



A Blessing from Bethlehem Reaches Toddler in the Hospital: Connecting Our Story

By: Heidi Marttila-Losure



Where does the life of Bethlehem happen? Both inside the church's walls and outside of them - including on the pediatric floor of Avera St. Luke's Hospital.

That's where the Bruns family was in May, when

their 2-year-old son, Boston, was sick.

Boston is Luke and Maggie Bruns's youngest child. He has three older brothers - Beckett, 11; Kohen, 9; and Paxon, 5. And he had a sister, Laila, who died in infancy in 2019 - which, even if the two situations are unrelated, is the kind of thing a parent thinks about and that raises the heart rate a bit when another of their children is sick.

And, in May, Boston clearly wasn't feeling well. When his cold symptoms took too long to resolve, Luke and Maggie took Boston to their doctor, Lyle Biegler. Dr. Biegler, who is also a member of

Bethlehem, recommended taking Boston to the hospital out of an abundance of caution, just to make sure he was being monitored.

“We thought we’d spend the night there, but he got progressively worse,” Luke said. “He ended up being diagnosed with walking pneumonia. Once we found out it was walking pneumonia, we were very glad we were there. It wasn’t pleasant. We were just basically camped up there for three days.”

Avera St. Luke’s is about a mile from Bethlehem Lutheran, which has been the Bruns family’s church home since Luke and Maggie were married in 2012 and settled in Aberdeen after a brief time away. Both Luke and Maggie had grown up Lutheran and wanted to continue attending a Lutheran church. Bethlehem felt right to them. “For Aberdeen standards, it’s a big church,” Luke said. “But it doesn’t feel like a megachurch. You feel like you are part of it and not overlooked.”

And, even though they were stuck in a hospital room down the street and around the corner and up the stairs from Bethlehem, some blessings from Bethlehem managed to find them. On Boston’s second day in the hospital, when Luke had left the room for a moment, he met Pastor Jeff Willock coming up the elevator. Pastor Jeff, who had been visiting someone else in the hospital, was surprised to see Luke and asked what he was doing there.

“Actually, Boston hasn’t been doing well,” Luke told him.

Pastor Jeff asked if he could stop in to see Boston, and a little while later, he did. Boston was doing a little better that day, sitting up after a lethargic first day, but still subdued. Pastor Jeff spoke to him, telling him that he was surrounded by people who cared for him and who were working to help him feel better. And Boston, in a hospital bed with oxygen tubing winding around him, was locked in on the pastor and the good news he had to share. Luke took a picture of Pastor Jeff and Luke’s unusually attentive 2-year-old.

Even now, when Boston is healthy and back to his regular toddler energy, and long into the future, this is something the Bruns family is likely to remember.

“It was really nice for Pastor Jeff to be present,” Luke said. **“It’s just kind of nice to know your faith and your church are right around the corner.”**

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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