



ANNUAL REPORT 2023

BEHLEHEM
Lutheran Church



Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America



WELCOMING All to Jesus Christ
BELIEVING In God's Promises | **SERVING** God and Neighbor
LIVING In God's Grace through Faith

www.slaterblc.org

Bethlehem Lutheran Church | 2023

Staff

Pastor	Rev. Nat Bothwell
Secretary	Ann Mills
Custodians	Janice Berhow Tammy Johnson
Treasurer	Erica Weeks-Burger
Financial Secretary	Ann White
Organist	William Polzin

Council

Doug Mackey, President
Paul Mills, Vice President
Andy Denner, Secretary
Matt Curran
Sarah Seigfried
Joan Schoon
Lisa Wason
Ann White
Dave White
Pastor Nat

Council Members with Terms Expiring 12/31/23

Paul Mills

Council Members

with Terms Expiring 12/31/24

Matt Curran
Andy Denner
Doug Mackey
Joan Schoon
Lisa Wason
Ann White

Council Members

with Terms Expiring 12/31/25

Sarah Seigfried
Dave White

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING AGENDA

January 28, 2024

Call to Order..... Doug Mackey

Devotions Pastor Nat

Approval of Minutes (2023 Annual Meeting)

Elections..... Doug Mackey

 Report of the Nominating Committee

 Nominations from the Floor

 Election

Reports

 Presentation of the 2024 Budget Erica Weeks-Burger

 Council President Report..... Doug Mackey

 Pastor's Report Pastor Nat

New Business

Adjournment & Benediction..... Pastor Nat



Table of Contents

Annual Congregational Meeting Opening Liturgy	1
Minutes of the 2023 Annual Meeting	2
A Message from Bishop Eaton	3
Pastor's Report	4
Parish Report	5
President's Report	6
Financial Reports	
2023 Actual & 2024 Budgeted	8
Memorials & Thank Offering Summary	10
Endowment Fund Summary	11
Investment Fund Summary	12
Ministry Reports	
Education Team Report	13
VBS & Camp Reports	14
Food Pantry Report.....	15
Cemetery Team Report.....	16
Property Team Report	16
Stephen Ministry Report	17
Circle Reports.....	18
Hospitality Team Report.....	19
Southeastern Iowa Synod Profile	20

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

OPENING LITURGY

Son of God, Eternal Savior

Recognizing that our faith is a living, busy, active and mighty thing, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with each of you.

And also with you.

Teach us to love you with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.

Receive our prayer, O God.

Descend on our hearts, that we may love others in the ways Jesus loves us.

Receive our prayer, O God.

Empower us to be enthusiastic in pursuing your vision for our congregation.

Receive our prayer, O God.

Move us to engage issues in our community in Christlike ways, and to pursue deep and authentic relationships with those with whom we serve and partner.

Receive our prayer, O God.

Strengthen us to face the barriers we encounter in doing your work, learning to work with others amid disagreement.

Receive our prayer, O God.

Give us the ability to adapt to the cultural, economic and social changes that occur in the neighborhoods we serve.

Receive our prayer, O God.

Guide us to be a healthy congregation that learns from its failures as well as its successes and offers wisdom to others.

Receive our prayer, O God.

As we strive to become the church that we proclaim to be, raise up leaders who focus on the gospel of freedom, forgiveness and reconciliation as given to us through God's indescribable act of love in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Renew us daily in our baptism, that we may discover vitality in our relationships with you, each other and those we serve in the world.

Amen.

1 Son of God, e - ter - nal Sav - ior, source of life and truth and grace,
2 As you, Lord, have lived for oth - ers, so may we for oth - ers live.
3 Come, O Christ, and reign a - mong us, King of love and Prince of peace;
4 Son of God, e - ter - nal Sav - ior, source of life and truth and grace,

Word made flesh, whose birth a - mong us hal - lows all our hu - man race,
Free - ly have your gifts been grant - ed; free - ly may your ser - vants give.
hush the storm of strife and pas - sion, bid its cru - el dis - cords cease.
Word made flesh, whose birth a - mong us hal - lows all our hu - man race:

you our head, who, throned in glo - ry, for your own will ev - er plead:
Yours the gold and yours the sil - ver, yours the wealth of land and sea;
By your pa - tient years of toil - ing, by your si - lent hours of pain,
by your pray - ing, by your will - ing that your peo - ple should be one,

fill us with your love and pit - y, heal our wrong, and help our need.
we but stew - ards of your boun - ty held in sol - emn trust will be.
quench our fe - vered thirst of plea - sure, stem our self - ish greed of gain.
grant, oh, grant our hope's fru - i - tion: here on earth your will be done.

Evangelical Lutheran Worship, 655

Text: Somerset C. Lowry

Music: IN BABILONE, Oude en Nieuwe Hollandse Boerenlities en Contradansen, 1710;

arr. Julius Röntgen

Text and music are in the public domain. May be reproduced without restriction.



Annual Meeting Minutes

January 29, 2023

The meeting was called to order at 10:04 am by Council President, Rick Zimmerman. Paul Mills moved with second by Jess Denner. Motion carried.

Pastor Nat lead an opening prayer.

There was a motion to approve the 2022 Annual Meeting minutes. Paul Mills moved with second by Erica Weeks-Burger. Motion carried.

Elections:

Doug Mackey gave Election Committee report. Currently Dave White and Sara Seigfried have agreed to run. There are two openings. There were no floor nominations. Andrew Denner moved to elect them to the open council positions by unanimous consent. Ben Johnson seconded. The motion carried with no opposed.

Financials:

Erica Weeks-Burger gave financial report of 2023 budget. Some of the budget line items were adjusted to better reflect where expenses fall. Have not budgeted for a giving increase but expenses. We will still have the organ serviced. We are still on the list. Non-offering giving is where we show money for specific expenses, i.e. poinsettias. There was discussion of how the Thank Offering is shown in the budget as it is a restricted fund.

Synod giving has decreased to 6% from 7%. It is in line with what other congregations are giving and is due to our projection of a short fall.

Benediction by Pastor Nat.



Above: Levsen Organ Company of Buffalo, Iowa completed a 20 year service of BLC's organ in 2023. The process involved dismantling and cleaning more than 1000 pipes, followed by reassembly and tuning.



Above: Rick and Alison prepare the coolers for Ragbrai. Below this: a new Angel Tree debuts in 2023 just in time for Christmas at Bethlehem.

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



Pastor's Report

Submission by

Pastor Nat

It's not all sunshine and rainbows out there. Maybe that's especially true in an election year. It's becoming all too familiar though: the half-truths, outright lies, intolerance, fearfulness, and hate. What gives me hope: Christians have navigated worse than this.

The early church navigated plenty. The "good news" wasn't just scarce in those days, it was openly attacked and suppressed. Paul didn't deny the reality of the adversities he faced; instead he used this to God's advantage. As Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 4, "...we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way but not crushed, perplexed but not driven to despair, persecuted but not forsaken, struck down but not destroyed..." Paul's suffering is inarguable. His faith in the midst of suffering is even more notable still.

The early church contended with a lot in its day (things like false teachers, misbehaving elites, misinformation, and outright persecution). Paul himself was shipwrecked three times, imprisoned, beaten, and bitten by a snake (see Acts). Notice though, Paul's witness: he points to hope in a time of hopelessness. Notice too: the historical record. Christianity endures.

As I've reflected on 2023, I see parallels. The world around us is, for the most part, a hot mess. And yet, here we are. A community of saints who continue to faithfully gather at a place called Bethlehem.

And the ideal is what it has always been: to love God and to love one another. It's counter-cultural: the work that Christ calls us to. We're doing those things here at BLC. We're welcoming those who don't look like us. We're caring for the hungry, the poor, and the sick. We're teaching our young people to trust in the reality of things unseen. Who

does that anymore? Well, the answer is "we do." And not just us, but Christ through us.

As I've said in years' past, there's a lot to celebrate in the pages to follow. To repost a few words from just last year: "in the midst of so much that remains uncertain, there's room for gratitude. As you flip through this report, notice the names and faces who helped make [2023] happen. Notice the resiliency and the generosity of this church. Notice the faithfulness of Bethlehem's people as you notice the Holy Spirit's persistent [work through you]."

"⁷ But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. ⁸ We are afflicted in every way but not crushed, perplexed but not driven to despair, ⁹ persecuted but not forsaken, struck down but not destroyed..."

2 Corinthians 4:7-9
NRSV

Peace be with you Bethlehem. By the grace of God, we get to do it again for another year. There are challenges yet to come, but new life and unexpected joys too.



Parish Report

Submission by

Ann Mills

Members Received in 2023

Adults Baptized	0
Children Baptized	5
Received by Affirmation of Faith	6
Received by Baptism	5
Received by Confirmation	0
Received by Transfer	1

Members Removed in 2023

by Death	3
by Transfer	2

Confirmed Membership 440*

**this number will change as a) new members are received, b) existing members are removed, and/or c) lapsed records are identified and updated.*



Official Acts of Bethlehem Lutheran Church as Recorded in the Congregational Record (2023)

Baptisms (5)

Luke Andrew Houser
Taytum Mae Estabrooks
Isaac Alexander Denner
Norah Ralene Rosing
Robert Curtis Burger

New Members (6)

Nancy Nelson
Rick, Alison, and Aksel Peterson
Scott and Susan Ramfjord

Confirmations (4)

Karsen William Dean Cleverley
Hailey Lauren Estrem
Caden Charles Krause
Aksel Wayne Peterson

Deaths and Committals (7)

Max Raines
Dustin James Ihle
Nancy Kay Coons
John Wayne Kennedy
Matthew Wisecup
Robert Ragnar Leon Boyarksy
James Richard Mallon

Marriages (1)

Sawyer Jo Elwell and Cody Ihle





President's Report

Submission by

Doug Mackey

Beginning with the subject of property maintenance, 2023 seemed to go quite well compared to prior years. Levsen Organ Company rebuilt BLC's organ (a planned project that had been in the works the last couple of years). That 20-year service was completed in 2023. Other things popped up that weren't necessarily scheduled. Obviously with a building as old as ours, that's not so surprising. This year we discovered a bat infestation that required our prompt attention. We also had work done on a sump line that was installed when we upgraded the elevator years ago. Both of these projects were important but relatively minor compared to other recent work (such as the new boilers and an A/C unit replacement).

This last summer we found ourselves with a great opportunity to invest in Bethlehem's music ministry. With the use of some unrestricted funds, we purchased a baby grand piano locally. Some work on the choir loft is required yet to accommodate this piano, but that work should begin relatively soon.

One area that Council spent time on is understanding governance and the church's ministry structure. It's important that Council fulfills its oversight role while supporting ministry teams and standing committees in their work. As the council continues to think about how a church is uniquely structured, we hope this equips BLC to minister even more effectively.

A related area of focus is the work of the executive board in 2023 on an updated church constitution. The executive board is made up of the officers of the council and Pastor. We went through our constitution and bylaws and amended this document per Synod requirements. That work continues, but we plan to submit a final draft to the S. E. Iowa Synod in 2024 for their approval. Following the Synod's approval, we will bring that

draft to the congregation for adoption by a congregational vote.

This year in ministry included a number of very successful events such as the debut of Bingo and our RAGBRAI hospitality. Other events returned including the golf outing & silent auction, our annual Thank Offering, and Christmas at Bethlehem. Together, these additional activities helped Bethlehem finish 2023 in the black. Our 2024 budget projects a deficit (as 2023's budget projected a deficit). Your support of events such as those mentioned above will again play a significant role in 2024.

One last topic I should mention is a word of thanks to those who have served this congregation so faithfully in their time at BLC. Ann Mills has wrapped up her tenure as secretary. Ann graciously extended her stay in the church office through 1/15/24 so as



Above: Bishop Amy Current of the SE Iowa synod stops to survey the pies during Ragbrai. 2023 inflows exceeded expectations due in large part to these and other outreach events and a strong Thank Offering. These proceeds have been carried forward and earmarked for 2024 "faith formation" expenses by BLC's Council.



President's Report

Submission by
Doug Mackey

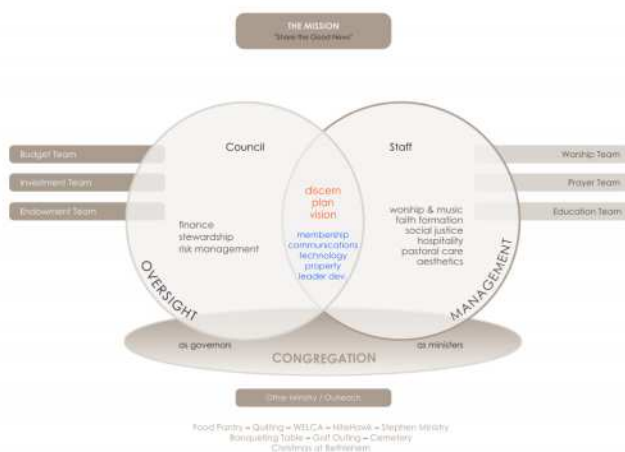
to allow Susan Ramfjord time to get oriented in her new role. Susan has agreed to serve in a part-time interim capacity as Bethlehem's administrative assistant, and we are extremely grateful for her willingness to serve in this way. Also this year (sadly), it is likely that William Polzin will transition out of BLC as our organist and choir leader. William's full-time work is expected to call him out of Iowa sooner rather than later (perhaps as early as late spring '24). I mention this with some hesitation

because nothing is yet final. Your Council is aware, and we'll do all we can to support William as we know more. Regardless, Bethlehem has been blessed by both Ann and William's service.

Finally, I want to share that I consider it an honor to serve Bethlehem as council president. Bethlehem has been our church home for the last 25 years. I will always do all I can to work to preserve our church's well-being.

2023 Church Council

Doug Mackey, President
Paul Mills, Vice President
Andy Denner, Secretary
Matt Curran
Sarah Seigfried
Joan Schoon
Lisa Wason
Ann White
Dave White
Pastor Nat



Above: Adapted from Dan Hotchkiss' book "Governance and Ministry: Rethinking Board Leadership." BLC's updated constitution affirms the shared work of Council, Pastor, and People where "Jesus" occupies first place.

Above: Jill Wheeler leads a training session after worship on BLC's new AED unit. Council members applied for (and successfully received) a grant offered by the Iowa Heart Foundation. This grant funded the purchase of the life-saving device.



Financial Reports

Submission by

Erica Weeks-Burger

2023 Year End Operating Budget & 2024 Projected

The generosity of BLC members (and non-members) helps fund BLC's operating expenses throughout the year. Occasionally, restricted funds are employed as "transfers in" (as needs arise that specifically relate to designated funds).

Pictured right: Year End actual receipts for 2022, 2023, as well as budgeted projections for 2024.

GENERAL FUND	2022	2023	2023	2024
RECEIPTS	YTD	YTD	Budget	Budget
OFFERINGS:				
Envelopes	\$100,974.30	\$127,660.00	\$118,000.00	\$125,000.00
Electronic	\$39,202.85	\$45,596.56	\$45,000.00	\$46,000.00
Loose Offerings	\$3,978.50	\$5,581.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00
Total Offerings:	\$144,155.65	\$178,837.56	\$168,000.00	\$176,000.00

OTHER INCOME:				
WORSHIP & SERVICE				
Flowers	\$835.00	\$1,556.00	\$0.00	\$1,500.00
Services	\$533.00	\$2,243.00	\$0.00	\$2,500.00
Total Worship & Service:	\$1,368.00	\$3,799.00	\$0.00	\$4,000.00
OUR CHURCH HOME				
Property Improvements	\$0.00	\$150.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Utilities	\$220.03	\$172.69	\$0.00	\$0.00
Total Our Church Home:	\$220.03	\$322.69	\$0.00	\$0.00
OUTREACH & MINISTRY				
Christmas at Bethlehem	\$310.00	\$1,350.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Community Outreach	\$950.00	\$3,202.00	\$750.00	\$750.00
Congregational Outreach	\$179.00	\$110.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Other Benevolence	-\$486.60	\$1,415.84	\$0.00	\$0.00
Total Outreach & Ministry	\$952.40	\$6,077.84	\$750.00	\$750.00
Total Other Income:	\$2,540.43	\$10,199.53	\$5,250.00	\$4,750.00
TOTAL RECEIPTS:	\$146,696.08	\$189,037.09	\$173,250.00	\$180,750.00

TRANSFERS IN:				
Transfer in from Money Market	\$35,825.00	\$22,200.00	\$16,200.00	\$0.00
Transfer in from Restricted Funds	\$20,182.40	\$25,141.45	\$5,250.76	\$11,150.00
Music & Tuning	\$101.65	\$4,000.00	\$1,500.00	\$4,500.00
Total Worship & Service:	\$101.65	\$4,000.00	\$1,500.00	\$4,500.00
OUR CHURCH HOME				
Refresh & Renew	\$0.00	\$245.15	\$0.00	\$0.00
Repairs & Maintenance	\$2,314.59	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Total Our Church Home:	\$2,314.59	\$245.15	\$0.00	\$0.00
FAITH FORMATION				
Adult Education	\$500.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,000.00
Bibles	\$0.00	\$420.97	\$0.00	\$0.00
Campership	\$633.00	\$700.76	\$700.76	\$1,000.00
Confirmation	\$175.77	\$277.56	\$500.00	\$500.00
EPIC Scholarship	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$300.00	\$300.00
Sunday School	\$678.63	\$1,071.73	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00
Vacation Bible School	\$261.59	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$500.00
Youth Education	\$128.02	\$37.40	\$250.00	\$250.00
Total Faith Formation:	\$2,377.01	\$2,508.42	\$2,750.76	\$4,550.00
OUTREACH & MINISTRY				
Bingo	\$0.00	\$500.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Christmas at Bethlehem	\$0.00	\$2,850.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Christmas Baskets	\$0.00	\$219.45	\$0.00	\$500.00
Community Outreach	\$856.61	\$830.29	\$500.00	\$800.00
Congregational Outreach	\$283.12	\$1,623.87	\$500.00	\$800.00
Golf Outing	\$4,365.00	\$4,050.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Total Outreach & Ministry:	\$5,504.73	\$10,073.61	\$1,000.00	\$2,100.00
OTHER/MIXED USE				
General Use	\$140.95	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Thank Offering	\$9,743.47	\$8,314.27	\$0.00	\$0.00
Total Other Mixed Use:	\$9,884.42	\$8,314.27	\$0.00	\$0.00
TOTAL TRANSFERS IN:	\$56,007.40	\$47,341.45	\$21,450.76	\$11,150.00



Financial Reports

Submission by

Erica Weeks-Burger

2023 Year End Operating Budget & 2024 Projected (cont.)

Our 2023 budget initially anticipated a \$23,000 deficit, and this was a transparent assessment in 2022. By the grace of God and through the generosity of many, BLC outperformed this projection in '23. Events such as bingo, the golf tournament, silent auction, and Christmas at Bethlehem helped supplement regular giving. A strong Thank Offering Sunday closed the gap—allowing BLC to meet its operating expenses for the year.

Pictured right: Year End actual expenses for 2022, 2023, as well as budgeted net totals for 2024.

GENERAL FUND EXPENSES	2022 YTD	2023 YTD	2023 Budget	2024 Budget
WORSHIP & SERVICE				
Music & Tuning	\$169.38	\$15,525.40	\$17,700.00	\$4,500.00
Worship Expenses	\$3,933.57	\$6,546.31	\$4,000.00	\$0.00
Events				\$200.00
Flowers				\$1,300.00
IT				\$250.00
Printing				\$2,000.00
Service Supplies				\$700.00
Worship Planning				\$550.00
Total Worship & Service:	\$4,102.95	\$22,071.71	\$21,700.00	\$9,500.00
OUR CHURCH HOME				
Custodial Supplies	\$353.93	\$333.71	\$500.00	\$500.00
Insurance	\$8,676.50	\$9,370.25	\$5,000.00	\$9,500.00
Property Improvements	\$0.00	\$4,454.79	\$0.00	\$2,000.00
Refresh & Renew	\$0.00	\$245.15	\$0.00	\$0.00
Repairs & Maintenance	\$44,107.00	\$7,463.39	\$3,500.00	\$5,000.00
Snow Removal Services	\$0.00	\$420.00	\$500.00	\$0.00
Utilities	\$12,051.69	\$13,931.32	\$13,000.00	\$13,000.00
Total Our Church Home:	\$65,189.12	\$36,218.61	\$22,500.00	\$30,000.00
FAITH FORMATION				
Adult Education	\$950.33	\$491.99	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00
Camperships	\$633.00	\$750.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00
Confirmation	\$350.59	\$435.22	\$500.00	\$500.00
EPIC Scholarship	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$300.00	\$300.00
Sunday School	\$498.64	\$1,335.04	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00
Vacation Bible School	\$261.59	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$500.00
Youth Education Expenses	\$128.02	\$37.40	\$250.00	\$250.00
Total Faith Formation:	\$2,822.17	\$3,049.65	\$4,050.00	\$4,550.00
OUTREACH & MINISTRY				
Banqueting Table	\$0.00	\$51.37	\$0.00	\$250.00
Cemetery Expense	\$1,000.00	\$1,993.90	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00
Christmas at Bethlehem	\$0.00	\$1,957.83	\$0.00	\$0.00
Christmas Baskets	\$0.00	\$240.70	\$0.00	\$500.00
Community Outreach	\$867.95	\$788.76	\$500.00	\$800.00
Congregational Outreach	\$531.52	\$2,198.78	\$500.00	\$800.00
Golf Outing Expense	\$0.00	\$10.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Other Benevolence	\$272.00	\$827.03	\$750.00	\$0.00
Southeastern Iowa Synod	\$10,018.16	\$11,171.29	\$10,080.00	\$10,560.00
Total Outreach & Ministry:	\$12,689.63	\$19,239.66	\$14,830.00	\$15,910.00
SUPPORT				
Church's Portion of FICA	\$1,874.10	\$1,925.57	\$2,222.33	\$1,858.37
Fees - Offering & Service Charges	\$2,220.29	\$1,846.44	\$1,200.00	\$1,300.00
Health & Pension	\$28,683.10	\$32,548.51	\$32,310.00	\$33,170.60
IT Computer Expense	\$645.82	\$387.45	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00
Miscellaneous	\$0.00	\$50.70	\$100.00	\$0.00
Office Expenses	\$1,761.43	\$4,026.04	\$3,000.00	\$0.00
Mailing & Postage				\$500.00
Office Supplies & Other				\$550.00
Printing				\$650.00
Software & Licenses				\$1,300.00
Pastor	\$69,236.99	\$79,722.62	\$80,345.35	\$84,172.62
Staff	\$24,498.02	\$25,582.82	\$30,771.04	\$29,775.60
Supply Pastors	\$1,977.41	\$2,180.52	\$2,000.00	\$2,100.00
Total Support:	\$130,897.16	\$148,270.67	\$154,948.72	\$158,377.20
TOTAL EXPENSES:	\$215,701.03	\$228,850.30	\$218,028.72	\$218,337.20
RECEIPTS LESS EXPENSES	-\$69,004.95	-\$39,813.21	-\$44,778.72	-\$37,587.20
RECEIPTS LESS EXPENSES PLUS TRANSFERS IN	-\$12,997.55	\$7,528.24	-\$23,327.96	-\$26,437.20



Memorials & Gifts

Memorial gifts are given throughout the year as a way of remembering those we've lost. These gifts are sometimes designated for a particular purpose; in other cases, they are undesignated. Memorial Gifts were received this year in loving memory of:

2023 Memorial Gifts

- Max Raines
- Jim Mallon
- Leo Richardson
- Karen Croft (Pederson)
- Bob Weeks
- Lois Becker
- Nilus Ihle
- Nancy Coons
- Dave Clark

2023 Designated Memorial Gifts

- Sunday School in memory of Max Raines
- Grand piano in memory of Dave Clark
- Music in memory of Nilus Ihle, Lois Becker, and Bob Weeks

2023 Other Designated Gifts

- Christmas Baskets
- Cemetery Project
- Food Pantry
- Love Your Neighbor Fund
- Mission Outreach
- National Christian Foundation Grant
- Angel Tree
- Bingo
- Kitchen Remodel
- Christmas at Bethlehem Sponsorship
- Golf Sponsorship
- Sunday School
- Men's bathroom changing table

Thank Offering

Thank Offering Sunday is a fall harvest tradition that celebrates God's provision at a time of relative abundance. Thank Offering proceeds often help close budget gaps and fund new ministry projects. Gone are the days of donating beans and corn, though Thank Offering Sunday remains a deeply-personal (and visible) statement of faith.

2023 Thank Offering

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| • Undesignated Gifts Received | \$18,039.00 |
| • Designated Gifts Received | \$1,300.00 |



Above: In September of 2023, BLC was presented with an opportunity to purchase a lightly-used Baldwin M baby grand piano. The piano was inspected by members of Council, William Polzin, Johnathan Bell, and a local piano tuner. The assessed value & overall condition of the instrument checked out. Modifications to BLC's choir loft will happen in early 2024 with the piano to be moved & tuned thereafter. This project is being generously funded by existing memorial gifts and recent pledges.



Financial Reports

Submission by

Mike Helland

Endowment Funds

The Bethlehem Endowment Committee was formed in 2005. The committee met several times with the ELCA and adopted resolutions that were approved by the Council and the fund began its mission. The mission of the Endowment Fund is to accept and manage gifts from church members directed toward the mission of the church. The committee annually distributes 4% of its funds. The funds are distributed across four categories: Congregation, Community, Synod/State, and Global. This year's disbursements were as follows:



Amount to distribute: \$3385.00

Applicant	Congregation (25-45%)	Community (10-35%)	Synod/State (10-35%)	Global (10-35%)
1 Slater Legion		\$200.00		
2 BLC Youth	\$300.00			
3 Climb for Haiti				\$800.00
4 Slater Library		\$200.00		
5 Sunday School	\$200.00			
6 Riverside			\$400.00	
7 Food Pantry	\$1000.00	\$285		
	\$1500.00	\$685.00	\$400.00	\$800.00

Endowment Committee

Mike Helland, Mike Fairchild, Bill White



Financial Reports

Submission by

Juli Helland

Investment Funds

Bethlehem's Investment Committee manages a portfolio of holdings that include undesignated gifts and other assets not associated with normal Sunday offering activity. It's the committee's responsibility to balance the competing priorities of both 'return on investment' and 'liquidity.' Much of

this portfolio is comprised of memorial gifts that were originally given to fund the ministry of BLC. It's the Committee's responsibility to safekeep these funds at the highest possible return until such time as they are employed elsewhere (e.g. a future kitchen project).

Summary of Holdings

MISSION INVESTMENT FUNDS

Certificate	Matures	Interest	3/31/2023	6/30/2023	9/30/2023	11/30/2023
CD1754	02/16/26	3.350%	\$32,000.00	\$32,000.00	\$32,000.00	\$32,000.00
CD1746	02/18/24	0.648%	\$32,000.00	\$32,000.00	\$32,000.00	\$32,000.00
CD4475	04/28/25	4.400%	\$30,000.00	\$30,000.00	\$30,000.00	\$30,000.00
CD7047	02/27/24	1.490%	\$39,219.62	\$39,362.30	\$39,510.33	\$39,658.92
7403	(N/A)	0.510%	\$24,395.01	\$25,000.79	\$25,629.70	\$26,289.34
			\$157,614.63	\$158,363.09	\$159,140.03	\$159,948.26

EDWARD JONES

	3/31/2023	6/30/2023	9/30/2023	11/30/2023
Muni Bond, Mutual Fund, CD's	\$296,528.21	\$295,543.74	\$285,255.54	\$296,866.30
Parsonage	\$21,227.73	\$22,547.62	\$21,794.36	\$22,703.29
Memorial IRA				\$0.00
	\$317,755.94	\$318,091.36	\$307,049.90	\$319,589.59

Mission Investment				\$159,948.26
Edward Jones				\$319,589.59
Total				\$479,537.85

Misc. Notes:

*The Dunlap memorial IRA bundled into existing Edward Jones account

*6/23/2023 \$15,200.00 withdraw for organ repairs

Investment Committee

Juli Helland, Trent Seigfried, Doug Houser, Jon Johnson



Ministry Reports

Submission by

BLC Education Team

Sunday School (Preschool-6th)

The BLC Education Team strives to teach our children the word of God, the importance of church and community, and serving others in a welcoming and fun atmosphere. We kicked off the 2023-24 program year on September 10th with a fun-filled rally Sunday that included fellowship, snacks and outdoor activities. We have 43 children actively attending from preschool through grade six.

Children start each Sunday enjoying snacks with other members of the congregation before heading upstairs where they sing out their praises with the help of Kathy Cline, Jennifer Bramble, and Anders Dovre. The music they practice gets shared with the congregation one Sunday each month. After music, students discuss lessons from the Bible. In addition, our first through grade six program works to familiarize our children with the Ten Commandments and The Lord's Prayer. Ann Krause and Ann White lead the 3 through 6-year-old classroom where they make the day's lesson enjoyable for our youngest participants.

Students performed their Christmas program on December 10th during our worship service. Through song and narration, our children reminded us of the real reason for Christmas (Jesus!) and reflected on what it means to truly believe. Extra volunteers stepped in to help plan this program, which was wonderful. A special thank you to Tami Staples for writing and directing the program, as well as Jennifer Bramble and Kathy Cline who shared their musical gifts to help prepare students for the

program music. We were proud of the students for learning speaking parts in addition to songs and we're always amazed at the work of the Holy Spirit through our young people. A big thank you to parents and volunteers who make everything possible for our Sunday School kids.



BLC Education Team

Jamie Albertsen
Jen Dovre
Amy Holmes

Above Top: Kindergarten students receive their Spark Bibles. Below this: "Where are You Christmas?" took center stage on the 2nd Sunday of Advent, 2023.



Ministry Reports

Submission by

Jess Denner & Pastor Nat

VBS Week (Preschool-5th)

Approximately 40 kids participated in our 2023 Vacation Bible School week under the theme of “Hero Hotline.” We had 10-15 adult volunteers on hand to assist from both BLC and Slater United Methodist Church. It was Slater UMC’s year to host, and we had a fun week learning how to be a hero in God’s eyes.



2024 is here, and we are already starting to look at dates and available VBS programs. Bethlehem hosts this year, and we’ll once again target late July or early August. We give thanks for our neighbors with kids who continue to make VBS a priority each year. We’re thankful as well for the long-standing partnership Bethlehem enjoys with our Methodist friends. Watch for more details to come and we look forward to what 2024 will bring!

VBS Contributors

Jess & Andy Denner
Marcia & Howard Taylor
Kurt Jones

Confirmation Camp

Bethlehem has long supported summer camp opportunities for young people, and to that end, it offers camperships still today. For 2023, we tried something new. Pastor Nat and Pastor Minna led a group of confirmation kids to Lutheran Lakeside Camp on Spirit Lake. Capitol Hill Lutheran Church in Des Moines provided 15 passenger van and a driver. It was a warm week at camp, but the kids sang, swam, and learned more about the love of God in Jesus Christ. It was a trial run of sorts for Pastors Nat and Minna (& Ada). For 2024, the Bothwell’s are looking to take a small group to Camp Ewalu near Strawberry Point, Iowa.



Above Top: Willow and Ada make the most of their time at Lutheran Lakeside Camp. Below this: The Power Rangers were our celebrity guests for this year’s VBS week — fitting the week’s “Hero” theme.



Ministry Reports

Submission by

Judy & Craig Whitney

Slater/Sheldahl Food Pantry

The Slater/Sheldahl Food Pantry was established in 1983. It is run by Judy and Craig Whitney and made possible by many volunteers.

The Slater/Sheldahl Food Pantry's purpose is to provide a welcoming and friendly environment for people within our communities to come and get food and other items necessary to provide food assistance for their families. In addition to the items available at the pantry, we give our clients a voucher for Town and Country Market so they are able to purchase items we may not have that they need. Our main goal is to lessen the number of hungry children, but we will provide food assistance to anyone who asks. Our only requirement is that their income falls within the Federal Food Guidelines, which change each July 1st. This year, with the cost of most items increasing, the numbers requesting our help have also increased. Residents and businesses have been very generous and, since we operate totally on donations, we have been able to help everyone who requested our help. In

addition to our usual services, we helped facilitate an Angel Tree and additional Christmas baskets in 2023.

We feel very blessed to be doing God's ministry through our work at the Food Pantry. Our communities certainly could survive without us, but we help make their lives better through our work. Our prayer is that God will allow us to continue this ministry for a very long time.

***Note:** Pantry open hours are Tuesday mornings from 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. and Wednesday evenings from 7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. Clients may come to the pantry twice a month. When visiting the pantry clients receive approximately enough food to feed them for 3 to 4 days and according to the number of people in their household. Free pet food is also available to food pantry clients, courtesy of the Ames Pet Food Bank.*

Community Food Pantry Volunteers

Julie Krause, Sarah Ingham, Ann White, Martha Sheldahl, Bill and Julie Britton, Susan Ramfjord, Cindi Zimmermann, Ann Krause, Howard Taylor, Scott and Rita Thorson, Kim Reed, Rose Arrasmith, Paul Mills, Cindy Johnson, Susie Schaudt, Myrna Harmon, and Judy and Craig Whitney



Above: It was a generous Thank Offering Sunday at BLC both in terms of financial support and donations of food and personal care items for the community food pantry. Not pictured: still more donations lining the office halls.



Ministry Reports

Submission by

Barb Mallon and Bill White

Cemetery Committee

Our cemetery is an important ministry of this church and its members. Continual maintenance reflects just how beautiful it is. This year, the trees along the road were removed and all stones were cleaned with help from volunteers and the Boy Scouts. Its location makes it visible and all the more important to maintain.

The Team sorted through files and old records to ensure correct names for each plot and to find unmarked graves of older burials. A master map of the cemetery was then updated and placed on the wall in the NE meeting room upstairs. A kiosk was built by the team and placed at the east drive. A lot map, and an alphabetical list of names and lot numbers, and a list of military graves can now be viewed in the kiosk. Also posted are the cemetery regulations.

To do: Continue the work of raising and leveling stones. Create lane markers. Add metal identification tags to worn stones. Make completed obituary and genealogy searches available online. Update the Find-A-Grave website.

A visit to Bethlehem Cemetery evokes feelings of peace, connection, love and memories. Walking through the cemetery and reading names and dates on the stones makes you wonder about that person's life and what Slater was like during that time. There are very old military stones and sadly, too many stones of babies and children who were placed there upon their young death. Families moved on and now we are the keepers of their memories. God is with them and with us as we care for their stones. While visiting, stop for a moment to reflect and pray for all those buried in our care. Anyone with time, technical skills, genealogical interest and a desire to help with this work, please feel free to contact our team.

Cemetery Committee

Denny Mitchell, Joan Schoon, Dave White,
Barbara Mallon

Property Team

The property team supports Church Council priorities and keeps God's people warm, safe, and comfortable at BLC. We perform regular maintenance throughout the year while tending to emerging concerns related to Bethlehem's church home.

2023 Projects

A few property projects that were completed or put in motion during the calendar year of 2023:

- Mirror hung by elevator entrance
- Light bulbs were replaced in the sanctuary
- Bat remediation was performed in the church attic, entrance areas were sealed and bat guano removed
- Coordinated an agreement to serve as a Red Cross Disaster Relief site in the event of a local emergency
- Coordinated an agreement with 72 Degrees for service on heating and cooling unit
- Coordinated exterior spring cleanup effort
- Installed dry erase vinyl over chalkboard in confirmation room
- Installed AED cabinet
- Seasonal installation and removal of air conditioner in the Food Pantry

Future Work

- Upgrade the custodial room for easier access and usage
- Knock down the old garage and remove all debris
- Help clean the pantry and remove unnecessary objects
- Continue to support Council initiatives as needed.

Property Team

Ben Johnson, Paul Mills, Rick Peterson, Kelvin Schoon,
and Bill White



Ministry Reports

Submission by

Cindi Zimmermann

Stephen Ministry

2023 marked the 7th year for Stephen Ministry at Bethlehem Lutheran. BLC joined forces with Slater and Sheldahl United Methodist churches to provide support to members of our congregations and community. Stephen Ministers are lay congregation members trained to provide care to those experiencing difficult times. We are not counselors, but friends who provide a listening ear, support, and prayers. Everything shared with a Stephen Minister is kept in confidence and received with a non-judgmental heart and an open mind. A Stephen Minister typically has one care receiver at a time and meets with that person once a week for about an hour. In addition, Stephen Ministers meet as a group monthly to do continuing education, discuss ideas to improve our care, and provide support to each other. We had 7 active Stephen Ministers between our congregations in 2023.

Stephen Ministers are 'caregivers' but God is the 'cure giver'. Psalm 55:22a says: Cast your cares upon the Lord and He will sustain you. Stephen Ministry multiplies blessings throughout the church and community and allows congregations to carry out Christ's commandment to "Love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12 RSV) in a powerful and practical way.



Bethlehem Stephen Ministers:

Bonnie Dingman
Ronna Hoppenworth
Gary Ihle
Kelvin Schoon
John Sheldahl
Craig Whitney
Cindi Zimmermann

Slater Sheldahl UMC Stephen Ministers:

Connie Peterson
Barb White





Ministry Reports

Submission by

Myrna Harmon and Jess Denner

BLCW (Bethlehem Lutheran Church Women)

As a community of women created in the image of God, called to discipleship in Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves to grow in faith, affirm our gifts, support one another in our callings, engage in ministry and action, and promote healing and wholeness in the church, the society, and the world.

The Bethlehem Lutheran Church Women (BLCW) gather the third Tuesday of each month for bible study and fellowship at 2:00 pm in the church basement. The BLCW Circle is an opportunity to gather with others to study God's word and share with each other our concerns and joys on our journey with Jesus. The BLCW Circle uses the ELCA magazine entitled, *Gather*, as a guide for the lessons, with a variety of topics and themes. Such themes have included Nature and Quilting. The group varies in number from 5-12. A free will offering is collected, and the proceeds benefit charitable causes. Pastor Nat regularly checks in on the group for a few minutes and answers any questions the group may have. Everyone is welcome!

Evening Women's Bible Study

We started out the year by reading the book "How (Not) to Save the World: The Truth about Revealing God's Love to the People Right Next to You" by Hosanna Wong.

This study group finished the year by starting the book: "I Am - An 8-session Bible Study of John (The Son Reveals the Father)." This book references the bible a little more and helps the group get more in depth with the stories of the bible and how they reflect in our every day lives.

Though we no longer meet at the Nite Hawk (which was prone to get noisy), this study group typically meets on the 3rd or 4th Monday of the month as schedules allow. We are now referring to ourselves as the Evening Women's Bible Study group.

BLC Quilters

We have an industrious group of quilters who meet on the 1st and 3rd Monday mornings of each month to make quilts for the benefit of Lutheran World Relief and Des Moines homeless shelters. On average, Lutheran World Relief distributes more than 300,000 quilts worldwide each year. Our quilting group is always ready to welcome new faces, and you have an interest, they're happy to show you a few things. Please contact the church office for more information.



Above: On average, Lutheran World Relief distributes more than 300,000 quilts worldwide each year. Bethlehem's quilters share their work with LWF annually.



Ministry Reports

Submission by

Brenda Neville

Hospitality Team

Hospitality takes many forms at BLC, but the kitchen is where much of that activity begins. Sunday mornings after worship, volunteers host snacks and treats for all ages. On Easter morning and again on Thank Offering Sunday, the church Council hosts a breakfast or similar meal. As the church hosts grieving families, a meal is graciously served by the women of BLC. Bethlehem's kitchen remains a place of fellowship, connection, and new life. Our Banqueting Table meals are another visible example of BLC's commitment to hospitality.

All Ages Fellowship

Rose Arrasmith, BLC Church Council, Lona Boyrasky, Julie & Bill Britton, Holly Christensen, Stacey and Matt Curran, Bonnie Dingman, Jen Dovre Tabatha Eatock, Al & LuAnn Erickson, Norma Erickson, Emily Gibson, Lora Gibson, Kathy Harkin, Amanda Houser, Sharon Ihle, Angela Johnson, Cindy Johnson, Sharon Mackey, Barb Mallon, Nancy Nelson, Brenda Neville, Allison Peterson, Susan Ramfjord, Linsey Rosing family, Joan & Kelvin Schoon, Martha and John Sheldahl, Stephen Ministers, Marcia Taylor, Jill Wheeler, Judy and Craig Whitney, & Cindy Zimmerman

Banqueting Table

The main objective of these Wednesday night meals is to feed anyone and everyone in the community. It's a time of much-needed fellowship, not to mention a home-cooked meal made with care. Twice each month from October to May, the BLC kitchen hosts this community event from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. downstairs. Many stop in to visit and sit down, but our take out orders have continued to grow in popularity too.

A few fun facts about BLC's Banqueting Table:



Most popular meals:

(based on overall attendance and freewill offering)

1. Tater Tot Casserole
2. (TIE) Lasagna and Ham Balls
3. Soup Supper

Total Number of People attended: 642

(October 2022 - May 2023)

Average Attendance: 58

Highest Number of meals served : 94

(Tater Tot Casserole Meal - 2023)

Lowest Number of meals served: 28

(Casey's Pizza)

Largest Donation Collected in one Night: \$362

(2023 Ham Ball Meal)

Biggest Factor for not Attending:

(based on collective feedback to date)

People get busy & forget.

All are welcome at BLC's Banqueting Table and God's presence is felt in so many ways by way of this effort. From preparing the food, to serving and sitting down together to share a meal, we're reminded of God's near presence continually. We also feel God's presence as we distribute the leftover food to families in need from the Slater area. This is a special and important ministry of Bethlehem that we hope continues to reach even more people in 2024.

Banqueting Table Team

Cindy Johnson, Barb Kahler, Julie Krause
Brenda Neville & Elaine Raines



The Office of the Bishop
equips and supports
leaders and congregations
to be witnesses to
the Good News of Jesus Christ.

The Office of the Bishop exists to oversee the proclamation of the gospel and to serve with and among the many ministry partners of this synod.

The Office of the Bishop:

- Seeks to be present with and among the congregations and leaders of this synod,
- Works intentionally with congregations during times of transition and crisis,
- Convenes people for mutual support, fostering health and wholeness,
- Facilitates congregational renewal,
- Builds connections between local congregations, other ministry partners and the wider church.

Your Mission Support

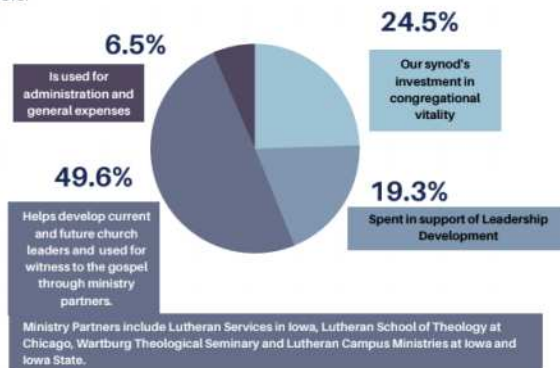
When you give money to your local congregation through pledges or your weekly offerings, a portion of that money is shared with the Southeastern Iowa Synod. This is called Mission Support.

These funds are then used to help other congregations, leaders in the church, local and regional partners, ELCA churchwide ministries and global ministries, and more.

YOUR MISSION SUPPORT HELPS FUNDS MINISTRIES BEYOND YOUR CONGREGATION

SYNOD MINISTRIES

46.5% of everything shared with the Southeastern Iowa Synod helps support our synod investment in congregation vitality, support and development of church leaders, and our witness to the gospel through local ministries and partners.



Message from the Bishop

On behalf of the Southeastern Iowa Synod, thank you for the ways you have imagined what's possible in community together at the foot of the cross.

Because of the faithful generosity of you and your congregation, we have been able to accomplish so much together this year.

Together we accompany individuals and congregations in ministry, proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ, feed the hungry, and care for those on the margins. Together we equip saints for ministry and help those in congregations that are struggling in Iowa and beyond. Together we celebrate all that God has done and continues to do with and among us. Together we believe that God who is at work amongst us can do more than we can ask or imagine.

Gratefully,
Bishop Amy Current

