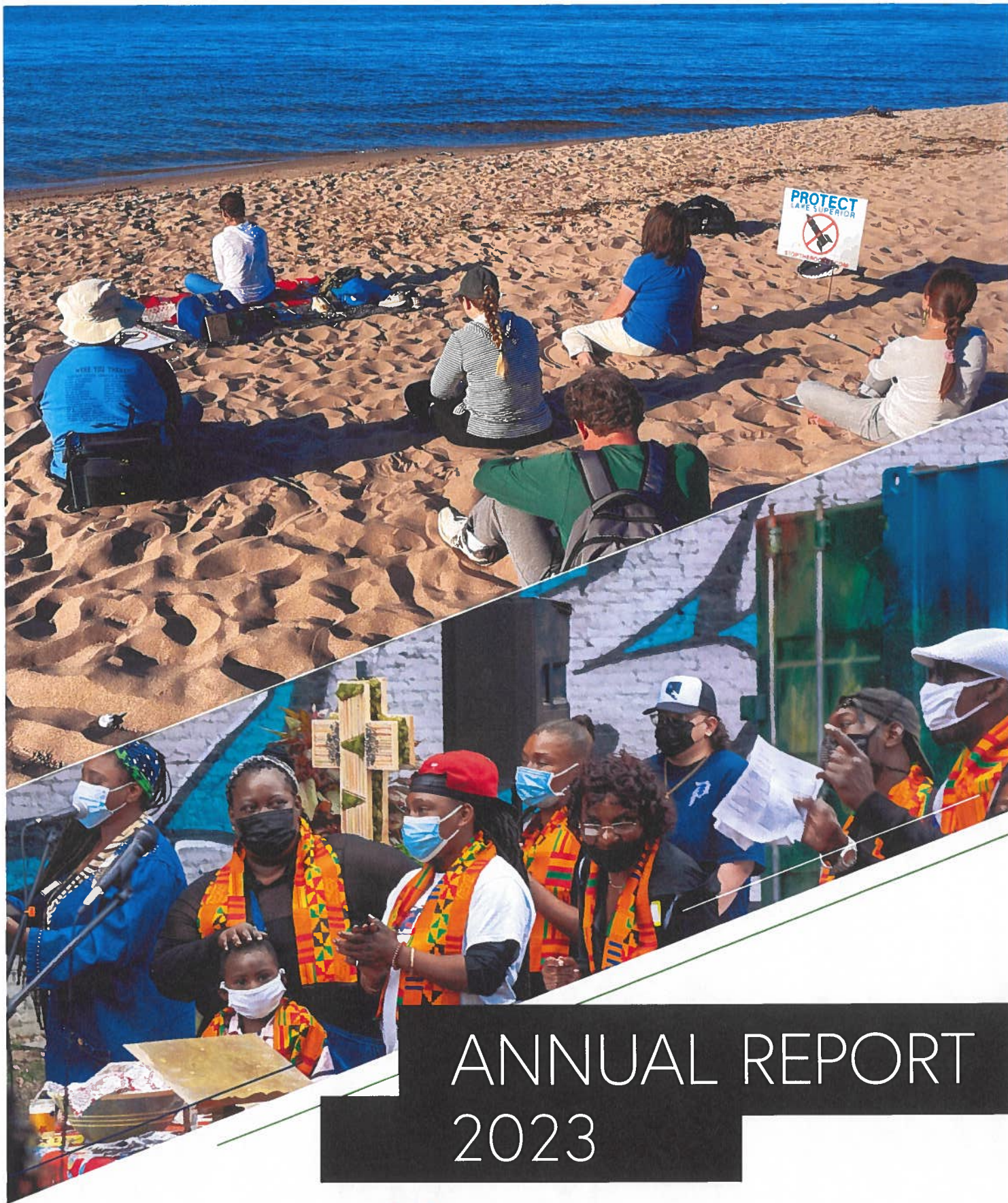




ANNUAL REPORT 2023



Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America

A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDING BISHOP ELIZABETH EATON



Dear friends in Christ,

Over the past year we have continued to experience changes in the world around us. Even as our church finds ways to adapt to this changing world, we find hope in the unchanging and always present promise of God's love through Jesus Christ. We change and adapt not to conform to the world but because we believe that the gift of God's Son is for the world, and that our congregations and worshiping communities are places to gather and be sent into the world, where we will tell the story of God's love in word and deed.

The ministries of our congregations, our synods and the churchwide organization provide ways for the church to move beyond the boundaries of structures and geography and to share God's love with people in our neighborhoods, our cities, our country and beyond. We engage in this ministry knowing that our church walks by faith, trusting in God's promise in the gospel, and that we exist by and for the proclamation of this gospel word. In John 15:5, Jesus reminds us, "I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing." We are connected by the promise that we do all through Christ and can do nothing apart from him.

God gives the Holy Spirit, who uses gospel proclamation — in preaching and sacraments, in forgiveness and in healing conversations — to create and sustain this faith. Just as we rely on God to sustain our faith, we rely on each other to sustain the ministries that offer God's love to the world. Through your generosity to each expression

of this church — your congregation, your synod and your churchwide organization — you add to our collective voice proclaiming God's love for all.

I am grateful for your generosity over this last year. My gratitude spreads far beyond your generous financial gifts. You've shared your gifts of time through countless hours of volunteering, serving and accompanying. You've shared the gifts of your voices as we've tried to discover and learn how God is calling us to be the church now and into the future. And, finally, dear church, you have shared the gift of the realness of God's love with the world around you. Be well, dear church, and stand steadfast in the promise of God's love and grace as you take that promise with you into the world.

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

“I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.” —John 15:5

Agenda for the 2023 Annual Meeting of Bethlehem Lutheran Church

January 21, 2024 | 10:00 AM – 11:30 AM

Call to Order: Steve Fritsch, Council President. A quorum of 10% of voting members is required to conduct the Annual Meeting.

Opening Prayer: Pastor Sam Nelson

Motion to Approve Minutes from Three Congregational Meetings – The 2022 Annual Meeting, the Special Meeting to Call Deacon Mindy Bugaj, and the Special Meeting to approve the ERC

Funding Allocation: A motion is needed to approve the minutes en bloc from these three meetings held respectively on January 22nd, June 4th, and October 8th. Second the motion, discussion, and vote.

Lead Pastor's Report: Pastor Laura Ziehl (see packet)

Associate Pastor's Report: Pastor Sam Nelson

Recognition of Departing Council Members: Pastor Sam Nelson

Election of New Congregation Council Members: Presented by Suzi Westmoreland. See the report from the Nominating Committee. If there are no additional nominations from the floor, then a motion is needed to "move election of the slate as presented." Second the motion, discussion, and vote.

Election of Nominating Committee: Presented by Suzi Westmoreland. See the report from the Nominating Committee. If there are no additional nominations from the floor, then a motion is needed to "move election of the slate as presented." Second the motion, discussion, and vote.

Mission Endowment Fund Report: Presented by Mark Stauffer. See the report from the Mission Endowment Fund Committee.

Election of Mission Endowment Fund Committee Members: Presented by Mark Stauffer. A motion is needed to "move election of the slate as presented." Second the motion, discussion, and vote.

Employee Retention Credit (ERC) Report: Presented by Mark Stauffer.

Treasurer's Report: Presented by Mark Stauffer, Assistant Treasurer, and George Orness, Council Treasurer.

Approval of 2024 Budget: Request a motion that "we adopt the 2024 budget (or approve as amended)." Second the motion, discussion, and vote.

Reports: The printed reports from the council president and staff of the congregation are received as presented unless there are questions or comments.

New Business: As needed.

Closing Prayer: Pastor Sam Nelson

Adjournment: The chair will entertain a motion to adjourn.

Bethlehem Lutheran Church

2022 Annual Meeting Minutes

January 22, 2023

- **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 10:10 am by Suzi Westmoreland, Council President. A 10% quorum of a total 514 Confirmed Members was confirmed with a total attendance of 75.
- **Opening Prayer:** Pastor Laura Ziehl
- **Motion to Approve Minutes from the 2021 Annual Meeting:** A **MOTION** was made by Bill Dabbs to approve the minutes of the Annual Meeting held on January 23, 2022. **SECONDED** by Dan Halverson . All in favor. **Motion approved.**
- **Lead Pastor's Report:** Pastor Laura Ziehl
- **Associate Pastor's Report:** Pastor Sam Nelson
- **Recognition of Departing Council Members:** Pastor Laura Ziehl
 - Thanks given to Suzi Westmoreland, Melissa Ontiveros, Mike Lyons, Derrick Oien, Mallory Oien, Brit Oien and Tucker Oien as departing council members.
- **Election of New Congregation Council Members:** Dave Ensberg presented the report of the nominating committee. The following members are being presented for election.
 - Art Schmidt, Solimar Schmidt, Melanie Hunter, Audrey Weed, Mark Reynolds

There were no additional nominations from the floor. Dave Ensberg made a **MOTION** to accept the slate of nominees as presented. **SECONDED** by Sherry Cass. All in favor. **Motion approved.**
- **Election of Nominating Committee:** Dave Ensberg presented the new nominees for the nominating committee. The following members are being presented for election.
 - Bobby Allen, Mike Lyons, Janet Mastrogony, Derrick Oien, Suzi Westmoreland, Fred Wise

There were no additional nominations from the floor. Dave Ensberg made a **MOTION** to accept the slate of nominees as presented. **SECONDED** by Julie Draskovic. All in favor. **Motion approved.**
- **Report of the Mission Endowment Fund:** Bob Michelet presented the report of the Mission Endowment Fund.

- **Election of Mission Endowment Fund Committee Members:** Bob Michelet presented the slate of nominees for the Mission Endowment Committee. The following members are being presented for election.

- Cindy McMahon, Mark Stauffer

There were no additional nominations from the floor. Bob Michelet made a **MOTION** to accept the slate of nominees as presented. **SECONDED** by Mike Lyons. All in favor. **Motion approved.**

- **Model Constitution Changes:** Bob Michelet presented the Amendments to the Model Constitution for Congregations. These changes were approved by the 2022 Churchwide Assembly and now must be ratified for Bethlehem's constitution. Bob Michelet made a **MOTION** to adopt the constitution amendments as presented and add the language into Bethlehem's constitution . **SECONDED** by Louise Julig. All in favor. **Motion approved.**
- **Pastoral Housing Information:** Derrick Oien presented a brief overview on the current pastoral housing situation. Some discussion took place. More information will be shared with the congregation at a later date.
- **Treasurer's Report:** Melissa Ontiveros, Council Treasurer, gave a virtual report on the current budget and the proposed budget for 2023.
- **Approval of 2023 Budget:** Steve Fritsch made a **MOTION** to accept the 2023 budget as presented. **SECONDED** by Tucker Oien. Discussion followed. All in favor. **Motion approved.**
- **Employee Retention Credit Information:** Presented by Pastor Laura Ziehl and Suzi Westmoreland. Additional meetings will take place to discuss the use of these funds. The total ERC money is between \$430,000 - \$450,000.
- **Reports:** The printed reports from Council and staff of the congregation are received as presented.
- **Closing Prayer:** Pastor Sam Nelson
- **Adjournment:** Mike Lyons made a **MOTION** to adjourn the meeting. **SECONDED** by Bill Dabbs. All in favor. **Motion approved.**

Respectfully Submitted by:
Jana Hegg, Council Secretary

Bethlehem Lutheran Church

Congregational Meeting Minutes

Special Meeting; June 4, 2023

Call to order: The meeting was called to order at 10:04 am by Council President Steve Fritch

Quorum: 51 voting members need to be present in order for a quorum to be in place. There were 79 members in attendance at the meeting.

Call of New Youth Director - Pastor Laura shared information on the new Youth Director candidate. The Congregation Council has moved a name forward to the congregation for a vote. The vote must be a 2/3rd majority of total voting members present.

Mindy Bugaj is a rostered Deacon in the ELCA with many years of experience in youth ministry. Because she is a rostered leader in the ELCA, this will be a call to Bethlehem Lutheran Church, however the position will be split between Bethlehem and St. Andrews.

Members of the search team, along with Pastor Sam and Pastor Laura, shared information regarding Mindy Bugaj and why she was chosen as our next youth director. A video from Mindy was shared with the congregation.

MOTION made by Pastor Sam to call Mindy Bugaj for the position of Director of Youth Ministry. **SECONDED** by Julie Draskovic. Discussion and questions took place.

A written ballot was given to each voting member present. Ballots were collected and counted. 75 ballots in favor and 2 opposed to calling Deacon Mindy Bugaj as Director of Youth ministry. **Motion approved.** Deacon Mindy has been called.

MOTION made by Tricia Storey to approve the compensation package for Mindy Bugaj in the position of Youth Director. **SECONDED** by Cindie McMahon. Information was shared and discussion took place. All in favor. **Motion approved.**

Bill Dabbs made a **MOTION** to adjourn the meeting at 10:22. The motion was **SECONDED** by Art Schmidt. All in favor. **Motion approved.**

Respectfully Submitted by:
Jana Hegg

Bethlehem Lutheran Church

Congregational Meeting Minutes

Special Meeting; October 8, 2023

Call to order: The meeting was called to order at 12:00 pm by Council President Steve Fritsch

Quorum: 51 voting members need to be present in order for a quorum to be in place. There were 86 voting members in attendance at the meeting.

ERC Congregational Vote - Steve Fritsch gave an overview on the purpose of the meeting. He also reminded all of those in attendance on the need for respectful discussion. Pastor Laura did an overview on Robert's Rules of Order and shared the correct protocol for votes and amendments.

The following **MOTION** was made by Jana Hegg:

In gratitude and recognition for the generosity of God, and in thanksgiving for the unexpected resources that have been provided to the congregation through the Employee Retention Credit (ERC), the council has laid out the following vision for the expenditure of these resources.

Motion: To approve the following allocations from the ERC monies:

1. \$40,000 to be given as a tithe to be split between the Community Resource Center, the Pacifica Synod, and the North County LGBTQ Resource Center.
2. \$140,000 to be used for repairs to the Family Center and Eco-Narthex to support the longevity of our church and preschool ministry.
3. \$200,000 to be set aside to help solve the ongoing unmet pastoral housing need.
4. \$50,000 to be used to install solar panels on the campus in order to be good stewards of our creation.

SECONDED by Suzi Westmoreland. Discussion and questions took place. A time limit was set for 30 minutes for discussion, with each speaker limited to two minutes.

MOTION made by Cindy McMahon to divide the previous motion into four unique and separate parts. **SECONDED** by Sue LaClair. This motion is not debatable. The vote was taken and the motion **FAILED** by a majority vote.

A written ballot was given to each voting member present. Ballots were collected and counted. It was determined that more votes were cast than members present, so the vote was declared invalid. New ballots were handed out to 81 voting members based on the attendance sheets and those still in attendance. A new vote was taken.

81 ballots cast. 76 ballots in favor and 5 opposed. **Motion approved.** The ERC funds will be used as indicated.

Wes Westlake made a **MOTION** to adjourn the meeting at 1:12.

The motion was **SECONDED** by Dan Halvorson. All in favor. **Motion approved.**

Respectfully Submitted by:

Jana Hegg

LEAD PASTOR'S ANNUAL REPORT 2023

"Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you. . . . Lift up your eyes and look around . . ." Isaiah 60:1-2,4a

Dear people of Bethlehem, as we look back over the last year, we have much of which to be proud, and much for which to be thankful. We were able to give substantial financial resources to the Oceanside LGBT Center, the Community Resource Center and the Pacifica Synod Anti-Racism Team, thanks to the ERC funds. We gratefully added many new members to the congregation and ended the year with a significant budget surplus. We extended our gift of All are Welcome by continuing to nest a Hispanic Neighborhood Congregation; welcoming Congregation B'nai Tikvah to our campus; and welcoming an E4E after school learning program for ESL students. All the while, continuing to be a joyous gathering of souls determined to make a difference in the world, and determined to care for one another and for the world God loves. I am grateful for the journey in your company, and to serve as the lead pastor of Bethlehem.

Worship and Music

- As a faith community, we are centered first in worship and weekly gathering around Word and Sacrament at 9 /10:30.
- We celebrated the ordination of Pastor Emily Baynton and the installation of Deacon Mindy Bugaj. One celebration welcomed a staff member, and the other honored this congregation's commitment to raising up leaders for God's church. The Holy Spirit was mightily present at both services, as well as present at Vicar Keegan's installation.
- The Christmas season was joyous, including a presentation of "A Christmas Carol" by Jamie Newcomb and Ursula Meyer. Christmas Eve was well attended. If live-stream views are included, attendance was between 600-700. The Christmas Concert filled every available seat! The Easter season saw the return of the Palm Sunday Cantata, foot washing on Maundy Thursday and prayer stations at the Good Friday service. Midweek Holden Evening Prayer, Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday were a gift as well.
- Kim Froke retired after 40 years of service to Bethlehem as organist/pianist, accompanist, and bell choir director. To him, we offer our deepest gratitude and grace.
- Natasha Riobova was hired as 1/2 time organist beginning Oct. 1 and Judy Collier continues as 1/2 time organist, as well as keyboardist for Second Sabbath and WME. Natasha accompanies the choir. We thank these accomplished musicians.
- Mona Goetsch, Bethlehem's music director, continues to be the heart of our exceptional music ministry. She directs both choirs and oversees all that lifts us in worship.
- Mark Weed directs the bell choir and newly directs the Band of Bethlehem (BOB) We thank him for his gifts and grace. Marilyn Stenoien continues to faithfully lead Second Sabbath.
- Worship attendance is strangely unpredictable in this post Covid time, with both high and low attendance, without a noticeable pattern. Attendance is beginning to approach pre-covid numbers, but only if livestream views are included.

Adult Education

- Lenten education focused on a video series featuring Rachel Held Evans and the changing church.
- On Pentecost Mary Ann Horton, a local trans advocate and member of First Lutheran, joined us to discuss her autobiography, "Trailblazer". 50 people attended and the discussion was deeply engaging.
- A five week study entitled, "I Think You're Wrong, But I'm Listening" was held this spring. It has become important foundational work, that feels more like ongoing ministry, than educational opportunity. 50 people attended.

Youth and Family Ministry

- Deacon Mindy Bugaj was called to serve as Director of Youth Ministry at a special meeting of the congregation on June 4th. She was installed on Aug. 5th. Deacon Mindy comes with significant expertise and is expertly overseeing the confirmation ministry as well as the high school ministry. We are deeply blessed to have her on staff. My thanks to the search team for their faithful work. The high school summer trip was a border immersion to Las Cruces with 13 students and 4 adults in attendance. Deacon Mindy is building a middle school ministry and engaging high school students in service to the neighbor.
- Jana Hegg became our permanent Children's Ministry Director this year. She brings exceptional skills and heart to the role. The Sunday School is solidly staffed, the intergenerational Christmas program was a joy, VBS had 45 students in attendance and many volunteers, and so much more. Additionally, we are focusing on the needs of

neurodivergent students. Jana secured the Matthew 25 Grant to assist the after school learning program and serves as the liaison with our after school learning program.

- Sally von Zirngibl continues to oversee the community library and a reading program with our preschool students. She is a reading specialist and brings such gifts to the role.

Preschool Ministry

- My continued gratitude to our two exceptional preschool directors, Debi Carr and Kelly Perez. Both programs are currently full and continue to be our strongest footprint in the community. Both directors are proactively adjusting the programs to meet family needs.
- I meet with the children for preschool chapel, attend Halloween, Christmas and all programs where I can, in order to engage preschool families. This VBS year, my group was nearly all preschool families.

Ministries, Service and Outreach

- In partnership with St. Andrews, I moderated a forum on affordable housing in North County, with 100 people in attendance. My thanks to Naida Malchiodi for graciously overseeing our feeding ministry partnership with St. A's.
- As part of the Interfaith Shelter Network, we hosted 10 guests, including 2 children. My thanks to Diane Langager and her team for their work to care for the most vulnerable in our community.
- We began a new after school learning program this year in partnership with E4E, working with ESL students in our neighborhood. I am overjoyed to deepen this new partnership and much needed ministry in our neighborhood.
- Bethlehem Serves was well attended again this year. My thanks to Mona Goetsch for her leadership.
- Our welcome statement was updated this year and we have new mugs reinforcing that All are Welcome.
- We continue to host a neighborhood Hispanic ministry headed by Carlos Hernandez. There are close to 100 people involved in his ministry. We continue to be grateful for this deep partnership.
- Bethlehem marched in San Diego Pride again this year. 40 members of Bethlehem joined 6 other Lutheran congregations for a total of 140 people. I served on the joint steering committee.
- Stephen Ministry continues to accompany those in our congregation in crisis, under the capable direction of Laure Reynolds. Rose Moldenhauer serves as our parish nurse, and the partnership between these two ministries and the pastors allows us to provide healing care for the congregation.
- The columbarium committee has secured an architect, the mosaic art is completed, and foundational monies are available from niches sold. We anticipate securing additional funding this year, and the completion of the project.

Women's Ministry

- Our first full year of WOW ministry included: a paint and wine night, a 3 day retreat at LutherGlen, a tea supporting St. Andrews feeding ministry and more. Our average attendance at all events was an outstanding 40 women.
- Scraps and Prayers, PJ Project, and prayer shawl ministry continue to bless so many. My thanks to all those who faithfully lead these ministries.

ERC

- My deep thanks to this, and the previous council for 2 years of faithful, diligent work to discern the best use of ERC funds to secure the congregation's future. Two open forums were held, updates given, and a special meeting of the congregation was held on October 8th. After lively debate the vote passed overwhelmingly to (1) give 10% of the resources to causes that meet our core values, (2) acquire solar for the congregation (3) make repairs to the family center and eco narthex and (3) begin to secure a pastoral housing solution. My thanks to all lay leaders who headed these subcommittees, and who worked so faithfully and diligently to present these options to the congregation.
- The pastors were honored, on your behalf, to deliver significant financial gifts to the Pacifica Synod Anti-Racism Team, the Oceanside LGBT center, and the CRC. What a blessing to live into our faithful commitment as stewards.
- My thanks to the solar committee, particularly George Orness, for faithful work to secure Steller Solar. Solar monies from ERC dollars, congregational giving, and budget are in place, and solar will be installed this spring. This is a long term goal of the congregation, now achieved.
- After significant flooding last year, drainage work behind the Family Center is completed as well as installation of a new HVAC system. My thanks to the subcommittee, especially Dennis Astroth, for their expertise. Our gratitude to Carlos Hernandez who generously offered the labor. The eco-narthex repair will be completed in the coming year.
- Pastoral housing monies are in an interest earning account until the council and sub committee discern a solution to the ongoing pastoral housing need for current and future pastors.

Administration and Finance

- Extensive ERC work was overseen by the finance committee and council, as well as the preparation of this year's budget. My thanks to Mark Stauffer, George Orness and all those who have faithfully executed this work.
- This is our first full year operating under a new model of assistant treasurer and congregational treasurer working in partnership. It has gone well. Mark Stauffer has agreed to continue to serve in the volunteer role of assistant treasurer, to create financial continuity in partnership with the elected treasurers of the congregation.
- This year, the council voted to move monies to a Thrivent money market interest earning account.
- My deep gratitude to the council for their faithful, accomplished service to the congregation. We are blessed with a great deal of wisdom at the table. My particular thanks to outgoing leaders; president Steve Fritsch for his exceptional leadership, treasurer George Orness for his service in so many areas this year, and secretary Jana Hegg for her excellence in the position. My thanks to Trisha Storey and Solimar Schmitt for faithful grace at the council table.
- Thanks to the stewardship committee, Carolin Meinhardt, Dick Dubois and Mark Stauffer for their year round work.
- The endowment committee continues to faithfully oversee legacy and large gifts and provide grants for new ministry.

Membership

- Bethlehem received 22 new members this year. What a sign of the health of the congregation. We continue to be one of the largest congregations in the Pacifica Synod, a reality for which I regularly give thanks.
- We completed a Pictorial Directory this year, thanks to Cynthia Heigold and her remarkable gifts overseeing the project. 125 families are included and we have used the opportunity to update our database as well.

Technology

- My thanks to all who run sound and who make our livestream presence possible. The work is challenging, requires unique skills, and a unique ability to see a sudden crash of the system as a fun exercise in problem solving. We continue to provide outdoor worship and live streaming every week.
- My thanks to Marian Singletary, Suzi Westmoreland, Aaron Criner, Ron Hegg and Darryl Westmoreland.
- My additional thanks to Ron Hegg for oversight of our website and eblasts, and Pastor Sam for managing our social media presence. In the coming year we hope to build a new computer system to run our complex tech needs.

Pacifica Synod and Interfaith

- Vicar Keegan Chin-Cheleden, began her internship with us on Aug. 6th. Bethlehem is so well suited to train an intern and Vicar Keegan has provided us a unique opportunity to do so. Her ministry among us is a gift.
- I continue to serve as the RAB for the Pacific Synod, serving in mobility for the San Diego area and leadership in planning for 4 regional gatherings and the synod Azoombly. A re-evaluation of the time required, means that I am no longer the candidacy coordinator for the synod, that role is currently in the capable hands of Pastor Cate Luehr.
- I attend the Pacifica Synod dean's meeting, RAB, and synod staff meetings, as well as the Harvest Conference. I also regularly attend SDIMA, the North County Clergy group, and serve on the resolutions committee for the synod.
- We are now hosting Congregation B'nai Tikvah, under the leadership of Cantor Larry Kornit. I attended Yom Kippur services with the congregation and Cantor Larry and I are in regular conversation about shared ministry. What a blessing to house an interfaith ministry at Bethlehem.
- I attended Theosis, Synod Assembly, an A2B national gathering, and anti-bias training with the synod.

Staff

- My thanks to the incredible staff of this congregation for their collegiality, faithfulness, and abundant gifts for ministry: Deacon Mindy Bugaj, Jana Hegg, Judy Foland, Karen Wise, Laure Reynolds, Molly Hall, Rose Moldenhauer, Debi Carr, Kelly Perez, Mona Goetsch, Judy Collier, Natasha Riobova, and Mark Weed. What a gift.
- My thanks to Pastor Sam Nelson for the partnership we share and for his excellence in ministry. I value his humor and kindness and the seamless working relationship he and I share.

Final thoughts

As we begin 2024 we do so, not knowing where we go, but knowing that God's hand is leading us and God's grace supporting us. In this divisive world, we are called by the Holy Spirit to live differently, to carry the light we have been given and to bless the world, not as individuals, but as a community called to care for one another and for the world God loves. My gratitude for the blessings in the year past, and for our shared commitment to all that is to come. It is an honor to serve as your pastor.

In Christ, Pastor Laura Ziehl

Associate Pastor's Annual Report 2023

"Be curious, not judgmental." ~ Ted Lasso / Marguerite Shearer (not Walt Witman, believe it or not!)

"God is not obsessed with uniformity. God does not desire uniformity, but unity. Unity is diversity embraced by an infinitely generous love." ~ Richard Rohr (as quoted in *I Think You're Wrong, But I'm Listening: A Guide to Grace-Filled Political Conversations* by Sarah Steward Holland and Beth A. Silvers)

As many of you know, one of my main goals for 2023 was to clean out and organize the physical storage spaces on our campus. With the help of some amazing members, we Marie Kondo-ed (to the best of our ability) the sanctuary attic, Family Center storage closet, youth shed, sacristy, office supply closet, Multi Use storage closet, and two of the preschool attic spaces. In addition to this being a practical endeavor, there was also a deeply sacred aspect to that process of organizing and purging. It afforded us the opportunity to look at who we were, who we are, and who we hope to be. To honor and hold memories from the past and reclaim/reinvent them in the here and now, or to release them in loving gratitude. It required courage, honesty, curiosity, and openness to simultaneously hold our past, present, and future in tension with one another, and I believe that it puts us in a wonderful position to move into 2024 ready for whatever God has in store for us. Below is just a snapshot of some of the non-organizational/purging ministry work that we were able to do in the past year.

Worship

- We continued to offer two worship services at 9 & 10:30 am with indoor/outdoor seating and livestream.
- Thank you to the worship tech team (Marian Singletary, Darrel Westmoreland, Will Mather, Aaron Criner, Suzi Westmoreland, and Ron Hegg) for their work providing livestream and sound support.
- Like last year, our midweek Lenten gatherings included Holden Evening Prayer and adult education, but for the first time since Covid, we were able to bring back the soup suppers which was truly a joy.
- Holy Week services included Maundy Thursday with the return of foot-washing/hand-washing, Good Friday with the return of prayer stations, Easter Vigil, and Easter Sunday (services were held both indoors and outdoors but we do not plan to repeat the outdoor services).
- Special Events included VBS Sunday, multi-lingual Pentecost worship, high school senior blessing, teacher appreciation Sunday, two hymn request Sundays, installations for Deacon Mindy and Vicar Keegan, Pastor Emily's ordination, All Saints interactive worship art, *A Christmas Carol* by Jamie Newcomb and Ursula Meyer, the Comfort at Christmas service, and the return of the Children's Christmas Program.
- Christmas Eve had four services (Candlelit – 10 am, 7 & 9 pm; Children's – 4:30 pm)
- I created a worship decoration document that details how to set up and decorate for each liturgical season including in-depth instructions (with pictures!) for Holy Week and Advent/Christmas.
- I continued my production of the weekly bulletins.

Education

- Confirmation – Pastor Laura and I taught confirmation classes for the beginning of 2023, and we were thrilled to have Deacon Mindy join us in September for the start of the new class. We have begun a new curriculum that is working quite well for our current configuration. The 2023 confirmation class was small but mighty with one confirmand.
- *A New Family: Opening the Doors of the Church* – During Lent we had discussions around a 5-part film series featuring theologian Rachel Held Evans that yielded lively conversation and deepening of relationships.
- *I Think You're Wrong, But I'm Listening – A Guide to Grace-Filled Political Conversations* – Pastor Laura and I led a book discussion group about bridging the political divide and engaging in conversations with people of different beliefs and perspectives. Over 50 people participated in the class. The depth of discussion, as well as the vulnerability that people displayed, and the eagerness for something better than what we have right now in our society, was truly inspiring.

Continuing Education

- *Stewardship Kaleidoscope Conference* – Virtual conference on stewardship.
- *Theoasis: Bound by Grace, Bound by Race: What Does This Mean?* – Synod led professional development conference.

- *A Spirituality of Fundraising: For Those Who Give & Raise Funds* – Webinar by the Henri Nouwen Society.
- *Beat Church Burnout* – Webinar for church leaders put on by Share the Struggle.

Youth and Family Ministry

- Pastor Laura, Jana, and I taught a first communion class.
- I led the Imagination Station for VBS this year, along with doing the opening skits with Rachel Line.
- I participated in the search team tasked with hiring our new youth director Mindy Bugaj and I could not be more thrilled to be working with her. We are so thankful for the new ideas and passions that she brings, as well as for her experience, warmth, and wisdom. She is a wonderful addition to the team!

Technology

- One of the other main goals I had for 2023 was to increase our social media and general online presence.
- *Instagram* – I launched the BLC Instagram Account which now has 40 shared posts, and 117 followers.
- *Facebook* – I revamped the BLC Facebook page with new pictures and information.
- *Google Photos* – I created a new BLC Google Photos account to help save important pictures from different moments in the life of the congregation.
- *Website* – Thank you to Ron Hegg and Chris LaClair for their work in helping to reorganize the website. We have made a concerted effort to keep it updated with new pictures and the event graphics that I create.
- We made a push to increase the number of reviews on Google, Facebook, and Yelp, and we were selected as one of the best reviewed “businesses” by Yelp for 2023.

Stewardship

- This year’s stewardship emphasis – Indefatigable Hope – in addition to containing an excellent vocabulary word to add to our repertoire, truly reflects both the people of this congregation, as well as the kind of hope that the faith we share provides us with.
- Thanks to the stewardship committee (Dick Dubois, Carolin Meinhardt, & Mark Stauffer) for their amazing work both on the emphasis, and in their year-round efforts.
- *ERC* – Thanks to the decision that the congregation made to tithe \$40,000 of the Employee Retention Credit (ERC) funds that were received, Pastor Laura and I had the wonderful joy and privilege to deliver checks to three very deserving organizations. Each was a unique and joy-filled experience where the Holy Spirit’s presence was truly palpable. It was an incredible opportunity for us as a congregation to collectively live out the commitment to stewardship that we endeavor to practice on an individual basis.

Interfaith and Ecumenical Work

- Regularly participated in the San Dieguito Interfaith Ministerial Association (SDIMA) monthly meetings, and gave the land acknowledgement for the Circle of Gratitude Thanksgiving Worship Service.
- Participated in monthly meetings of the North County Clergy Group and attended the group’s Night of Prayer for Christian Unity.

Congregational Life

- *Pastoral Internship* – Keegan Cheleden began a part-time year-long internship with Bethlehem, in conjunction with a full-time internship with the San Diego VA. Keegan’s involvement at Bethlehem will help her experience in congregational leadership and will be focused on the areas of worship and preaching, church finances, church administration and leadership, and pastoral care. She is a wonderful addition to the leadership team and this time has already been filled with mutual learning and growth.
- *New Members* – We welcomed 22 new members to the congregation in November.
- *Music Ministry* – We had an amazing summer concert in June, and a packed house for the Christmas concert in December. Kim Froke retired after many years of dedicated service to our congregation, and we sent him with our love and blessings (and an open invitation to come back and sub anytime). Mark Weed took on his new role as director of the JuBellation Ringers and created the Band of Bethlehem (BoB) of which I am a proud member. We hired Natasha Riabova as our new choir accompanist and part time Sunday morning organist, a role she shares with the incredible Judy Collier. Thank you to all those who share their musical gifts and talents with the congregation, and especially to Mona Goetsch for her tireless dedication to the music ministry here at Bethlehem.

- *Trailblazer: Lighting the Path for Transgender Equality in Corporate America* – local author and activist in the LGBTQIA+ community Mary Ann Horton gave a presentation and promoted her book.
- *SD Pride* – BLC joined with other San Diego area Lutheran congregations to march in the SD Pride parade.
- *Bethlehem Serves* - We had 111 participants and 11 different projects both on and off campus.
- *Emily Baynton' Ordination* – Emily's ordination on October 7th was an occasion of great joy, especially since she grew up in this congregation; I know she will do wonderful things during the course of her life in ministry.
- *Oktoberfest* – We held our first Oktoberfest since Covid and had a wonderful time.
- *Christmas on the Coast: Come to Bethlehem and Sea* – Christmas market and crafting/food event.
- *Men of Bethlehem (MOB)* – Events included work parties, meals, a cornhole night, and a joint trivia night with the Women of Welcome (WOW).
- *Adventure Ministry (BAM)* – Events included kayaking in Mission Bay, a Cardiff bike ride, and others.
- *E4E Tutoring Program* – Bethlehem opened our doors to a tutoring program for students in our neighborhood and will be working with the leadership in the coming year as we vision where the program is headed.
- *Congregation B'nai Tikvah* – Bethlehem welcomed a new Jewish worshipping community into our space.
- *Weddings, Baptisms, and Funerals* – I officiated two weddings, performed six baptisms, and helped with four remembrance of life celebrations.

Property

- Installed new mini-split HVAC system in the Family Center.
- Installed a new trench drain behind the family center – this was done for only the cost of materials. All labor was donated by Pastor Carlos and members of the Spanish-speaking congregation that we host which saved us a considerable amount of money, and we are incredibly grateful to their generosity and stewardship.
- Installed new countertops in the sanctuary kitchen and multi-use bathroom.
- Installed outlet drain for Lake Bethlehem and inspected/performed maintenance on other drain lines.
- Our water system, including all of the fixtures, was tested for lead content, and passed the newest state requirements.
- Contracted with Stellar Solar to install solar panels on the sanctuary roof. The total cost of the project is \$136,937 to be paid from the following funding sources: ERC - \$50,000; Donations - \$44,607; Accrued Interest on Restricted Accounts - \$10,452; Operating Account - \$31,878. We anticipate a 30% refund (\$41,081) to come back in 12 – 18 months' time.
- Commissioned 3 mosaic panels to be hung above our new columbarium from local artist Jane Wheeler and are in talks with our new architect to finalize designs and estimate costs. Currently ~27 niches have either been purchased or reserved.
- Thanks to all the volunteers who have helped with maintenance projects this past year especially Dennis Astroth, Rusty Powell, Roger Jordheim, Karl von Schlieder, Carl Johnson, and Tom Wolf.

Concluding Remarks

The two quotes that I began this report with speak directly to the lessons that were learned during our adult education class about grace-filled political conversations. In a world that continues to feel increasingly divided and polarized, as Christians we have a spiritual imperative to live in a different way. We have a calling to embody curiosity, open-mindedness, and open-heartedness. We must endeavor to choose grace whenever possible. Not only in our interactions with others, but in regards to how we treat ourselves as well. Increasingly, the word Christian is becoming somewhat of a dirty word, being associated with worldviews and perspectives that look nothing like what goes on in this congregation on a Sunday morning (or the rest of the week for that matter). As beloved children of God, it's our job to provide a counter-example; to be beacons of God's love, grace, and welcome in the world around us. And that is one of the things that the people of this congregation are best at. I am so proud to call myself a member of this community. To see the ways that you all embody the grace of God here at Bethlehem, as well as out in the world. And I cannot wait to see the amazing ways that we spread God's love in the year to come.

Bethlehem Nominating Committee

2023 Annual Report

Congregational Council

Twelve members of the congregation and our Pastors comprise the Congregational Council of Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Encinitas CA. Their terms are staggered to maintain continuity in the experience and work of the Council. Typically, three to four members join the Council each year to replace departing members. A youth member is also chosen in consultation with the Pastors and Youth Director. The youth representative serves on the Council for a one-year term.

The recommendations of the 2023 Nominating Committee are:

1. These members will continue to serve on Council:
 - a. Through 2024: Julie Draskovic, Karen Olsen, and Wes Westlake
 - b. Through 2025: Melanie Hunter, Mark Reynolds, Art Schmidt, and Audrey Weed.
2. The following nominated members will begin to serve a three-year term on the Council:
 - a. Through 2026: Lisa Adlam, Aaron Criner, Linda Inskeep, and Jessica Oien.
3. The nominated youth member of the Council is Emily Higginbotham.
4. We thank the following departing Council members for their service:
 - a. Steve Fritsch
 - b. Jana Hegg
 - c. George Orness
 - d. Solimar Schmidt
 - e. Tricia Storey

2024 Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee is also charged with filling next year's Nominating Committee, which will propose church members interested in serving the Congregational Council starting in 2025. The following members have agreed to serve on the 2024 Nominating Committee: Steve Fritsch, Dan Halvorson, Jana Hegg, Carolin Meinhart, George Orness, and Tricia Storey.

Respectfully submitted,

2023 Nominating Committee

Suzi Westmoreland, Chair

Bethlehem Lutheran Church Mission Endowment Fund

Annual Report for 2023

Background

The Mission Endowment Fund (Fund) was established to further the work of God by supporting and expanding the ministry of Bethlehem Lutheran Church (Bethlehem or the Church). The Fund exists to receive gifts from members and others, invest and manage those gifts, and disperse a portion of the fund in support of the Fund's purpose.

The purpose of the Fund is to complement and supplement the mission of Bethlehem through grants that enhance the ongoing ministry of the congregation or develop new ministries. While the congregation is expected to meet the Church's operating budget with regular giving, the Fund offers another channel through which members can support ongoing ministries as well as encourage the development of new ministries. Members are encouraged to submit a grant application (see the Church's website blcenc.org/contribute/endowment for consideration of a grant. The Fund is not intended to be used for the Church's annual operating budget or for capital improvements or land acquisition.

Assets of the Fund are invested with Thrivent Charitable Impact & Investing, an affiliate of Thrivent Financial, a Fortune 500 holistic financial services organization. Investment gains accrue in the Fund while investment losses and administrative fees reduce the value of the Fund, as do grants made with the approval of the Mission Endowment Fund Committee (Committee) and the Congregation Council.

2023 Activity

The Fund bylaws, as amended, govern the amount of the Fund that is available to be granted (or expended). In summary, annual expendable funds include net earnings of the Fund plus up to 5% of assets, excluding those which carry restrictions.

The Mission Endowment Fund Committee was pleased to receive and approve the following grant requests during 2023:

- \$3,400 to support the Youth Trip in light of limited fundraising opportunities.
- \$6,000 scholarships (total) for two students in the Bethlehem Part-Day Preschool program with financial need.
- \$4,769 seminary expenses for Keegan Cheleden.

The Committee is thrilled to be able to put these monies to work for the glory of God through these various ministries that are complementary to Bethlehem's mission. To date, the Fund has made grants of almost \$120,000!

2023 Financial Information

There are two funds in the Fund: the General Fund, which holds funds that were received without use restrictions; and the Bill and Patty Harman Vision Fund, which supports initiatives as identified by the current pastor of Bethlehem.

Below is a summary of the activity, performance and balances of the Fund from December 31, 2022 to November 30, 2023 - the most recent statement received before assembly of this annual report.

Mission Endowment Fund activity 11 months ended November 30, 2023:						
	Balances 12/31/2022	Contri- butions	Grants	Investment Performance (net of fees)	Balances 11/30/2023	
General Fund	\$ 409,137	\$ -	\$ (14,169)	\$ 18,367	\$ 413,334	
Harman Fund	\$ 11,265	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 505	\$ 11,770	
Totals	<u>\$ 420,402</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ (14,169)</u>	<u>\$ 18,872</u>	<u>\$ 425,105</u>	

The Fund's assets are invested in the Thrivent Charitable Core Growth fund, a broad-based managed fund; the Mission Growth fund, which aims to support positive social and/or environmental change; and the WomenInvest fund, which invests partially in companies that do well when women do well. As an endowment fund, the investments are made with a long-

term horizon. In addition, a small portion of the endowment fund may be allocated to an investment vehicle protected from the ups and downs of financial markets, to ensure that when grants are made, the money for them will be easily available. A financial recap by investment is below:

Thrivent Charitable account information as of November 30, 2023:									
						Year-to-date Return			Balances 11/30/2023
						8.4%			\$ 214,155
						6.8%			\$ 100,248
						11.6%			\$ 110,702
									\$ 425,105

Committee Leadership

The members of the Mission Endowment Fund Committee for 2023 included: Dan Halvorson, Beth Nelson, Karen Saake, and Mark Stauffer.

Appointment of Committee members requires approval by the Council and by a majority vote of the congregation at its annual meeting. The following new members have been approved by the Council to serve terms beginning January 2024:

- Steve Fritsch to serve a one-year term to fill a vacancy.
- Carole Orness to serve a two-year term.
- Continuing member Beth Nelson to serve a two-year term.
- Continuing member Karen Saake to serve a two-year term.

With profound gratitude, we recognize that Dan Halvorson has completed his third and final consecutive term on the Committee. We are so grateful for Dan's thoughtfulness and service during his tenure. THANK YOU, DAN!

2023 BLC Treasurer's Report

As a result of the faithfulness and generosity of the people of Bethlehem, 2023 was a financially strong year. Though the budget approved at last year's Annual Meeting was balanced, our actual income exceeded expenses by \$41,861 in 2023. What a blessing to our mission in our communities.

2023 Financial Report

The following summarizes the church's 2023 financial results vs. the budget:

2023 Actual vs Budget		2023 Actual	2023 Budget	Favorable / (Unfavorable)	%
1]	Offerings	\$ 690,048	\$ 658,752	\$ 31,296	5%
2]	Other Income	8,425	4,300	4,125	96%
*	Shared cost reimbursement	197,964	197,960	4	0%
	Income	\$ 896,437	\$ 861,012	\$ 35,425	4%
3]	Staffing	463,294	472,212	8,918	2%
*	Music	14,229	16,200	1,971	12%
*	Education / Library	3,717	6,550	2,833	43%
*	Youth Ministry	2,936	5,300	2,364	45%
*	Worship	4,280	6,725	2,445	36%
*	Outreach	55,517	55,452	(65)	0%
*	Office / Administrative	37,193	38,500	1,307	3%
4]	Property and Maintenance	116,969	110,828	(6,141)	-6%
5]	Mortgage, Utilities, Insurance, other	156,441	149,245	(7,196)	-5%
	Total Expense	\$ 854,576	\$ 861,012	\$ 6,436	1%
	Net surplus	\$ 41,861	\$ -	\$ 41,861	N/M
1]	Significantly favorable offerings due to large special offerings, new members, and faithful fulfillment of pledges.				
2]	Includes unplanned outside use of facilities.				
3]	Staffing is under budget due to Deacon Mindy hiring later than budgeted.				
4]	Significant Family Center repairs early in 2023 resulted in over budget.				
5]	Utilities was the largest contributor to the budget overage.				
*	Relatively minor, mostly favorable differences vs. budget. Overall, expense budget favorable by \$6,436.				

For additional context, below are the church's financial results for the past 4 years.

		2020 Actual	2021 Actual	2022 Actual	2023 Actual
Offerings		\$ 639,857	\$ 648,817	\$ 671,635	\$ 690,048
	Year-over-Year Change		1%	4%	3%
Other Income		3,835	4,251	4,383	8,425
Shared Cost Reimbursement		76,367	169,704	185,004	197,964
Excess Carryover		6,000	-	-	-
Forgiven PPP Loan		93,337	-	-	-
Income		\$ 819,396	\$ 822,772	\$ 861,022	\$ 896,437
Staffing		438,752	453,941	484,293	463,294
Music		7,557	11,900	14,238	14,229
Education / Library		886	2,308	3,122	3,717
Youth Ministry		7,018	5,874	4,789	2,936
Worship		7,781	9,569	6,103	4,280
Outreach		55,260	55,185	55,055	55,517
Office / Administrative		78,260	84,047	84,223	37,193
Property and Maintenance		108,737	112,258	102,400	116,969
Mortgage, Utilities, Insurance, other		77,522	101,341	96,314	156,441
Total Expense		\$ 781,773	\$ 836,423	\$ 850,537	\$ 854,576
	Year-over-Year Change		7%	2%	0%
Net surplus (shortfall)		\$ 37,623	\$ (13,651)	\$ 10,485	\$ 41,861

Our 2023 offerings exceeded the budget by 5% and were 3% higher than 2022. We continue to have broad stewardship participation by and generosity from our members, a key to the vitality of our congregation. Expenses were less than our 2023 budget by 1% and were approximately the same as 2022. Our staff are consistently mindful of their spending. Note that Staffing expenses were lower than expected due to the filling of the Youth Director position later than was budgeted.

2024 Budget

The Council recommends that the Congregation approve the following balanced budget for 2024.

2024 Budget vs. 2023 Actual		2024 Budget	2023 Actual	Increase / (Decrease)	%
Offerings		\$ 674,980	\$ 690,048	\$ (15,068)	-2%
Other Income		\$ 13,530	\$ 8,425	\$ 5,105	61%
Shared cost reimbursement		\$ 207,862	\$ 197,964	\$ 9,898	5%
Income		\$ 896,372	\$ 896,437	\$ (65)	0%
Staffing		\$ 511,451	\$ 463,294	\$ 48,157	10%
Music		\$ 8,400	\$ 14,229	\$ (5,829)	-41%
Education / Library		\$ 4,039	\$ 3,717	\$ 322	9%
Youth Ministry		\$ 7,529	\$ 2,936	\$ 4,593	156%
Worship		\$ 4,796	\$ 4,280	\$ 516	12%
Outreach		\$ 57,820	\$ 55,517	\$ 2,303	4%
Office / Administrative		\$ 39,112	\$ 37,193	\$ 1,919	5%
Maintenance services		\$ 85,301	\$ 81,328	\$ 3,973	5%
Other Property Expenses		\$ 31,100	\$ 35,641	\$ (4,541)	-13%
Mortgage and Utilities		\$ 96,843	\$ 108,986	\$ (12,143)	-11%
Insurance and Misc. Operating Expenses		\$ 49,981	\$ 47,455	\$ 2,526	5%
Total Expense		\$ 896,372	\$ 854,576	\$ 41,796	5%
Net Surplus (Shortfall)		\$ -	\$ 41,861	\$ (41,862)	-100%

Offerings

By its nature, developing an estimate for budgeted offerings is subjective. The Council has relied on the pledge results from this fall, consideration of membership growth and historical giving trends in developing the \$15,068 decrease in offerings.

Shared Cost Reimbursement

The preschools reimburse the church for a variety of expenses that are initially incurred by the church on behalf of the preschools (e.g., mortgage, janitorial, etc.). The preschools have agreed to a 5% increase in this reimbursement.

Expenses

Expense budgets were established in consultation with staff and volunteer project leaders. In total, expenses are budgeted to increase 5%. Generally, inflation was assumed to be 4%.

Staffing expenses reflect a significant increase for primarily 3 reasons:

- The 2024 budget includes 12 months of a Youth Minister (Deacon Mindy) vs. just 7 months actual payroll in 2023.
- Certain amounts for musicians which were included in the Music line item in 2023 are now classified as Staff for 2024.
- After due consideration, raises of 4% for staff were approved by the Council.

The Mortgage and Utilities budget decreases primarily due to solar assumed to begin providing savings as of April 1, 2024. The Other Property budget decreases due to an expectation that the significant Family Center repairs experienced in 2023 will not repeat.

All other individual Expense budget changes vs. 2023 amount to less than \$5,000.

Preschool Financial Report

The following presents the combined Full Day and Part Day Preschool 2020 through 2023 financial results and 2024 budgets.

	2020 Actual	2021 Actual	2022 Actual	2023 Actual	2024 Budget
Tuition	\$ 816,650	\$ 1,234,881	\$ 1,344,537	\$ 1,417,566	\$ 1,458,811
Year-over-Year Change		51%	9%	5%	3%
Other Income	\$ 48,106	\$ 6,528	\$ 55	\$ 20,387	\$ 23,000
Forgiven PPP Loan	\$ 173,782	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Income	\$ 1,038,538	\$ 1,241,410	\$ 1,344,592	\$ 1,437,953	\$ 1,481,811
Staffing	\$ 906,234	\$ 924,794	\$ 973,076	\$ 1,061,236	\$ 1,100,031
Direct Costs	\$ 62,306	\$ 53,972	\$ 56,024	\$ 78,536	\$ 72,628
Shared Costs	\$ 76,367	\$ 169,704	\$ 185,004	\$ 197,964	\$ 207,862
Total Expense	\$ 1,044,907	\$ 1,148,470	\$ 1,214,104	\$ 1,337,736	\$ 1,380,521
Year-over-Year Change		10%	6%	10%	3%
Net Surplus/(Shortfall)	\$ (6,369)	\$ 92,940	\$ 130,488	\$ 100,217	\$ 101,290

BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH

2023 PASTORAL ACTS

Baptisms = 11
Confirmations = 1
Funerals = 2

2022 – 2023 STATISTICAL SUMMARY

Membership at the end of 2022
Baptized (Includes Children) = 849
Confirmed (Teenage & Adult) = 514

Baptized Members received in 2023 = 36
By Transfer, Affirmation & Restoration = 25
By Baptism = 11

Baptized Members removed in 2023 = 22
By Death = 3
By Transfer = 1
Inactive/Removed/Moved = 18

Confirmed Members received in 2023 = 19
By Transfer, Affirmation & Restoration = 18
By Baptism = 0
Confirmed = 1

Confirmed Members removed in 2023 = 22
By Death = 3
By Transfer = 1
Inactive/Removed/Moved = 18

Membership at the end of 2023
Baptized (Includes Children) = 863
Confirmed (Teenage & Adult) = 511

PLEDGE/ESTIMATE REPORT FOR 2024

<u>CATEGORY/AMOUNT OF PLEDGE PER YEAR</u>	<u>NUMBER OF FAMILY UNITS</u>
AS ABLE	2
ESTIMATE	4
\$0.01 - \$500.00	8
\$501.00 - \$2,000.00	21
\$2,001.00 - \$5,000.00	36
\$5,001.00 - \$10,000.00	19
\$10,001.00 - \$20,000.00	14

TOTAL FAMILY UNITS PLEDGE/ESTIMATE GIVEN FOR 2024 = 104

TOTAL FAMILY UNITS CURRENTLY MEMBERS OF BETHLEHEM = 241

PLEDGE/ESTIMATE REPORT FOR 2023

<u>CATEGORY/AMOUNT OF PLEDGE PER YEAR</u>	<u>NUMBER OF FAMILY UNITS</u>
AS ABLE	4
ESTIMATE	3
\$0.01 - \$500.00	6
\$501.00 - \$2,000.00	23
\$2,001.00 - \$5,000.00	29
\$5,001.00 - \$10,000.00	21
\$10,001.00 - \$20,000.00	12

TOTAL FAMILY UNITS PLEDGE/ESTIMATE GIVEN FOR 2023 = 94

TOTAL FAMILY UNITS CURRENTLY MEMBERS OF BETHLEHEM = 234

JANUARY 2023

Bethlehem Lutheran Church Encinitas
Council President's Report
January 21, 2024

Dear Fellow Members of Bethlehem:

It has been an honor to serve Bethlehem as Council President. Serving as Council President has been such a rewarding experience. I thank you for the opportunity to have served our congregation in this role.

After serving the prior two years on Council during Covid, it was great to get back to normal. This year was the first year since Covid that the Council had in-person meetings. Being able to meet in-person again was such a positive for this Council and we were able to accomplish so much. Let me share some of the highlights from this past year.

- **New Council Members.** We welcomed Melanie Hunter, Mark Reynolds, Audrey Weed, Art Schmidt and Solimar Schmidt (youth member) to the Council. We are thankful for their wisdom and service and look forward to their assistance for the next three years.
- **Council Retreat.** The year started off with our Council retreat. It was the first retreat during my 3-year term that was not on Zoom. It was a great opportunity for the Council to meet the new members and discuss what was in store for the upcoming year.
- **ERC, ERC, ERC.** Bethlehem was blessed to receive approximately \$429,000 from the Employee Retention Credit (ERC). This Council was tasked with how to allocate the ERC funds. There was much time and thought by Council discussing how these funds should be allocated and after months of discussion and input received, the Council decided on how we believed the ERC funds should be allocated. The Council held two separate forums (one in person and one via Zoom) in August for the congregation regarding the ERC allocation. At the Congregational Meeting in October, a motion was passed to allocate the ERC funds as follows:
 - 1) \$40,000 Tithe split between the Community Resource Center, ELCA Pacifica Synod Anti-racism focus, and the North County LGBTQ Resource Center;
 - 2) \$140,000 for repairs to Family Center and Eco-Narthex;
 - 3) \$200,000 for pastoral housing; and
 - 4) \$50,000 for solar panels.
- **Youth Ministry Director.** In May, the Council affirmed to extend a call to Deacon Mindy Bugaj for the Youth Ministry Director, and we were very excited that she accepted the call. In June the congregation approved to call her. She has done such a wonderful job in her short time as Youth Ministry Director. Our youth are in good hands.
- Thanks to the requests from the Endowment Committee, we were able to provide:
 - 1) Preschool scholarships for two families; and
 - 2) Payment of internship expenses for Keegan Cheleden.

Bethlehem Lutheran Church Encinitas
Council President's Report
January 21, 2024

- Maintenance of the campus is always an on-going issue and some of the maintenance that occurred was for the preschool playground, drain connection for the sanctuary and parking lot lights.
- The Council approved the opening/transfer of deposit accounts to increase the interest Bethlehem receives. This has been a financially prudent and beneficial action as Bethlehem is receiving increased monthly interest.
- **Columbarium.** The Council approved to use Simbiotek Design Lab and approved the documents to be used to purchase a niche in the Columbarium. The Columbarium is going to be a beautiful and wonderful addition to Bethlehem.
- **Parental Leave Policy.** The Council approved to amend the Parental Leave Policy to increase paid parental leave of a rostered leader to 12 weeks.
- The Council approved the revised Welcome Statement for Bethlehem.

As we welcomed new council members, we also must say goodbye to our departing council members who have completed their terms: Jana Hegg, George Orness, Tricia Storey, and Solimar Schmidt. Thank you for your hard work, dedication, and service. You all will be missed, and you all should be proud of a job well done.

I would also like to thank all my fellow council members for their hard work and faithful attendance. Their input and thoughtful discussions on whatever issues were put in front of them were invaluable. I could not have asked for a more dedicated and hardworking group.

Additionally, I would like to thank the entire Bethlehem staff for their hard work and dedication. Without such a great staff, Bethlehem would not be the wonderful place we know and love. Next time you run into a staff member, be sure to thank them for their hard work. I also would like to thank our subcommittees on various projects for their knowledge and input. Specifically, I would like to thank Mark Stauffer, Suzi Westmoreland and Dennis Astroth for your wisdom and guidance.

And lastly, thank you to Pastor Laura and Pastor Sam for their continual leadership. Being on Council and as President I had the pleasure to work closely with the pastors and experience how much time and dedication they give to Bethlehem and see the immense care and love they have for the congregation. We are truly blessed to have them.

Grace and peace,

Steven L. Fritsch

BETHLEHEM COMMUNITY EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

2023

It's the goal of Bethlehem's Early Childhood programs to provide a safe, nurturing environment for the children and families we serve. We strive to create a program in which children grow both socially and emotional in a positive Christian environment. Where they can learn the skills they will need to be productive member of the community.

We can report that both programs, as of January 2024, are operating at capacity with wait lists for the coming school year. We were able to make improvements to the Family Center for the part day program. Which included replacing the heating and air-conditioning system, fixed the drainage problem on the back patio area as well as new shade covers on both the front of the Family Center and the playground. We purchased new large wooden blocks as well as other playground equipment. This and other improvement have helped to keep Bethlehem Community Early Childhood Center one of the top pre-school programs in the area.

We are grateful for the wonderful partnership with the church in helping the pre-school programs. It is a blessing for the community and all the young lives that Bethlehem has touched. We look forward to continuing our mission with Bethlehem Lutheran Church to remain dedicated to the joyful discovery of each child's innate capabilities and potential. The programs and the church, in partnership, inspires and nurtures children to become global citizens, all people everywhere, and the earth itself.

Debi Carr, Kelly Perez

Program Directors

Annual Report Youth Ministry 2023

The youth of Bethlehem are involved and committed to serving, learning, and growing in community. The youth are present and active in worship, youth meetings, retreats, and service trips. This is a direct reflection of the inclusive environment of Bethlehem. I am so grateful to have been called to serving in this joyful ministry. In the last six months, youth learned a lot and experienced much joy.

Our high school students met weekly on Wednesday evenings for service and fellowship with a special emphasis on exploring how their faith can guide and support them daily in this ever changing world. The summer meetings included middle school youth and were held at the beach. The annual summer service trip included 13 high school students and four adult leaders. We can all be very grateful to Chris LaClair, Cynthia Heigold, and Chacha Pinilla who gave of their time and talents to accompany the students for the week. We traveled to Las Cruces, NM to participate in a week-long border immersion program. A lot was learned from the broad exposure to various perspectives on the issues surrounding immigration to the US.

In September, the new middle school group began meeting twice each month. The 6th-8th grade students join together to grow their relationships with one another and with Jesus. They have fun, serve, and learn as a community of faith.

Confirmation classes began in September under the direction of Pastor Laura and Pastor Sam. It is a privilege for me to team with them in teaching the students. In October, Luka Draskovic was confirmed during a service that included the participation of all the current confirmation students. It was a joyful expression of the faith of our young people.

On a personal note, I am so very grateful for the welcome and support the people of Bethlehem Lutheran have extended to me in my role as Director of Youth Ministry. I am looking forward to seeing what the new year brings for the youth and families of this wonderful congregation.

Deacon Mindy Bugaj

Bethlehem Lutheran Church Children's Ministry

Annual Report 2023

2023 was a year of rebuilding for the Children's Ministry program at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, as we had a change in leadership and a significant need to revitalize the program coming out of the COVID pandemic years.

We started out the year with some very exciting news when we found out that we had been awarded the Pacifica Synod Warner Grant in the amount of \$1000. The purpose of this grant was specifically targeted at the "building" needs for Sunday School programs. With the idea of "building" in mind, we have used these funds to rebuild our children's ministry program, focusing more on a multi-aged/peer-buddy concept versus a traditional grade level program. The Warner Grant funds have been used as follows:

- Purchase of Spark All Kids multi-aged curriculum
- Purchase of new Spark Story Bibles for kids to be able to read stories together
- Purchase of musical instruments to be used during our monthly Music with Mona
- Updated supplies after the current supply closet was cleaned out and organized
- Family Game Night
- Easter Egg Hunt supplies
- First Communion Class and Lunch

Our Learning Circle continues to meet weekly during the 10:30 service and we want to say thank you to the following amazing teachers who have volunteered their time to support this program: Tricia Story, Audrey and Sarah Weed, Laura Johnson, Kelly and Noa Simcoe, Mona Goetsch, Audra Yanda.

We had an out of this world experience this past summer during our very successful Stellar VBS, which was space themed. We had 50 children, ages 3 through 6th grade from our congregation, preschool and community in attendance. We had over 25 volunteers each day helping with our rotations of Bible stories, Games, Imagination Station, Music and Snacks. It was a fantastic week of fellowship with our community and we are looking forward to our Scuba Adventures in June of 2024.

Bethlehem has also established a new partnership with an after-school tutoring program through Encinitas for Equality, and we are excited to be working with this group to provide tutoring services to children in our community three days per week. They are also using the Bethlehem Library, which has been amazingly cleaned out and organized by Sally von Zirngibl, to provide reading material to their students. We just found out that we have been awarded the Matthew 25 Grant from the Pacifica Synod and the purpose of this grant is to help support outreach within the community. We will be using the \$1000 award to help support the after-school tutoring program, provide school supplies to students in need and make some updates to the library.

We ended our year with a great Intergenerational Christmas Program on Dec. 17th. Our children did such a great job sharing the Christmas Story in action, word and song and the congregation did a great job with their "acting" parts as well. It was so heart warming to feel the true spirit of Christmas in the sanctuary that day as baby Cleo and her parents took their place in the nativity scene and our children gathered around them in awe and wonder. I look forward to continuing to build on this as we work together to share the love of God with our most precious children.

Respectfully Submitted by,

Jana Hegg, Children's Ministry Director

BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH MUSIC ANNUAL REPORT 2023

*All the music sung and played here is a gift, O God, from you.
For as long as we have prayed here, we've been blessed by music, too.
By your Spirit, each musician finds new depths of faith to share.
Music is a gift you've given and becomes our thankful prayer.*

We have been blessed by talented music leadership at Bethlehem Lutheran for many years. However, this year our longtime organist, accompanist and handbell director, Kim Froke, retired in June. Although we will miss Kim, God blessed us by providing excellent replacements for these positions. In September, the church hired Natasha Ribova as part time organist and choir accompanist for the Good News Singers. Mark Weed became the new director of the JuBellation Ringers and continued as director of the instrumental ensemble Band of Bethlehem. Judy Collier continued as part time organist and accompanist for Second Sabbath and the World Music Ensemble. Marilyn Stenoien continued to lead the Second Sabbath and Mona Goetsch continued directing the Good News Singers and Children's Choir. Thank you each for your talent and leadership this year!

Bethlehem is blessed to have so many people who want to participate through music. Second Sabbath and the World Music Ensemble provide opportunities to sing contemporary Christian and music from other countries. The Band of Bethlehem has become an established ensemble for our instrumental musicians. Special thanks goes to the members of the Good News Singers, JuBellation Ringers and Children's choir who continue to attend weekly practices. All have produced beautiful musical moments during our Sunday morning worship services and concerts at Christmas and the Spring. We thank you for your dedication.

We are blessed to have cantors who lead weekly services and often provide special music as the offering of our gifts and ourselves. Their leadership in person and online is invaluable for congregational singing. Thank you for sharing your talents.

Finally, we are blessed with a talented tech team. You have become essential in today's worship services. Your technical expertise makes all these groups sound their best every time we perform. Thank you Darryl Westmoreland, Ron Hegg, Marian Singletary, Will Mather, Aaron Criner and Suzie Westmoreland for your weekly service.

*Bless the talents we are bringing, for we offer you our best.
If our gifts are not in singing, may our joyful noise be blest.
If our world is ever silent, may we sign to you above.
Touched by grace, may each one present offer back your song of love.*

*Tune: Nettleton 87.87 D "Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing" Wyeth's Repository of Sacred Music, 1813.
Words: Copyright ©2000 Carolyn Winfrey Gillette. All rights reserved.*

Mona Goetsch, Bethlehem Director of Music



The Stephen Ministers of Bethlehem Lutheran Church are lay volunteers who have been trained to provide high-quality, confidential care and support to people who are facing changes in their lives. We provide support to members of the Bethlehem congregation as well as members of the community.

In 2023:

- We had 11 active Stephen Ministers, three who served as Stephen Leaders.
- Our Stephen Ministers made 187 contacts with care receivers and provided 57 hours of care to individual care receivers.
- Our Grief Ministry program provided 24 Stephen Ministry Grief Series books to members of the congregation.
- Our Stephen Ministers met twice monthly for Supervision and Continuing Education. Continuing Ed topics this year included hope and prayer, healing prayer, San Diego County mental health emergency resources, and grief ministry. We studied the book *Coping With Your Difficult Older Parent*, by Grace Lebow and Barbara Kane. Topics include self-centered behaviors, controlling personalities, self-abuse, and depression. We also participated in a guest presentation from Voices For Children.
- Stephen Ministers assisted in funeral services and the Comfort at Christmas service.
- Stephen Leaders participated regularly in the Bethlehem Health Ministry team.
- Stephen Leaders participated in several continuing education training classes from Stephen Ministries in St. Louis as well as training by the National Alliance on Mental Illness on San Diego mental health resources, by the San Diego Domestic Violence Council on childhood trauma and on supporting families with autism, and by the San Diego Suicide Prevention Council on mental health resiliency.

Thank you for your continued support of the Stephen Ministry program.

Laure Reynolds

Stephen Ministry Team Coordinator

Parish Nurse Health Ministry 2023

As Parish Nurse for Bethlehem's parishioners I make home visits, do health checks, advise and accompany parishioners to doctor appointments, provide health information, resources and referrals and answer health questions.

I assist with funerals and church programs.

I work closely with the pastors and Stephen Ministry to make sure our parishioner's needs are taken care of.

We administer the Bethlehem Cares Fund which provides our parishioners who are in need of financial assistance such as bills, groceries, medical needs.

A CPR first aid class will be scheduled for April.

Thank You, Rose Moldenhauer, RN

BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH

MISSION STATEMENT

**The mission of Bethlehem Lutheran Church
is to announce boldly the love of God through Christ.**

We do this because we are:

- *Included through baptism**
- *Nourished by Word and Sacrament**
- *Rooted in the Gospel**

We do this by:

- *Celebrating our faith in worship**
- *Listening and responding to needs and concerns**
- *Including children and youth in all aspects of our ministry**
- *Applying our faith in loving, caring actions in our community and throughout the world**

VISION STATEMENT

We see Worship as a means by which we are continually called and drawn into renewed relationship with God through Christ.

We are called by God through Baptism and reach out through Word and Sacrament-centered worship. We believe that through worship we experience anew the healing power of the Gospel in our lives and God's redeeming love for our broken world. We acknowledge God's abiding grace with prayer, praise and thanksgiving for all that God has done for us, most especially the gift of salvation through God's son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We are sustained and nourished by the Holy Spirit. We encourage our pastors to boldly preach the Gospel, keeping its message alive and meaningful to the diverse needs of our congregation and the larger community of God's people. We celebrate the Eucharist as being the real presence of Christ for all people embodying God's renewing and sustaining love and forgiveness. We value diversity of worship styles, in an environment of openness and acceptance which expresses God's love for people of every age and background.

The spiritual well-being of our members is a responsibility shared by everyone in the congregation. We provide an environment that promotes ongoing spiritual self-examination and maturity. We support each other on our faith journeys, and seek to strengthen everyone facing the challenges life brings. We are a congregation willing to take risks and to act on faith as reconcilers, care-givers and missionaries through a ministry of witness, service and evangelism.

There is a gladness in service, in reaching out to people in need, both in our community and throughout the world. We see outreach as a response to the Gospel, and believe that in touching the lives of others we make known God's love for all people. We see our congregation and our community as interdependent. We invest human and financial resources in our society, and take an active role in addressing unmet community needs.

Christian Education is essential to the life and growth of our congregation. Through education God develops an enriching relationship with us through Jesus Christ. We provide a wide range of educational programs and each person is encouraged to participate in ongoing experiences designed to be meaningful to every age.

We view stewardship as an act of worship which is a natural outgrowth of the Gospel. Stewardship is a biblical imperative, and begins with the recognition that all we have is a gift from a loving God. It involves how we use all the resources God has given us – our lives, our time and our possessions. It includes the money we give that is necessary to meet the financial needs of the congregation, its mission, and social responsibilities throughout the world. But, good stewardship goes well beyond just gifts of money. It recognizes each individual's opportunity and responsibility of daily managing God's gifts of time and talents. Growth in stewardship goes hand in hand with growth in the Gospel as stewardship is a practical expression of an individual's faith.

Our Christian Faith is encouraged through fellowship with one another. We are committed to witnessing joyfully to our Christian faith in ways that will draw others into our caring community. We encourage the formation of small groups to preserve our sense of family. We promote a sense of intimacy that facilitates that healing of brokenness. We assist one another to discover, sustain, and nurture the use of our inherent talents. We seek opportunities to gather in fellowship and are strengthened through our communion with fellow believers. We see ourselves as a center for cultural and community events.

We are called by God to go forward with courage to share the message of the Gospel. We recognize that our lives can be a living illustration of God's love in Christ. It is the privilege of our entire congregation to share the love of God in a broken world. We are willing to experience rejection in order to announce justice, peace and God's love.

COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS PAGE

**Please offer any suggestions, comments, or questions that are on your mind.
We will refer them to the appropriate leader or staff person.**

I have a question:

I have a suggestion:

I have a comment:

I have an idea: