



From Grandfather to Grandsons: The Donaldson Family Ushering In Faith

By: Janis Heier



When you walk through the doors at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, there's a good chance some of the first faces you'll see belong to the Donaldson family - Bill, his son Stuart, and grandsons Bennett and Henry - three generations united in the quiet ministry of serving worshipers by ushering.

For Bill Donaldson, that welcome has taken on a deeper meaning since surviving a serious car accident on July 23, 2023. "It's good to be back in a routine that was disrupted and to re-engage with people who have been so supportive," he shares.

Bethlehem has long been at the heart of Bill and his wife Margo's journey. The couple was married in the chapel of Bethlehem's former downtown location, and the church has remained a cornerstone of their lives ever since. **"It's been a welcoming congregation, rich in the diversity of its people,"** Bill reflects. **"Bethlehem has helped us focus our faith."**

That sense of belonging naturally led Bill to seek ways to give back. Not long after the current church home was completed in 1998, he accepted an invitation from longtime friend Louis (Louie) Koch to begin ushering - a simple act of service that would quietly become a multi-generational tradition.

Stuart, Bill's son, began ushering during his junior high years and continued whenever he returned home from college. Now a father himself, Stuart has passed the tradition on to his sons.

"I wanted to entice them to get involved," Stuart shared with a smile. "They have energy! Bennett asked if he could help one day - and it wasn't long before Henry joined in too."



For the boys, ushering is more than just a Sunday morning task - it's a joy. Bennett says he likes seeing friends, family, and even his school principal at church. Henry grins when he talks about handing out bulletins and making sure no one is missed.

The Donaldsons' service reflects more than a helpful routine. It embodies Bethlehem's mission: *Welcoming, Worshiping, Teaching, Serving*. Bill explains, "We ushers are sometimes the first face people see when they arrive. That's a chance to put those four words into practice."

When asked about the Donaldson family faith formation, Bill replied, "Pastor Al Schoonover and Pastor Karl Hester were instrumental in shaping our faith for all of the important family milestones through Stuart's confirmation". The family appreciates the legacy of pastors that have served their family through the years.

Through baptisms and funerals, illness and healing, the Donaldson family has experienced firsthand what it means to be part of a faith community that shows up - week after week, season after season.

"This church sees people through so much. It keeps you on a path toward the right reason," Bill says thoughtfully.

For Bill, Stuart, Bennett, and Henry, that path often begins right at the church doors - bulletins in hand, smiles ready, living out their faith one greeting at a time.

Thank you for being a vital part of Bethlehem and for your support. With your partnership and the power of the Holy Spirit, Bethlehem is touching lives each and every day – connecting us with God, one another, and our mission in the world.



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