



BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH

2020 Annual Report



WORSHIP



GROW



LIVE



CARE



SERVE

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MINUTES FROM 2019 ANNUAL MEETING

Lisa Meetze, Council Secretary

Minutes submitted by Julie Owen (secretary at the time of the meeting)

BLC Annual Congregational Meeting – 10.20.19

1. Rick Walker, Council President welcomed those in attendance and confirmed that a quorum was established
2. Meeting opened with prayer
3. Annual meeting agenda reviewed – please see powerpoint for agenda and detailed information for the annual meeting
4. **M/S/A 10.21.18 Annual Congregation meeting minutes**
5. Pastor Amy shared highlights of the Co-Pastor report included in the Annual Meeting report.
 - This year, we will be building on “a wing and a prayer” – stepping out on the edge to try something new. It is a good way to approach our ministry especially as church is changing and the life of the church is volatile. Pastor Amy referenced the trial of our Prayground as an example
 - Pastor Amy invited the congregation to imagine some of the ways that we might continue to extend welcome
 - We are a strong, vibrant and vital congregation – and it will take the work of the community to continue as that!
6. Alan Sleeman presented the 2019 Treasurer’s report – see powerpoint for details. Highlights include:
 - A review of the statement of activities for FY ending 9.23.19
 - The rental property is part of our overall financial picture, but not part of overall church operations
 - Review of restricted vs. unrestricted funds – rental property is considered unrestricted.
 - Statement of Net Assets FY 2018
 - The fixed net asset amount represents the book value of the church – NOT the market value
 - The Special Choir fund has been eliminated; the balance of the remaining funds are being used for the newly formed 100th Anniversary celebration as seed money; a portion has also been designated for the creation of a scholarship fund for music related pursuits
 - BLC Spending Plan – 2020
 - Trying to maintain the same level of receipts and spending for next year which leaves us with a deficit
 - BLC remains a strong congregation financially and we have a significant amount in unrestricted funds that could be used to offset the deficit
 - Spending typically runs well shy of the projected budgeted amount, but important to leave some cushion for unanticipated expense

- Ballots were distributed for the 2020 spending plan
 - **M/S/A to authorize BLC to spend up to \$440,960 for FY 2020 per the spending plan adopted by Council (55 Y / 2 N)**
7. A motion was put forth/seconded to authorize BLC to spend \$6937 from the 100th Anniversary fund to support the 100th Anniversary events
- Discussion: committee members can provide detail on expenditures planned for – they’ve done an admirable job.
 - **M/S/A (voice vote) to authorize BLC to spend \$6937 from the 100th Anniversary Celebration fund to support the 100th Anniversary events**
8. Synod Assembly Representatives – per BLC’s constitution, a vote of the congregation is required to appoint individuals to represent BLC at conference and synod assemblies. These individuals will serve as voting members at the annual assembly for the Upstate NY Synod
- Motion/Seconded to affirm Marcy Adams, Mike Higgins and Lisa Rosenbauer as the 2020 BLC representatives for conference and synod assemblies
 - Nominations were sought from the floor – none given
 - **M/S/A to affirm the slate of candidates proposed for synod representatives for 2020**
9. 2019 Council Positions
- Four open Council positions – nominees are
 - Marjorie Gaul: completing first term, continuing for second
 - Brian Edwards: completing first term, continuing for second
 - Erik Sorenson: first term
 - Lisa Meetze: first term
 - Nominations from the floor were sought – none given
 - **M/S/A to affirm the slate of candidates for 2020 BLC Church Council**
10. Adjournment and Closing Prayer

COUNCIL NOMINEES FOR 2021

Glenda Lockard - My husband Mark and I have been members of BLC for the past 17 years. We raised our two daughters in the faith here, and have been involved in various ministries over the years. I was privileged to serve on the Church Council for 6 years, helping develop and implement the team ministry concept. I've served in various roles - working with the CMT, Stewardship Committee, Ministry of Yarn, Money Tellers, Sunday School music, and served as Council Secretary. I look forward to the opportunity to serve on Council again, and promise to do my best to faithfully carry out the duties and responsibilities entrusted to me. Yours in Christ,
Glenda



Liana Thibault - Liana grew up in the Albany, NY area and after attending St. John Fisher decided to permanently stay in Rochester. Since joining BLC in 2016, Liana has been actively involved with the LYFE Committee and LYO, planning fundraisers, lock-ins and other events. She works for the Schwartzbeck Financial Group at Northwestern Mutual as the Director of Investment Operations and lives in Brighton. In her free time she enjoys reading and cooking, and can't wait to start travelling around the country again.

Mike Higgins (Re-elect) - A lifelong Lutheran, born and raised in MN. Married, 19 years, with 3 children. Former church council member at Oak Harbor Lutheran Church, Oak Harbor, WA. Active duty Naval Officer, Christine and I have lived in CA, FL, MD, WA, and now NY. I am happy to be a member of BLC and look forward to helping our brothers and sisters in Christ grow as a community. Thank you for consideration.





Andy Gates (Re-elect) – A life-long Lutheran, Andy is volunteering to serve a second term as a member of the Congregational Council after two terms in the 1990s. He and his wife, Ruth, met at a Lutheran Campus Center during college, raised their children as active members of Bethlehem and have been in the Chancel Choir loft for more than 25 years. In addition to tenure as the Financial Secretary and the layout editor of The Star monthly newsletter, Andy directed the first few Lenten drama series. He coordinated the church's local sponsorship of the ELCA radio program Grace Matters for several years and introduced electronic giving to members 15 years ago, most recently with Tithe.ly. He and Ruth coordinated Day Camp / VBS week for a few summers. Now, he is learning the church's new streaming software to bring live worship into members' homes.

As an Eagle Scout and a former Scoutmaster, Andy is the liaison with Bethlehem's new BSA Girl Troop 2019. He is the Chair of the Seneca Waterways BSA Council Advancement Committee and a volunteer Campmaster at Camp Cutler a few weekends each year. He and Ruth are musicians in the Fairport Fire Department Band seen at local parades and concert venues and he leads the BLC Chamber Orchestra which has been playing hymn-sing concerts at local senior homes during Advent for 15 years. When Bethlehem formed a Finance Committee, he agreed to serve as Council Representative. He also serves on the Finance Committee of Camp Mount Luther, an ELCA Outdoor Ministry in central Pennsylvania where he was a counselor during college years and where son James recently did the same. Ruth and Andy used COVID-19 isolation productively to renovate the interior of one of the camp's cabins.

Andy continues to look forward to serving this congregation as a member of the Council and celebrating Bethlehem's 100th Anniversary next year. He would like to assist with understanding ways we can be good stewards of God's blessings, continuing to implement funds-handling policies as well as coordinating with the ELCA to offer members ways to continue their legacy to ensure the ministry of the people of Bethlehem continues for years to come.

VOTING MEMBERS TO SYNOD ASSEMBLY NOMINEES



Marsha Gerhardt - I grew up in Butler, Pennsylvania and after graduation from Capital University in Columbus, Ohio I returned to Butler and taught English at Butler High School. It was during this time that I met and married my husband, Pastor David Gerhardt. We have just celebrated our 41st anniversary. We continue to live in Chili. We are looking forward to returning to our peaceful 20-minute drive to Sunday Worship.

Our three children were born while David was serving his first congregation just outside of Butler, PA. We moved to Orlando, FL and while we lived there, I returned to teaching and taught 4th grade at Trinity Lutheran School in Orlando.

In 1992, David received at call to Trinity Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Rochester (Gates) and served that congregation until his retirement in 2017. During this time, I taught at St. Paul Lutheran School in Hilton NY. I also served as a field supervisor for student teachers for SUNY Geneseo. Finally, I worked part time at the front desk of the Westside Family YMCA.

David and I joined Bethlehem Lutheran shortly after his retirement. Our daughter Rachael Parlett and her family are also members of Bethlehem. Our sons and their families also live in the Rochester area. We have 6 grandchildren and I have been very involved in their childcare.

My other interests include traveling, hiking, biking and sewing. I have always been involved in music and have played the piano and organ for church and other organizations since high school. I have also taught piano to many students over the years.

Marcy Adams – Marcy has been a lifelong Lutheran who found a welcoming home in Lutheran churches as she moved across the country while growing up. She attended Valparaiso Lutheran University in Indiana and Nazareth College for graduate work. Marcy recently retired from the Webster School District after 25 years of teaching 5th and 6th grades. She has been a member of Bethlehem Lutheran Church for 30+ years where she has made strong and lasting friendships. Marcy has served her congregation in a variety of ways including youth committee chairperson, mission and social concerns committee chairperson, LYO advisor, Sunday school teacher and is currently on the Core Ministry Team representing Bethlehem's GROW ministry. She has been married for 45 years to Tom and has two grown children, Justin and Cori.





Lisa Rosenbauer - Lisa has been at BLC since she was a very little girl. Which means she has seen many changes! Lisa served on Church Council in 1984 and has been active in many and varied roles since then. She sang with the Cancel Choir for 25 years and now plays bells and dulcimer. Lisa is currently a RN at Lifetime Care, visiting Hospice and Palliative Care patients in their homes. She has her Masters in Nursing and was one of The founding members of Advent House.

Sherry Cook (alternate) - Sherry was born and raised in Columbus, Ohio and is a life-long Lutheran. She and her husband, Jim, joined BLC in 2005, relocating from the Annapolis, MD area after both retired. They made the move north in order to be near their daughter, son-in-law, three grandchildren, and one super cute granddog and very much enjoy being an active part of their lives. Both Sherry and Jim are graduates of Ohio State University where they met, and continue to enjoy following OSU athletics, especially football. In addition, Sherry likes to read, work in the yard, and research her genealogy. Sherry is completing her second and final term as a BLC council member, serving in the role of Communications Coordinator. As such, she is also a part of the Core Ministry Team. In addition, she is a member of the Worship Committee and volunteers at BLC in a variety of other capacities.



If you have any questions, please contact any member of the nominating committee: Margie Gaul, Lisa Rosenbauer, and Pastor Amy.

CO-PASTORS' REPORT

Pastor Abigail Zang Hoffman & Pastor Amy Walter-Peterson

"A wing and a prayer." That was the theme of our 2019 Annual meeting. Pastor Hoffman and I reflected on the theme in last year's annual report where we wrote, "We are living through a time of dramatic and unprecedented change in the Christian church in North America." The last year has brought more changes and challenges to congregational life and pastoral ministry that we never could have foreseen or imagined a year ago. Despite the significant and continual shifts that we have had to make over this year, we have done good and faithful ministry as we continue to live our vision to ***equip all children of God to follow Jesus.***

Prior to March, I was certain the highlight of my year would be the intergenerational work trip that nine members of Bethlehem took to Puerto Rico, in partnership with Lutheran Disaster Response Puerto Rico. Thanks to the generous support of the Bethlehem community we were able to completely re-roof a home that remained damage following Hurricane Maria. Our crew, which included unskilled and inexperienced workers completed the entire project from tear off to new roof in 4 ½ days. In addition, we gave the house a fresh coat of paint and provided new interior ceiling material that the family planned to install themselves. We came home with important learnings, eager to share our experience and to engage others in plans to do more ministry like this in the future. We remain confident that God's promised future will come when we can re-engage service ministry that builds connection, community and capacity.

Bethlehem's worship life has always been given priority of our time, energy and effort. Our response to the pandemic has intensified this focus and challenged us to learn and develop new formats for worship (including Zoom, Facebook Live, etc.). Prior to March, we used seasonally-grounded liturgies that connect to daily life. In Advent 2019 we asked *What Can't Wait?* as we prepared for Christmas. In the Epiphany season, we learned a new liturgical setting. In Lent, we were almost midway through our *Risking Everything* theme when we made the difficult but necessary decision to suspend in-person worship gatherings.

Since March, we have continued to seek ways to lead creative and engaging worship through online connections. Pastor Amy took on the task of learning new video editing skills in order to provide for more varied worship through the summer months. The addition of new equipment and software will allow us to provide an enhanced livestream weekly worship service that continues to allow varied voices to participate and provide leadership.

In July and August, we embarked on the *Cultivating Compassion* sermon series, which included an experimental virtual VBS called Compassion Camp, which provided resources for at-home participation by families, including videos, curated craft projects, discussion questions, prayer and yoga practices and more. Our Sunday series included youth engagement in sharing worship leadership. In September we began a new sermon series, *Unraveled: Seeking God When Our Plans Fall Apart.*

We continue to be blessed with talented and creative musicians at BLC who have provided ongoing musical leadership without missing a beat (pun intended!). Susie DePasquale faithfully provides outstanding musical leadership each and every week. Jim Jefferis, Annette Finkbeiner, and Rich Towsley have shown a willingness to adapt to the circumstances to continue to provide safe ways for people to share their musical gifts with the BLC community. Those who worship with the Bethlehem community continually express their gratitude for the rich worship that we have continued to cultivate since mid-March when our in-person gatherings were suspended.

We've continued to support and care for all members of the Bethlehem community throughout the ever-changing circumstances of this year. In June, we enhanced the strong lay leadership we have had for our Confirmation and LYO-aged youth by bringing Bethany Trippi on staff to serve as Coordinator for Youth Ministry and Bethlehem. Bethany was already known to many of our high school youth and our adult leaders, and she has been able to jump in and get things moving. Bethany is working hard to coach our youth into claiming their leadership and equipping adults for their work with youth.

We have experimented with a number of ways to provide care to the Bethlehem community while we are unable to be physically present with one another. Since March, we've added opportunities to connect through Sunday morning Coffee with a Pastor and Deep Dive Bible studies led by Dave Gerhardt.

The pandemic has revealed the fault-lines in our congregational life together. While many in the Bethlehem community are deeply rooted in meaningful, life-giving relationships, there are others who have felt deeply alone or forgotten. Figuring out how to remain connected as a community of faith and continue to extend care and support to the whole community while we remain separated is an ongoing challenge that we must find ways to address together. We are grateful for the ongoing faithful engagement in Bethlehem's ministry by so many, but we worry deeply about those who are not able to connect, have chosen not to connect, or who have found themselves overwhelmed by their circumstances. The whole Bethlehem community has work to do in the coming year to continue to seek ways to offer support, encouragement and care to one another.

The pandemic also revealed the need to improve our ability to provide timely communication to those who call Bethlehem their church home. Months into this pandemic, we are still learning of people who are not receiving information about our congregational life. We are grateful for the outstanding work Beth Schoenfeld has done this year to work with Capra Strategies, a local company, to revamp our website and begin to put in place new strategies for improving our ability to communicate in timely and focused ways with those who are new to Bethlehem and those who are deeply rooted in our ministry. Early on in the pandemic, Pastor Amy began to provide frequent video reflections. These have now been added to our website on a bi-weekly basis, along with video reflections of the printed devotions in the Star provided by both Pastors and others.

At Bethlehem, we are guided by a congregational vision that says ***we exist to equip every child of God to follow Jesus***. The pandemic has not changed this guiding

vision, but it has challenged us to discern how we embrace that vision giving the circumstances and conditions in which we are doing ministry today and for the future. This year has shown us that we are able to respond with urgency, creativity, and faithfulness to the challenges we face. These are all clear signs of a congregation that is led and guided by the Holy Spirit working in us and through us.

Pastor Hoffman and I shared this ministry as co-pastors for most of this past year. We are both grateful that Team Ministry provides a vehicle for us to adapt to the ever-changing circumstances. We are both deeply grateful for the partnership we share with each other and with the people of God at Bethlehem. Working together with the leaders of Bethlehem, we will continue to find ways to share ministry together that serves the needs of this community in the year ahead. We give thanks for the body of Christ that is present here in Bethlehem and made visible in each and every one of you. We are grateful always for the privilege of serving among you and for being partners with you in living out the mission that God has given to us.


BLC VISION, MISSION AND COMMITMENT

VISION: *Where we are headed*


BLC exists to equip every child of God to follow Jesus.

MISSION: *What we do*

Following Jesus means we:

 **WORSHIP** the Living God: **Worship glorifies God and gathers us together where we are transformed by word as well as baptism and communion and prepared to serve.**


Worship is the heart of our congregational life from which everything flows. Worship provides an experience of the living God that deepens our faith and calls us to action in daily life. Worship shapes us with beautiful music, well-prepared leadership and thoughtful preaching. Worship stretches us to experience the living God in new ways but is always grounded in forming community and witnessing to an authentic Lutheran understanding of faith in Jesus Christ. Worship is energetic, thoughtful, intentional, and full of joyful noise.

 **GROW** in Faith and Discipleship: **We cultivate multiple ways to learn about and deepen faith for people of all ages and life stages, as well as those with varied faith experiences.**


We provide opportunities for people to grow, learn, be challenged by and be invigorated in their faith in Jesus Christ and God's free gift of grace made known in him. We reach out to people who are new to or curious about Lutheran Christianity and welcome and integrate them into congregational life. At the same time, we seek for all members to continually develop in their journey with Christ. Age-appropriate and intergenerational learning experiences are provided throughout the week, and encouraged for all according to their interest. Parents understand that they serve as role models and primary teachers for their children about the faith. They are encouraged and supported in this vocation by being actively engaged in their own faith development. The foundation for faith development is Biblical and consistent with Lutheran Confessions.

 **LIVE** Our Faith in Daily Life: **We develop multiple points of connection between faith and daily life that extends beyond worship.**

God sends us into the world and equips us for action – in our community, in our schools, at our work, in our homes and everywhere we live. Serving, learning, sharing, growing and inviting others to join with us in all we do is vital to who we are as Christians. We witness to our faith through our words and actions and encourage members to humbly minister in their daily lives in ways that serve real and known needs. In all our life, we seek to steward God's abundance.

 **CARE** for One Another: **We build and foster intergenerational relationships within the BLC family to cultivate a faith community in which each person is valued as a fellow child of God.**

Relationships matter for us. We know and love one another. We value one another even when we don't agree. We share our joys and concerns. We pray for one another. We encourage each other to share our gifts with the church and community. Building relationships, growing new friendships and expressing care and support for one another are the work of the entire congregation.

 **SERVE** Our Neighbor: **We reach out to the world for the purpose of serving our neighbors near and far, especially those who are marginalized and easily forgotten.**

By the power of the Holy Spirit, we are called to be the hands and feet of Christ in our world today. We do this as part of a wider church as well as through our own congregationally based ministries. We give permission to members to start ministries consistent with the teachings and traditions of our faith. We listen for the Spirit's guidance, the congregation's discernment and our neighbor's needs to identify the life cycle of each ministry. In doing this we are attentive to the gifts and passions of congregational members and allow ministries to grow, adapt or end. We seek partnerships with others for the purpose of service. In all our ministry, we seek to manifest the gifts of the Spirit for the sake of our neighbors.

COMMITMENT: *How we do the work*

Called by the Holy Spirit, trusting in the grace and love of God, each of us will:

Cultivate a safe environment that enables us to take risks and step outside our comfort zone.

We know that we have been given the gifts of God's forgiveness and grace and are called to share them with others. We understand that people often react or don't act at all because of fear. We want to create a church that believes a glorious failure is better than a mild success. We accept the changes that come as we find new ways to show and share God's love in this time and place. We extend grace to all and believe that we are all trying our best.

Meet people where they are at all ages and stages of life.

We believe that BLC should reflect the gifts, experiences, faith stories and cultures of diverse ages and multiple generations. We desire to create an environment that encourages us to intentionally work, play, and worship alongside one another. We need to be aware of who's missing and intentionally create spaces where we can learn from each other and share life together.

Recognize our God-given talents and put them to work in the world.

We believe that we all have gifts to share. We strive to use those gifts in the ministry of BLC and throughout God's Kingdom. We value everyone's contribution and understand that there are many different ways for us to respond to God's gracious love, including through our daily actions as parents, family members, friends and employees; our commitments as citizens and community members; our efforts in social service and volunteerism; our voices offered in public witness for justice; and more.

Teach, encourage and learn from one another.

We take joy and comfort in the Word of the Lord. We know that a deep understanding of God's Word prepares us to be witnesses in speech and in action of God's rich mercy in Jesus Christ. We are curious about the perspectives of others and seek to find new voices to expand our understanding. We learn through many different means, such as Sunday School and Adult Education programs, book studies and discussion groups, personal daily devotionals, and conversation with family or friends.

Understand that we are in a relationship with the wider church.

We know that we cannot be church alone and we support the ELCA vision of fostering unity among the children of God for the sake of the world. We desire to develop our relationship with the Upstate Synod, the church-wide organization, and global partners. We understand that each congregation has a variety of gifts and we seek to use BLC's unique gifts in cooperation and support of the wider church. This means facilitating the ecumenical and interreligious work of congregations, synods and church-wide ministries, supporting the reception of our full communion agreements, and accompanying others, including our interreligious partners.

Provide and allocate resources to fulfill our vision and mission.

We recognize that we are called to be faithful stewards of the tangible gifts God has so abundantly given to us, including financial resources. We strive to practice generosity in our daily life and in the life of the congregation. We understand that we should use all that God has entrusted to our care - our time, our talents and our treasures - to love God and our neighbors.

The Vision and Commitment statements were developed through the conversations held at the Council and Core Ministry Team Retreat held in November 2015, congregational potluck dinners in January and April 2016 and Cottage Meetings in January/February 2016. The Mission reflects the Purpose statements that were adopted in 2013. Collectively, the Vision, Mission and Commitments below give us clear direction about where we are going, what we are doing and how we will carry out ministry together.

Compiled: September 2017

PARISH REGISTER 2020

		Baptized	Confirmed
	TOTAL Membership as of September 30, 2019	661	551
Members Received			
	Baptism	3	0
	Micah Hoffman (12/22/19)	1	
	Merrin Lintner (12/22/19)	1	
	Violet Morales (11/24/19)	1	
	Affirmation of Faith/Transfer In	5	4
	Mike & Sandy Joyce (3/9/20) - were still in as members in our system	0	0
	Penny Barto	1	1
	Colleen & Fred Sousa (Corinne & Evan)	4	2
	Andrew Sleeman (confirmed)		1
	Affirmation of Faith/Confirmation (Confirmed 5/31/20)	0	5
	Olivia Finkbeiner		1
	Elizabeth Henry		1
	Katy Herrmann		1
	Sam Higgins		1
	Paige O'Malley		1
Members Removed			
	Deaths	3	3
	Ken Cross (1/3/20)	1	1
	Sally Cross (1/26/20)	1	1
	Grace Garvey (9/12/20)	1	1
	Transfer Out	4	4
	Tim & Megan Nowak (3/5/20)	2	2
	Patricia & Larry Ramsey Macomber (10/20/19)	2	2
	Total Membership as of September 30, 2019	661	551
	Total Members Added	8	9
	Total Members Removed	7	7
	Statistical Adjustment	15	10
	TOTAL Membership as of September 30, 2020	677	563
	Active Membership for Quorum	579	430

CHURCH COUNCIL REPORT

Rick Walker, Council President

We began this year with some simple expectations. BLC would remain a vibrant and financially healthy congregation, following Pastor Hoffman's family leave our co-pastors would return to a normal work schedule, we would finalize some required updates to our constitution, and planning for our 100th Anniversary Celebration would continue. COVID-19 has certainly altered this simple set of expectations!

On March 12, the officers of the church held a special meeting to discuss how we should respond to the emerging COVID-19 pandemic. After some intense discussion, it became apparent that the only responsible alternative available was to cease in person worship effective the next Sunday, March 15th. Then came the hard question, where do we go from here?

Thanks to efforts of our pastors and music staff, within 48 hours of the decision to cease in-person worship, we were ready to have our first virtual service, live streamed over Facebook. Special thanks to Jim Jefferis for his contributions to this effort. We have continued a virtual service at 8:30 and along the way have found ways to improve the quality of the service and expand the types of content we would include. Weekly participation in our virtual services remains strong, whether it means joining with us at 8:30 or viewing the recording of the service at a later time. We have also discovered that living in this virtual space comes with challenges and surprises. The hardest challenge is how do we ensure that we are reaching as many members of BLC as possible. The reality is that we need to do better! We have several members that either lack access to the required technology to participate virtually or find it difficult to use. We have families for whom the challenges of meeting the needs of their families sometimes leaves them with little or no time to spend in worship. We continue to reach out to our members via phone calls, email, and direct mail but our sense is that there are still some members that are falling through the cracks. One of the surprises is that on many Sundays, our virtual congregation includes people who would not normally walk into our sanctuary on a Sunday morning. This virtual congregation is comprised of current and former members of BLC, friends of members, strangers looking for a Lutheran service and friends from our synod partners in Zimbabwe. We have experienced a re-definition of what the term congregation means!

Our normal pace of meeting quarterly as a congregation has continued using Zoom. We have used the format of crucial conversations to listen to what our members are feeling and experiencing during this period. A few things have stood out. One is that we need to continue the live stream of our services. Another is that our members trust us to take prudent steps to safeguard the health of our congregation. A third is that our members miss in person worship and the opportunity to participate in communion.

Through all of this, the people of BLC have continued to support the ministry at BLC. BLC council had anticipated that the pandemic might result in financial stress for BLC. That has not occurred. Our receipts are down but offset by reduced expenses. As a result, we will end this fiscal year in a stronger position than we had anticipated at the beginning of the year.

During this pandemic, the work of the church council has continued. Some of the things that have been completed this year include:

- Creation of a finance committee
- Completion of a gift policy
- Completion of a receipts policy
- Restructuring the treasurer's position to better align with ELCA guidance

We have also completed a major redesign of our church website to enable us to better communicate with our members and have purchased equipment to allow us to further improve our live stream capability and continue our virtual worship presence for the foreseeable future.

A re-entry team has been formed to develop a plan for returning to in person worship. Our building is now equipped with hands free hand sanitizing stations, soap dispensers and towel dispensers. We have held Wednesday evening prayer services in our parking lot, and we have begun to allow small group gatherings.

On September 19th we held our first funeral since the pandemic. Grace Garvey's immediate family gathered in our sanctuary while many others joined virtually over a live stream of the service.

We have a plan in place to resume offering Holy Communion on November 1st, All Saints Day.

Our next challenge is how to hold our annual meeting. We will be providing multiple ways to attend. The primary method will be via a Zoom call by video with an option for phone only. We will also provide a limited number of slots for in person attendance for member who cannot use Zoom.

It has been an incredible year! Had anyone suggested to me in 2019 that we would accomplish all that has been done in 2020 I would have scoffed at them. But with the help of God and a supportive congregation, we have had an amazing year! We have much more work to do before we are through the pandemic and have figured out what our new normal looks like. But I am confident that we will continue to work together to keep our congregation healthy and connected.

COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

Sherry Cook, Coordinator of Communications

Our Mission: *The mission of the Communications Committee at Bethlehem Lutheran Church is to inspire, inform, and invite participation in the life and ministry of the church. We do this through multiple areas of media, including print (printed Star, weekly worship bulletin, kiosks, bulletin boards), social networking (Facebook), electronic (website, monitors) and other special displays as needed. We work with the office, Council, and the Core Ministry Teams to coordinate projects or publicity campaigns to ensure information is effectively communicated to those both within and beyond our walls.*

At the beginning of 2020, we looked at the way the Communications Committee was operating and where our involvement was focused. It became apparent that the major kinds of tasks undertaken by the committee have been pretty much completed. At the same time, it also became clear that our potential goals for 2020 involved things driven primarily by the pastors and the office. In order to address this, we created a partnership between the groups. The Communications Committee decided to discontinue meeting monthly, and instead, gather on an as-needed basis. We have folded some of our responsibilities into those of the office, while retaining ownership of our on-going duties. This approach will continue and will be revisited periodically to evaluate its effectiveness.

In recognition of the need to provide for maximum collaboration between council and CMT regarding communications-related matters, a designated council member will act as liaison between the two groups. This will facilitate the sharing of information to enhance planning, enabling leadership to more smoothly and effectively fulfill our vision and mission.

The major project involving our newly-expanded team was the complete rebuild of the BLC website this past summer. With the professional capabilities and guidance of Capra Strategy, we now have a fresh, new online presence that will appeal to BLC members as well as those searching for a church home. This allows us to utilize current technology and updated aesthetics to enhance the flow of information and connect with people both within the walls of BLC and beyond in the wider community.

As coordinator of the Communications Committee for the past 6 years, I am very proud of what we have accomplished together! It has been my privilege to work with a very creative and committed team of people. Some met faithfully each month, others worked on special projects as they arose, and still others offered advice and guidance as needed. All are a valuable part of our committee and their help and support are greatly appreciated!

Heartfelt thanks to all who helped in any way with the planning and implementation of our work. It is truly a team effort and our BLC team is the best! We are also grateful to all who have supported us. Thanks be to God for this community of faith!

CARE OF PROPERTY REPORT

Bob Stolze, Chair

Addendum to follow with this year's report prior to the 10/25 meeting

CMT CONVENER REPORT

Beth Schoenfeld, CMT Convener

Core Ministry Team (CMT) Mission: *We work in tandem with Bethlehem Lutheran Church Council to realize the Congregation's vision statement. We engage in purposeful communication, coordination of the church calendar and activities, and consider what we are being called to do within and outside our walls in order to foster synergy and interconnectivity between Core Ministry areas: Worship, Grow, Live, Care, Serve.*

CMT works diligently throughout the year to offer multiple ways to fulfill the mission of this community of faith – to equip every child of God to follow Jesus – through planning for worship, Christian education, spiritual growth, community outreach, fellowship, youth programs, and much more. We gather monthly, both as a group and in 1:1 meetings between Beth and each CMT leader where the focus is intentionally on each individual area. We ensure that all the Core Ministry teams are involved in the planning and implementation of activities and programs to provide full coordination. CMT is the backbone of all the programs and activities at BLC.

Early in 2020, we made a change in the role of the CMT convener, a position formerly filled by a Council member. As the previous convener had completed her Council term and the Communications team functions were shifting, we discussed having Beth Schoenfeld serve as convener, while Sherry Cook would be the liaison to Council for both Communications and CMT. We have followed this approach for several months, and have found it an effective way to move forward with a new synergy in these four roles (office support, CMT convener, Communications, and Council liaison). CMT has also implemented a monthly report to Council, as we felt it was important to strengthen the collaboration between the leadership groups. CMT continues to help develop the planning calendar twice a year and review it on an ongoing basis. Pastoral presence at the meetings remains essential.

Your CMT leaders have worked hard to adapt and to continue to provide unique opportunities for engagement even in the midst of the pandemic. The team has:

- Gathered virtually since March, initially increasing the frequency to remain connected in these physically distant times
- Supported those groups who wanted to continue to meet virtually by training their leaders and promoting their Zoom meetings
- Successfully promoted and supported the Seeds of Hope Easter Campaign. The collection ended on June 30 and raised a total of \$6300, resulting in a contribution of \$2100 each to the Perinton Food Shelf, Lutheran Disaster Response (COVID-19 Response) and Zimbabwe Drought Relief.
- Supported the efforts in hosting Compassion Camp that was intentionally geared toward families and children. Pastor Hoffman facilitated a Google classroom group in addition to the weekly worship focus around the themes.

- Supported many groups who have not traditionally met in the summer (LYO, Women's Fellowship, and Quilters, to name a few) in their efforts to stay in relationship together

Beth Schoenfeld and Sherry Cook continue to work closely regarding BLC's Communication needs. While many of the functional tasks have been led by the church office, Sherry's insight, involvement, and general input have remained an integral part of the process.

Each quarter, CMT compiles a mailer to include details on upcoming events and happenings at BLC. The Quarterly Mailer is available for pick-up during times of in-person Sunday worship or is mailed to a home address. This is an additional way that CMT works to keep the congregation informed of upcoming events.

In March of 2020, when presented with a need to offer more digital access to members, the office created a 'one-stop shop' style page called BLC Today to help direct people to the most pertinent and timely information. As the pastors quickly found ways to offer our services via Facebook Livestream, we expanded our reach.

In conversation with Council, the pastoral office did extensive fact finding and selected a provider to help us rebuild BLC's website and improve our digital communications methodologies. We created a web team and worked diligently through the summer, launching the new site in August.

The new Calendar of Events on our website allows for current listing of the upcoming events, RSVP through the site, and seamless participation in virtual events. Easy access is provided for connecting to worship through social media platforms. Emails are being created with one-click access in mind and reflect more visual components and less text.

The relationship with the Web team has positioned us to better accommodate the shifting needs of the 100th anniversary team, as well as the livestreaming and broadcasting of worship and other events (such as a funeral in September). Not only have these improvements expanded our reach in a time of crisis, allowing those in different geographic areas to reconnect in meaningful ways with their BLC family, but the technological improvements will continue to serve us well into the future. We look forward to further implementing ways to highlight and support the work of all the ministry areas throughout the year!

If you are interested in exploring a new-to-you group and participating in the life of the congregation in a different way, we welcome your involvement. You can find out more about each CMT area, Worship, Grow, Live, Care, and Serve, by visiting <https://blcfairport.org/about/>, reading the STAR and Quarterly Mailer, or contacting one of the leaders, pastors, or the church office.

WORSHIP THE LIVING GOD

Toni Thompson, Core Ministry Leader

Worship glorifies God and gathers us together where we are transformed by words, baptism, and communion; and prepared to serve.

All Saints Sunday was celebrated on November 3, 2019 and was commemorated with our traditional lighting of candles to the memory of our loved ones who had passed away in the preceding year. As part of our communion observance we especially marked a first communion celebration for our children. As usual, the day was a very moving worship experience.

As a sequel to our Advent theme which centered around waiting – “How we Wait”, “Why we Wait”, “For Whom we Wait” and “With Whom we Wait” – 2019’s theme was “What Can’t Wait”. The messages were based on the themes of the Advent wreath – Hope, Peace, Love, Joy. Four families were selected to light the Advent candles each Sunday and spoke of what our world can’t wait for in each of the themes.

Christmas Eve services were, as usual, inspirational and joyful, and Epiphany began on January 5, 2020, as we all looked forward to a new year and all the special worship opportunities that we have become accustomed to.

Then in February, the corona virus struck, and all our plans were turned upside down. In the middle of March, the church was closed to all in-person worship, and we began the process of watching worship services on Facebook. The pastors and the music staff made a significant effort to make each Sunday morning as uplifting an experience as possible, and they all learned to deal with technology in ways they had never had to before. As each week and month passed, the technology got better and better, and on Pentecost Sunday, May 31st, we were treated to a presentation via Zoom to hundreds of choir members and instrumentalists from all over the denomination singing “Oh, Day of Grace” all at once.

At the beginning of August, the pastors initiated a four-week experiment with a Wednesday evening service in the church parking lot with masks and the appropriate social distancing. Anywhere from eighteen to twenty-five people participated in the short worship services, and it was good to see some familiar faces and exchange conversation.

As of this writing it is difficult to say what fall worship, Reformation Sunday, All Saints Sunday and Advent will even look like. There is no specific target date for re-opening the sanctuary to in-person worship, so the pastors and the Worship Committee are challenged to make plans for how we will celebrate big events in the church calendar – whether we are still in virtual mode or holding limited in-person services. When we eventually do open up, services will continue to be streamed live for those members who cannot or choose not to attend in person, and there will be no congregational singing of hymns.

As always, we extend many thanks to all those who have always strived to make our weekly worship service possible – Worship Committee members, liturgical staging ministers, lectors, assisting ministers, communion assistants, bread assistants, tray assistants, Eucharistic ministers, acolytes, crucifers, ushers, Altar Guild members, glass washers, those who participate in the children’s message, those who schedule all the volunteers and to all our choir members (Chancel, children’s, adult and children’s bells, folk group, dulcimer group). We pray for the day when all of their devotion and talent will be put to use again. Thank you, too to our paid staff – pastors, music, office support – who share their gifts to lead us in praising God together.

We invite anyone to become part of the planning and execution by serving on the Worship Committee, in an ad hoc planning meeting or with one of the ministries listed above. Lead by the Spirit and working hand in hand together, we can bring many wonderful new opportunities to Worship the Living God.

GROW IN FAITH AND DISCIPLESHIP

Marcy Adams, Core Ministry Leader

We cultivate multiple ways to learn about and deepen our faith for people of all ages and life stages, as well as those with varied faith experiences.

Our emphasis for the 2019 -2020 GROW ministry continued with the theme of equipping every child of God to follow Jesus. We also continued to encourage intergenerational connections as much as possible.

Sunday school was divided into age groups of pre-k through third grade; 4th and 5th grades, confirmation, LYO and a number of offerings for adult education. A team of teachers collaborated at each grade level. Pre-K – 3rd grade became Kingdom Kids; meeting for song and fellowship and then dividing into activity groups. Grades 4th and 5th followed a weekly lectionary series so that students could connect lessons read during worship and participate in discussions based on what they heard and read. The confirmation program continued, coordinated by Pastor Amy, with study, service projects and fellowship. Pastor Amy and Marcy Adams led intergenerational classes periodically throughout the year concentrating on topics taught in confirmation. A lively LYO class continued with the format of applying Biblical passages to the students' real-life dilemmas. A discussion format proved to be successful with concerted emphasis on sharing questions, wonderings, and experiences with each other and the adult leaders. "Outside" speakers often attended class sessions and shared how they reflect on their faith in their jobs.

March brought new challenges to our lives due to COVID-19 and church life was no exception. In-person classes were cancelled for the rest of the school year. All Sunday School classes followed a different schedule for Zoom get-togethers. David Gerhardt continued adult classes over the internet and K-Kids met virtually each week. For the Affirmation of Baptism celebration, five confirmands shared their chosen Bible verses during virtual worship on Sunday, May 31, with individual watch parties at each home. We also celebrated our graduating seniors with gift baskets delivered to each one by a member(s) of our congregation. Bethany Trippi joined our staff on a part-time basis; concentrating on confirmation and LYO age groups. She made a video of the basket-giving and shared it with the congregation during virtual worship the following Sunday. Three seniors were awarded BLC scholarships: Sydney Higgins, Rob Herrmann, and Kevin Dunn after completing a zoom interview with BLCs interview committee.

Over the summer, a virtual Compassion Camp was held for pre-K through 5th graders. About 15 families participated in crafts, movement exercises, story hours and lessons on compassion. Each week's theme was connected to the weekly sermon and children's message given by the Pastors. LYO students continued to meet virtually, relying on support of each other as we all navigated this new world. David Gerhardt and Pastor Amy continued to conduct adult education classes with interested participants.

The Education Committee, consisting of Marcy Adams, Pastor Amy, Pastor Hoffman, Bethany Trippi and Beth Schoenfeld, is in the process of developing a program for the fall and Advent seasons. Some of our new programs will be in cooperation with other congregations to widen our resources and expertise. A conscious decision was made to delay opening of Sunday school until October to allow parents and students to get back in a routine with regular school. Outdoor social groups will be encouraged through the good weather.

A special thank-you goes out to the many volunteers who participated in our GROW ministry this year. Everyone was willing and able to adjust to the new situations that seemed to appear weekly. We continue to welcome any new ideas to help support our faith formation growth. Come and join the fun!

LIVE OUR FAITH IN DAILY LIFE

Cathy Gottermeier, Core Ministry Leader

We develop multiple points of connection between faith and daily life that extends beyond worship.

LYFE stands for Lutheran Youth and Family Engagement. This committee focuses on faith formation in the younger stages of life and developing intergenerational relationships. They plan programs and activities for ages birth through high school and beyond. Prior events have included corn mazes, themed fundraisers, 30 Hour Famine, overnight lock-ins, and service activities. Bethany Trippi continues to help support appropriate activities for the LYO and confirmation kids, including a corn maze for BLC only. Additional plans will be made as circumstances allow. The LYFE committee will not formally convene at this time, but will be consulted as needed as plans are made going forward.

Women's Ministries

LYLAS (Love You Like A Sister) pairs women of BLC in order to anonymously provide encouragement and support to each other through the year. Participants are asked to regularly lift up her LYLAS partner and her family in prayer. Inexpensive cards and notes, as well as small gifts, can be used to maintain contact and remind her that you are thinking of her. The tricky part is doing this without disclosing your identity! The LYLAS partners for the year are revealed at Ladies Night Out in the fall.

LYLAS is currently active with a small group of participants this year. They will be ending this "season" in October. There will be no Ladies' Night Out this year. Sarah Morrissette is planning to coordinate LYLAS again for 2020-2021 with the new season starting in November. The overall premise of keeping another anonymously in your prayers, is a great way to stay connected to BLC without being together in person. There will not be a basket for physical gifts in the Narthex, at least while in-person Sunday worship is on hold, most of the women this past spring and summer were mailing notes to their LYLAS through USPS and the feedback was that it was very uplifting to receive and know someone was thinking of you. This program appears to work well with social distancing.

Ruth Circle and Women's Fellowship provide the opportunity for women of BLC to gather monthly in order to learn and grow in their relationship with God and with one another. The groups meet September through May at Church. Ruth Circle meets on the second Monday of the month at 1:00 pm and Women's Fellowship on the first Tuesday at 7:00 pm. Both groups read and study a book.

Over the past year Ruth Circle met up until March and decided not to meet again in person or by zoom thru the end of their program year in May. At this time there are no plans to resume until it is felt safe to continue to meet in person.

Women's Fellowship continued to meet via zoom after March and has been meeting everyone other week since under the leadership of Pastor Amy. At this time the group

will be finishing their current program at the end of September with plans still under discussion for moving forward.

Ladies' Night Out is held in the fall in Fellowship Hall. This annual event is an evening of fun, fellowship, and light refreshments, combined with an activity or entertainment. This is a wonderful opportunity to share a casual evening with your BLC sisters and get to know them a little better! *This group has no plans to have an event this fall. This will be revisited in 2021.*

BLC Brunch Bunch is an informal monthly gathering of the women of Bethlehem over a cup of coffee/tea – or a delicious breakfast – Friends, too, are welcome to join us at 9:30AM on the third Saturday of each month for a time of laughter, sharing and caring.

In March, the group was meeting weekly via Zoom with increased and broadened attendance. The group has since returned to meeting once monthly. At this time, they are planning to continue this format until such time people are comfortable meeting again in person.

Advent by Candlelight is held in mid-December. It is an opportunity to gather women together around the Word of God in a quiet setting to focus on the meaning of Christmas and to prepare our hearts for the birth of Jesus. This group meets one evening during Advent to share fellowship, dessert and prayer. This event did not take place December of 2019 and at this time do not plan on meeting in 2020. Plans for 2021 are to be determined over the next year.

Men's Ministries

The Men of Bethlehem (MOB) meet on an "as needed" basis to provide service work to a number of the ministries that BLC supports financially, along with many of our members as they need assistance around their homes. Examples include painting and repair work at Grace House, kitchen remodeling and construction/installment of free library for South Wedge Mission, and drywall repair/painting for our members. In addition, the MOB holds periodic social events, including our March Madness poker/college basketball night at one of our member's houses. Additional Service and Social event ideas are always welcome! Events will be posted in the STAR. This group is not active at this time and will be revisited when the time is right.

Gather with the men of BLC "at the Landmark restaurant in Fairport at 7:30 am on the first Wednesday of each month" has shifted to virtual meetings on the first and third Wednesdays to share good food and informal Christian fellowship with no particular agenda. This is a great opportunity to get to know your BLC brothers a little better. *Since March this group has been meeting twice monthly via zoom and will continue to do so until such time they are able to meet In person.*

CARE FOR ONE ANOTHER

GerryAnn Westcott, Core Ministry Leader

We build and foster intergenerational relationships within the BLC family to cultivate a faith community in which each person is valued as a fellow child of God.

CARE Ministry at Bethlehem includes several separate programs: Barnabas Ministry, Fellowship Committee, Greeters & Welcomers, Prayer List & Eucharistic Ministers.

Barnabas Ministry, coordinated by Lisa Rosenbauer, fosters intergenerational relationships within the BLC family to cultivate a faith community in which each person is valued as a fellow child of God. It includes our **Yarn Ministry** including Baptismal Blankets and Prayer Shawls (Glenda Lockard & Ruth Sleeman), **Funeral Receptions** (Sue Towsley, Wendy Ruhland, Joanne Swanson & Vickie Twietmeyer) and **Friendly Visitors** (Kathy Moragne), **Birthday Cards/Notes** (Donna Berner), and **Grief Mailings** (Jennifer Wideman), and **Christmas Bags** (Karen Bigenwald & JoAnne Swanson). These services have continued during the past year.

Fellowship Committee (Dave Hahn/Jim Flanagan) coordinated **Coffee Hour** each Sunday through March, but ice cream on Thursdays as well as the many receptions that are held between services such as those for Confirmation and Senior Recognition were not held in 2020. Our **outdoor tree lighting** on the first Sunday in Advent continues to be meaningful to us and also an outreach to our community. The **Fall Fun Fest** was a busy intergenerational activity including trick or treating, crafts, party games and seasonal refreshments. We also caroled to homebound members just before Christmas. The weather was against us for sledding at the **cabin party** in January, but many enjoyed the time together inside. Plans for a **March Madness** activity and **Church Picnic** in June were both cancelled in 2020.

Other CARE activities include: **Greeters** (Wayne Westcott) who greet everyone and **Welcomers** (Jim Flanagan) who focus on visitors serve Sunday mornings, the **Prayer List** (Beth Schoenfeld) which is assembled monthly and distributed online, and **Eucharistic Ministers** (coordinated by Bob Anderson & Dan Juers) which provides communion to those who cannot attend worship.

SERVE OUR NEIGHBOR

Beth Walker, Missions & Social Concerns Committee Chair
Core Ministry Leader Position is Open

We reach out to the world for the purpose of serving our neighbors near and far, especially those who are marginalized and easily forgotten.

The SERVE Core Ministries include: 2nd Sunday Dinner Ministry, the Angel Tree, community mission partners, Quilting Group, South Wedge Mission, Thinks-giving, connections with our international "twinned" congregation in Shurugwi, Zimbabwe, God's Work Our Hands, and Upstate NY Synod Mission Support. The Mission and Social Concerns Committee (M&SC) oversees much of this engagement.

Mission and service are transformational. We go into the world with an open heart and often encounter Christ in those we encounter.

The Mission and Social Concerns Committee facilitates mission engagement, mission education, seasonal ministries, and the Mission and Social Concerns spending plan. New members or visitors to the M&SC committee, ideas about new ministries, and different views and paradigms for engaging in mission are welcome.

This year, M&SC meetings moved to a zoom format, God's Work Our Hands became an individually driven but community celebrated function, and M&SC spent time reflecting and planning how to engage the congregation with current social and justice issues. Collecting school supplies and world hunger fundraising moved to virtual and snail mail formats for the Sowing Seeds of Hope spring appeal and school supplies for Learning Links. Individuals were encouraged to develop their own Gods Work Our Hands activity in the fall and 700 bulbs were delivered and planted, in conjunction with that week of service, to plant hope for the spring. A Thrivent Action Team paid for the bulbs.

International communication with our companion synod of Zimbabwe continued at both the country and individual parish level. BLC and the Shurugwi Parish send regular messages to each other, share greetings on Companion Synod Sunday, and pray for each other weekly and on All Saints Sunday. A long-term project of a well in central Zimbabwe culminated with a successful borehole providing an abundant flow of water in September, changing the lives of the people in that village.

As we enter the 20-21 church year, mission needs are still abundant, but it has become clear that *how* our neighbors and society are perceived directly affects who has opportunities to thrive and who does not.

In addition to its usual functions in 20-21, the M&SC Committee will continue to explore social and justice issues and have conversations within the committee to understand our individual and collective world view. A plan will be developed to invite BLC members to engage in these topics as they desire and are able.

Chairperson for the Mission and Social Concerns Committee is Beth Walker
rbowsend@rochester.rr.com or (315) 945-5539.

More about the Second Sunday Dinner Ministry



BLC has been involved with the Sunday Dinner Ministry since 2005. Over the past 14 years we have seen a dramatic increase in the need for this community outreach that offers a warm meal to elderly and homebound individuals in our community. We currently prepare and serve 100 meals or more on the second Sunday each month. It takes a dedicated team of about 40 volunteers to organize, plan, shop, prepare, cook, serve, deliver, and clean up. We are always looking for new volunteers. We are currently in need of volunteers to deliver meals to people in the community. This is usually a 30-45 minute commitment and you can indicate the months you are available to serve. We are also looking for volunteers to donate food and supplies as well as cash to offset the cost of food. Look in the STAR in the Serve Our Neighbor section each week for the Second Sunday items needed each month. For further information or to get involved please contact Paulette Costanza at 223-9255 or p.stanza@hotmail.com. ***This ministry has been on hold since March, 2020.***