

Hello Bethlehem!

I am Karen Saake, long time church member and a member of this year's church council and I would like to ask you to thoughtfully and prayerfully consider your pledge for the coming year.

Although, many cost savings have been implemented this year and we owe a huge shout out to Mark Stauffer and Judy Foland for their work on this. We are still anticipating an 8-10% increase in the budget and are looking for a similar increase in giving.

We would like to highlight 3 urgent budget needs for next year. These needs presented themselves organically at this time in the life of our congregation but it is so amazing to me that they are driving passions in my own life. God does work in mysterious ways.

1st the landscaping - last year when the budget was tight, we eliminated a substantial portion of the landscaping budget. Do you know we have over 60 trees on this campus and countless shrubs and plants? They need the love of professional landscapers. One of the many things I have learned during my time on council is that there are so many people who do so much work for our congregation. One of those people is Dennis Asthroth who serves as our property manager. He carries out these responsibilities with great care and expertise. He strongly recommends that we fully reinstate our landscapers and I agree. This will cost just under \$10k.

2nd library - our community library program which serves many, including many of my disadvantaged students from Ocean Knoll, was sponsored by an individual for many years when that sponsorship ended in 2018, we were able to fund it for 2019 with a special one-time gift. Moving forward it will be run by none other than our own Constance and it is already growing in new and exciting ways. We intend to include this ministry in our 2020 budget at a cost of about \$6k.

3rd and perhaps most importantly is the livelihood of our pastors. These pastors are the heart and soul of our congregation. I have personally walked through the darkest days of my life with Pastor Laura by my side and I am not sure how I would have made it through without her. The synod publishes guidelines for pastor's salaries and we are not where we would like to be for either of our pastors. Meeting these guidelines will require a substantial increase in our budget.

These are the three budgeting areas we are focused on for the coming year but the church does so, so much more. In order to support this great work, I take advantage of the automatic giving option and encourage you to do so too. This assures the church a steady cash flow throughout the year safeguarding us from the fluctuation of attendance. When you turn in your pledge card you allow the church to create a responsible budget for this congregation. You all give in so many ways your time, talent, special offerings, legacy giving and regular offerings. We are deeply grateful for all your giving. Today I am asking you to make a pledge, a pledge that is meaningful and realistic for YOU. Next week (October 6<sup>th</sup>) we will walk to the front of the church and hand in our pledge cards. This is a very powerful action for me and I hope it will be for you too.

Thank you!

Karen Saake  
BLC Council President