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**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.

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



## Pastor's Corner

Life out of nothing. It's not so foreign, that notion—after a few billion years of God's tinkering about. Genesis begins at the beginning with a formless void, and a Creator bent on creating. There was a great flood too... a reboot of sorts, and a new start. The Israelites were given a new lease on life after a time of slavery. There was life on the other side of a long walk in the wilderness. Life again, in Israel's return from exile. God stirred up life in Mary's empty womb. There was life again, on the other side of Christ's death. These are a few of the stories we Christians know. Life out of nothing— you'd think by now, the news wouldn't be so new (and yet, a living and loving God continues to surprise us still). Our giving has been better than expected in this time apart. Our weekly views on YouTube are meeting or exceeding a good Sunday in person. If you'd predicted as much 8 weeks ago, I might have laughed out loud (and not in a very pastoral way). Here we are, and Sunday mornings are very much alive. Add to that, the food pantry continues to receive great support (from all over). In addition to this, BLC's 'love your neighbor' fund is well-positioned now to help others in financial distress. On top of that, the old concrete is gone... the new steps are being poured (at a time when it's pretty okay to be without a front door). As I step back from this shared scene we've been living, I can't help but see evidence of God's continued tinkering. Life out of nothing. Even more remarkable, life in the midst of a whole lot of sickness, fear, division, and death. Church, you are witnesses to these things. We've been given front row seats, and faith says "I spy... the living God." It is a time of considerable uncertainty, yes, and also great creativity. Friends, I miss you all, but I know with certainty that you are out there, and the living God continues to go with, in, and under you still.

Peace, and stay safe everyone,  
Pastor Nat

### Bethlehem Lutheran Church

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Nat Bothwell, Pastor

### Church Council

Brenda Neville, President  
Stacey Cleverly  
Mike Helland  
Gary Ihle  
Ben Johnson  
Barb Mallon  
Lori McCasland  
Rita Thorson  
Erica Weeks-Burger  
Bill White  
Rick Zimmerman



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[youtube.com/c/bethlehemlutheran](https://youtube.com/c/bethlehemlutheran)



# Council Update

## From Your BLC Council

As we worked on this update, we reflected back to March when the COVID-19 pandemic was first emerging and like many other churches, we quickly sprang into action to take measures to provide continued service and outreach to the congregation. As we developed those plans, we honestly never anticipated that they would be in place for more than a few weeks or a month at the most. A stark reminder that someone else is ultimately in control, right?

Now here we are several months later, and we have all become accustomed to a life that looks dramatically different than we could have ever imagined. Widespread closures of public venues, telecommuting, social distancing, and gathering around our computers for worship service. Who would have thought?

But while the world as we knew it on March 1<sup>st</sup> is dramatically different now in May, we have survived and even thrived. We have adjusted to these new parameters and everyone has stepped up and offered assistance, suggestions, ideas, and most importantly a tremendous amount of grace as we have worked through many different obstacles. And in the end, we are even stronger and more unified as a congregation.

We built a livestream worship program from the ground up (literally) and every service continues to get more and more viewers. From the moment the announcement was made that large group gatherings were not allowed, we vowed that a livestream service was going to be priority number one. We wanted a “live” service because of the “real time” worship experience it offered as well as the opportunity for participants to interact with one another in “real time” with their comments. There was something comforting about that in our opinion. The success and appreciation for this worship format has exceeded even our most aggressive expectations. And because of the popularity and widespread participation, we are looking towards the future of this format and its profound ability to connect to even more of the BLC family. It would be short sighted to think that this service should end when the pandemic is behind us. So we continue to focus on another important question, How can we continue to provide this unique outreach going forward?

It also has become apparent as this new way of life has unfolded, that the financial foundation of BLC that has been established through years of generosity and discipline, has served us well. While we continue to be very judicious in our fiduciary responsibility as a council, we have been able to take solace in knowing that our finances are sound. The generous spirit of the congregation also prevails as contributions have continued to come in even though our sanctuary remains empty on Sunday morning. While we may not be at the level we were last year with weekly collections, we are not that far behind and that is yet another testament to very special group of people that are part of the BLC family.

We continue to look toward the future with great optimism and anticipation. The renovation of the front steps is underway; also planned: a new retaining wall and some long-overdue landscaping. Continued conversations are focusing on other priorities such as the Slater-Sheldahl Food Pantry and outreach to the congregation through some additional social activities. We are also exploring ways to enrich our pool of volunteers through a new and improved “time and talent” search and most importantly, we are already planning a special event to welcome everyone back when the pandemic restrictions are lifted and we are able to offer a safe environment for everyone to come and worship together. What a great celebration that will be!

In the meantime, continue to lift us up in prayer, reach out to others in whatever ways are possible and join us every Sunday through the livestream worship service. Together we will get through this and be even stronger than we were before. Thank you for your continued support and we look forward to seeing you soon!



## From the Bishop

Dear Friends in Christ,

I was privileged to help draft the ecumenical response to the governor's declaring that even as Iowa's rate of COVID-19 infection continues to grow, congregations are allowed to gather again for worship. To be sure, this increases some of the pressures people are feeling to resume in-person worship services. As promised, here are some thoughts and recommendations:

- First, the language of "opening up" is less helpful than "coming back" together. In these last weeks you have demonstrated that while buildings may be closed, the ministry of this church has never been shut down. I thank God for creative approaches to ministry that continue to emerge.
- The overwhelming evidence from the medical community makes it clear that it is still too soon for an unlimited return to in-person gatherings for worship. Determining the "right time" for balancing the risk and the need to be together is difficult to discern. It will be at least three more weeks before infection trends, resulting from several aspects of communal life resuming this week, will be evident. Waiting at least that long to decide about when to gather makes sense. As for me personally, I will not participate in any in-person gatherings before June, and then I will reassess.
- It is not too soon to be thinking strategically about what is needed to resume in-person worship. Not all congregations will "come back" at the same time. Decision-makers, (this really needs to be a team effort), should work together in weighing possibilities in light of local contexts, including the way space for gathering can be utilized so that the principles of social distancing can be maintained. Remember, this virus is highly transmissible, which requires taking pain-staking steps to minimize the risk of transmission. So be cautious. Because something can be done, does not mean that it should be done. Safety of participants and, by extension, safety for the larger community is critically important. The wisest decision-making will always involve wrestling with the tension between our deep desire to be together and what is in the best interests of the neighbor.

The governor's declaration assumes "deep cleaning" of church facilities. This is serious business and requires more attention than you might think. There are [specific guidelines provided by the CDC](#), state ([Iowa guidelines](#)), and local public health authorities. In addition to making sure you are adhering to the guidelines for cleaning, check with your insurance carrier. Some congregations have been warned of additional liability if an outbreak is tied to churches that have not followed the recommended cleaning requirements.

- In addition to provisions for social distancing anywhere in a church building that will be occupied by people when in-person worship resumes, pay attention to other important components of mitigation. People in at-risk categories should be discouraged from attending. No one who exhibits any symptoms of respiratory illness, particularly COVID-19, should be allowed on the premises. For Christians, it is a particularly heavy, but necessary burden to acknowledge that for a time at least, we cannot claim that "all are welcome." This is not about being exclusive. It is out of love for our neighbors and for the world.
- When the time comes to return, it is unwise to plan on doing everything that we have been missing while apart. First, learn what it means to be together under very different circumstances. Any "homecoming" to the church building should begin with a simple Service of the Word rather than with a service of Holy

Communion. Celebrating the meal safely while social distancing is going to be complicated enough and will require careful planning and teaching before attempting it. It will be difficult to resist, given the hunger that has been building for the meal in gathered worship.

- Recent studies have indicated that congregational singing adds to the risk because of the ways people breathe while singing. Regular congregational singing may be akin to a room full of people coughing, which is particularly dangerous during a viral pandemic that attacks the respiratory system.
- Initially, a single service will be more manageable than multiple services because of the cleaning that will be required between services so that those who attend a later service do not face higher risks. This suggests starting smaller than you might initially envision. Multiple services also increase the risk to those worship leaders who are present for each gathering.
- The freedom to gather for worship will increase the pressure to host or lead funerals or weddings. Current practices related to these types of worship, (for funerals, generally graveside only, limited to 10 or fewer people), should remain in place until in-person worship resumes in the congregation. Regarding funerals, local funeral directors may be of assistance.
- Even as congregations prepare to “come back,” whether, in a few weeks or months, people should be honest about the high likelihood that we will spend time apart again. Even if the virus goes “quiet” during the summer (which will require all the social/physical distancing we can muster), almost all the infectious disease experts are warning of the challenge this fall of coping with COVID-19 simultaneously with influenza when it reemerges.

May is a month of taking stock, planning, and resisting the temptation to move too quickly. The challenges are daunting. Even as restrictions are being relaxed, some things will get harder before they get easier. Still, our hope abounds. Jesus, The Good Shepherd knows how people are hurting. Jesus, the gate, beckons us to safety, opening the way to God’s love. Even when we cannot claim that “all are welcome: to be among us, we can rejoice in proclaiming that “all are welcome to God’s love.” Alleluia!

Peace to you, and life,  
Bishop Michael L. Burk  
Southeastern Iowa Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



## Looking Back

### Livestream Update

As of May 20th, BLC’s YouTube channel had 160 subscribers—with more than 600 hours of video streamed since mid March. We thank you for your continued participation in these live events! We are learning as we go, but it’s clear that Bethlehem is now reaching others as never before.

### Thank you

Special thanks to our Catholic friends from St. Malachy Parish in Madrid as they brought over 200 pounds of food for the Slater-Sheldahl Food Pantry (and over \$200 in gift cards as well)! This gift comes at a time when so many are in need—thank you St. Malachy’s!

### Clothing Pantry

The clothing Pantry will be taking a different path in the future. They will no longer accept clothing, but hope you will support local thrift stores with your donations. A very sincere “Thank you” to Martha Sheldahl and our clothing pantry volunteers as we now discern new ways of serving BLC’s neighbors in need.

### Confirmation Update

The 8th grade confirmation class will meet with Pastor Nat the first Wednesday of each month at 6:00 p.m. via Google Meet this summer. Our next online gathering is scheduled for Wednesday, June 3rd. As announced previously, Confirmation Sunday has been postponed until October 25th, 2020 (Reformation Sunday). Please pray for this group over these summer months, and be thinking about how you might celebrate with them in October (even if from some distance).

## Salute to Seniors!

**Jared Coomes**  
**Elizabeth Foster**  
**Maddie Kyhl**  
**Jon Lehms**



*Jon plans to attend Iowa State University in the fall.*

*“For I know the plans I have for you,”  
says the Lord. “They are plans for good  
and not for disaster,  
to give you a future and a hope.”*

**Jeremiah 29:11**

### Approved Council Minutes (April 2020)

2020 Bethlehem Lutheran Church Council Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, April 21, 2020

6:00 Conference Call

Attending: Stacey Cleverly, Mike Helland, Gary Ihle, Ben Johnson, Barb Mallon, Brenda Neville, Rita Thorson, Eric Weeks Burger, Bill White, Rick Zimmermann, Pastor Nat Bothwell, Lori McCasland

1. Welcome/Opening Prayer
2. Roll Call question/reflection  
“What is the thing you are looking forward to doing once the COVID-19 social distancing parameters are lifted?”

#### 3. Minutes Review/Approval

Motion to accept by Bill White, seconded by Rick Zimmermann. Motion passed.

Monthly Financial Review-Erica Weeks-Burger

A. Bigger expenses: equipment for live stream, one-time fee for yearly payroll program.

Motion to accept by Rita Thorson, seconded by Barb Mallon. Motion passed.

B. PPP-Payroll Protection Program: potentially forgivable loan from government

- 1) 2 ½ months of payroll
- 2) \$18,500+
- 3) We were approved
- 4) Should have money 4/22/2020 and need to use it within 8 weeks
- 5) Thank you to Erica and South Story Bank!
- 6) Need signatures from Brenda and Erica
- 7) Motion to accept by Bill White, seconded by Rick Zimmermann. Motion passed.

#### 4. General/Miscellaneous Update-

A. Lighting Update-Ben Johnson

- 1) New Lights are all replaced
- 2) Some switches still need to be fixed, but just a few.  
Things look great and are bright!
- 3) Thank you to Ben for all you did and a big thanks to Bruce Moody of Moody Electric.

#### 5. R & R 2.0 Update-Brenda Neville

A. Dave Helland is hoping to get sub-contractors lined up and going soon on the front steps.

- 1) Want a committee meeting next week to clarify some things.
- 2) Finalize railing, landscaping, lighting, etc
- 3) Will need council approval
- 4) Would like to have a time-line.
- 5) Parking/Painting Stripes will be re-done
- 6) Erica will talk to Clinton at IPSC to get a bid. They will then work with property committee.

#### 6. Worship Services/Live Stream Update/Technology applications for the future

A. 140+ subscribers

B. Over 3400 views for April 21st service

C. Nat has done a great job getting the live stream going!

D. Wednesday night service continued through April.

\*How can we continue to reach others using the live stream once we are back worshipping together at church.

E. Comments: People really like the service and we are reaching people we might not reach if they were to come into the church, congregation involvement in reading scripture is great, really appreciate the fact that the service is LIVE! Kudos to Pastor Nat!

F. More opportunities if we continue to move forward with the live stream.

#### 7. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by Rita Thorson, seconded by Bill White. Motion passed.

Next meeting:

Tuesday, May 19 @ 6:00 PM-Church Basement



# Looking Ahead

## Council Meeting

The next Church Council meeting will be held **Tuesday, June 16th at 6:00 p.m.** by conference call and in person (distanced). All council meetings are open to the congregation to attend.

## Refresh and Renew (2.0) is Underway!

Many thanks to our R&R 2.0 team for their continued work (Alvin Lund, Mat Emery, Jon Johnson, Jo Hokel, Brenda Neville, Pastor Nat, and Bill White). Look for a recap of this project to come in an upcoming livestream soon. For now, the old front steps have been removed. Salvageable brick is being saved, and soon new concrete will be poured. Our new stairs will include a geothermal element to heat the steps in the winter (eliminating the need for salt - hopefully extending the concrete's life). We'll also be replacing BLC's retaining wall, installing some exterior lighting, and refurbishing the outside flower beds. All of this work is the product of our "parsonage proceeds" conversations (which began in 2018 after the sale of Bethlehem's parsonage). It has been a process of discernment and careful conversation to get to this point, but we give thanks to God for the work that is now underway (& that it will serve BLC for years to come).

## Devotionals

Christ in Our Home, April - June, is available in the church to pick up. If you would like a copy of this in-home devotional resource delivered to you, please let the office know and we can make that happen.

## Office Hours

Beginning June 2, office hours will change to 1:00 PM-5:00 PM, Tuesday -Friday. To reach Lori, please call 228-3933. You may also contact the office by emailing [admin@slaterblc.org](mailto:admin@slaterblc.org). Pastor Nat will continue to work an adjusted evening schedule until Ada is able to return to daycare at some point this summer. Pastor's email is [pastor@slaterblc.org](mailto:pastor@slaterblc.org).

## *In Our Prayers this Month*

- Kim Brakke (Ann White's sister-in-law)
- Pam Chance (a friend of the Fairchild's)
- Mark Eimers
- Justin Forre
- Ron Ihle
- Patricia Ihle-Hughes
- Florence Krause
- Pat Kyle
- Janet Larson
- Gary Locker
- Ruth Ann Meyers (a friend of Nicki Drobny)
- Millie Nelson
- Phillis Newman
- DiAnn Schroeder (a friend of Abby Wait)
- Jackie Skaar (a friend of Ann White)
- Summer Compton Vespestad
- Rob Wright (a friend of Martha Sheldahl)

*Join us in remembering these friends in prayer. Cards and notes of encouragement are always welcome too!*

## *We Remember Also*

### **At Ballard Creek**

Phillis Newman | Elaine Weeks

### **At the Madrid Home**

Florence Krause | Tony Spence

### Food Pantry Needs

- Canned Peaches
- Shampoo
- Conditioner
- Paper Towels



Through this difficult time, your generosity has really come through for the food pantry. Because of the increase in monetary donations, Judy was able to put in an order at Town and Country Market in Slater. “The amount of donations has been overwhelming,” said Judy Whitney.

You may continue to drop food off for the food pantry at the church. Please place inside the west door or place in the hallway outside the elevator on the first level.

### Slater/Sheldahl Food Pantry Hours

Tuesdays 10 a.m.—11 a.m.  
Wednesdays 7 p.m.—9 p.m.

*For more information, call 515-228-3076*

### Love Thy neighbor Fund

We have received a few special offerings recently designated for BLC’s “love your neighbor” fund. These proceeds are available to help pay utility bills and other necessities for neighbors in need. If you have an immediate financial concern, please let the church office know.



### May is National Foster Care Month

Make a difference for an Iowa Child.

God calls on all of us to love and care for one another. Right now, hundreds of Iowa children are in need of loving, compassionate foster families.

Last year, Western Iowa children were referred into foster care 778 times. **If every Iowa place of worship had one foster family, no child would be left without a safe, loving home.**

**May is National Foster Care Month.** It’s a time to celebrate the families who are making a difference for Iowa children, and it’s a time to raise awareness for the children who are still waiting for a foster home. While daily life may look a little different amidst COVID-19 precautions, there is still a great need for foster families in our communities across Western Iowa. LSI Foster Care and Adoption has created a digital toolkit to help spread the word about foster parenting. **Please share this with your friends and loved ones.**

BLC’s regular giving to the SE Iowa Synod & the ELCA supports the mission of LSI and other non-profit missions throughout Iowa and the world.



# Big News!

## May Birthdays

- 3- Rosalie Lund
- 5- Florence Krause  
Kurt Estrem
- 6- Ronna  
Hoppenworth
- 7- Barry Broer
- 8- Ryan Cleverley  
Taylor Christensen
- 9- Avery Steward  
Payton Johnson
- 11- Shollie Falkenberg
- 14- Ben Gibson
- 15- Karen Douglas
- 17- Mike Kaldenberg
- 20- Brindley Sheldahl  
Cade Wilson
- 21- Alvin Lund
- 23- Tim Locker
- 24- Alan Schoening
- 25- Matt Plowman
- 28- Cindy Upah  
Lisa Lehm
- 29- Myrna Harmon  
Will Douglas
- 31- Addyson Emery

## Anniversaries this Month

- 1- Nick & Jill Smith
- 3- Gary & Carol Gibson
- 23- Bruce & Ardy Hinds
- 26- Glenn & Jackie Brown  
Mark & Rosalie Eimers
- 27- Al & LuAnn Erickson
- 30- Jon & Cindy Johnson
- 31- Alan & Jo Schoening



“So teach us to count our days  
that we may gain  
a wise heart.”

Psalm 90:12

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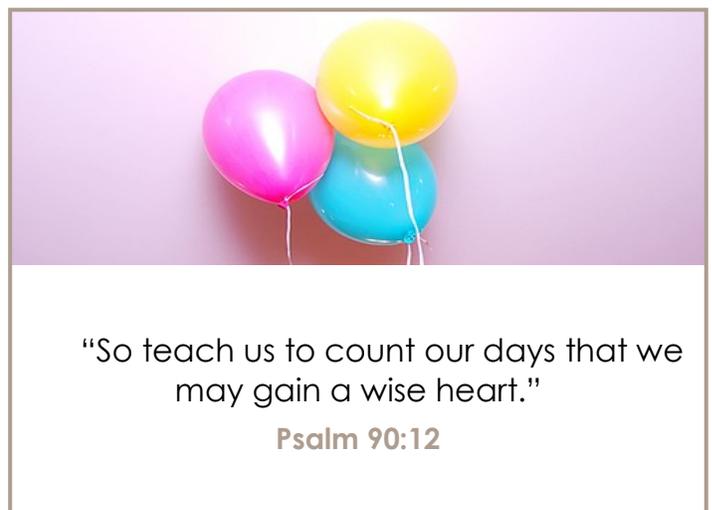
# Big News!

## June Birthdays

- 2- Diane Fulk
- 3- Jo Schoening
- 4- Lauren Drobny
- 5- Gunnar Peterson
- 6- Kevin Burt
- 7- Nelle Dovre
- 8- Dennis Hokel
- 10- Ann M. Johnson  
Charlotte Gibson
- 11- Sarah Seigfried
- 12- Bella Smith  
Shawn Kyhl
- 13- Hunter Steward
- 14- Maddie Kyhl
- 15- Dave White  
Jane Fideler  
Janet Larson  
Sue Burt
- 18- Barb Kahler  
Roger Greenough
- 19- Ben Kennedy
- 20- Rick Zimmermann
- 21- Carole Lund-Smith  
Tami Staples  
Tim Boyd
- 22- Marlene Fairchild  
Rollie McCubbin
- 23- Zach Horness
- 24- Tony Horness
- 25- Marilyn Sievers
- 27- Sara Locker
- 28- MaKayla Burt
- 29- Joshua Schaudt  
Lisa Stocksleger
- 30- John Krause  
Marcia Millang

## Anniversaries this Month

- 1- Dennis & Jana Mitchell
- 2- Bryce & Ashlee Lund
- 4- Matt & Laurie Plowman
- 5- Jerry & Darla Weeks
- 6- Bill & Julie Britton  
Trond & Kathy Forre
- 7- Scott & Lisa Stocksleger
- 8- Erik & Molly Sheldahl
- 9- Larry & Joan Larson
- 12- Andy & Jess Denner
- 13- Randy & Connie Kennedy
- 14- Duane & Ann Johnson
- 17- Shawn & Angela Kyhl
- 18- Doug & Brenda Houser  
Dustin & Lindsey Allen
- 20- Mark & Tina Estrem
- 21- Derek & Tina Kahler
- 24- Nick & Cara Helland
- 25- Dick & Lisa Lehm
- 28- Ron & Gwen Ihle  
Trent & Sarah Seigfried
- 30- Dave & Ann White  
Marcus & Kelsey Goins  
Rick & Janet Mason



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