility that humbles our hearts and draws us close to God.

Bethlehem Lutheran is a place of rich stewardship. We are a community that gives often and regularly of ourselves. This is a particularly exciting time to be a part of the mission and ministry of our church. Even as we launch the new ministries listed above, we continue to pursue new visions, including a new Family Center to accommodate our growing ministries. Our gifts reach well beyond our walls to touch the lives of our neighbors near and far.

Now is the time for us to invest together in God’s work in our congregation and community. Would you be willing to make such an investment? When we plant seed in the ground, God creates abundant harvest. The commitment card you received in the mail offers a variety of ways to give. It is for your prayer and your use. Please prayerfully consider the financial gift you are able to give to Bethlehem Lutheran Church this year as you reflect on God’s blessings in your own life. Over the next three weeks, we will converse and think and pray together. Please join us. On October 11, we will bring our commitment cards to the altar and offer our gifts to God’s purpose.

These are challenging times for many, and yet challenges often reveal new opportunities. We are reminded that there is One in whom we can always place our confidence. There is One to whom we can entrust our lives and all that we have. And it is in his name that we gather.

In Christ’s service,

Laura Ziehl, Pastor

Marji Wilkens

Scott Anderson