



# The Bethlehem Record

*The Official Newsletter of Bethlehem Lutheran Church*

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*A family of God sharing Jesus  
and serving Him faithfully*

**April 2015**

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**A LIFE invitation for you!**  
Lutherans for Life (LFL) from Peace Lutheran, Natoma will be sharing donuts and information on LFL with us on April 19. Look for more details in the weekly bulletin.



### Our Mission Statement

As members of Bethlehem Lutheran Church who have been granted eternal life through Jesus Christ's death and resurrection, we worship Him as our Lord and seek to further His work of salvation through word and sacrament ministry in our community and world toward the goal of creating and strengthening personal faith in Him.

### The Pastor's Page

**"No one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was." Heb. 5:4**

Well, it happened. Your pastor got a call to another congregation. Will he stay? Will he go? What does it all mean anyway?

First of all, know that the Lord is the head of the Church, and He will make sure that this part of His body is cared for no matter what happens with me. Also, please recognize that this is the Lord's calling and not one I "applied for."

Whenever there is a potential change like this, there are lots of questions, fears, and rumors. Please stop the rumors in their tracks. For us as a congregation, it's a time where we truly learn to lean on God for His will to be done and to give us peace and patience until a decision is made. It's also a time to take stock of who we are, what our ministry is, and where we think the Lord is leading us to continue to be His hands and feet in this part of His kingdom.

For me and my family, it's a time of prayer, discussion, and discernment as we contemplate what moving means for us as a family as we would have to find a new home, investigate schools, learn about the new community, and a host of other things.

For me as a pastor, it's taking stock of what I've accomplished and the work that is still ahead of me. That also includes serving St. Paul, Ellsworth as their vacancy pastor. Then it's a matter of looking at the work of the kingdom

in a new location with a different congregation and how I might be able to serve them with the gifts and talents I have.

So in the next few weeks I will strive to make a fact-based decision, praying for clarity and peace. While emotions are certainly part of our human nature, they must be held in check as much as possible for the sake of all involved.

How did all of this happen anyway? Don't you like it here, Pastor? Why would you want to leave us?

All fair questions to ask, especially when it seems that things are going well. Please know that I enjoy being here and serving you as best as I know how. Yes, there are challenges, but every congregation has them.

Our church body strives to function in a God-pleasing way and part of that function is raising up men to serve as pastors in Christ's kingdom and allowing for movement within it. All actively serving pastors are "eligible for a call," recognizing that the Lord may have need of you somewhere else in His kingdom.

When a congregation seeks to call a pastor from the field, that is, from a congregation or other place of service, it requests names of pastors from within the congregation and from the district office. The District President looks at the request, gathers information about the congregation from a "self-study" document it submits, and then goes about the task of →

checking within his own district and then with other District Presidents as to who might be a good fit for the congregation. Pastors also have profile information that they submit on themselves that the District President's keep on file. It's far from a perfect process, but it's the process that the Missouri Synod and other Lutheran church bodies in North America have followed for many years.

So how did I get this call? Either someone in the congregation submitted my name, or the Minnesota South District President provided it. There is no LCMS "job posting board" for pastors. We take our callings seriously (or at least we should) as coming from the Lord. Sadly, other church bodies do not function this way, taking more of a business-model approach with a recruit and hire (and fire) mentality.

Immanuel Lutheran in Plainview then went through the names and profiles of the pastors recommended by the district. Praying for the Holy Spirit's guidance and blessing, they chose me.

Now the Lord, in His infinite wisdom, has laid this option before me. Whether I stay or go, both are God-pleasing, for the work is still the Lord's work. So it's no small task, therefore, to gather information, ask questions – both here of Bethlehem and of Immanuel, and try to get an understanding of the needs of both congregations and where I might serve to the glory and honor of Jesus Christ. You're prayers and visits are appreciated.

- *Pastor Augustine*

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### **April Stewardship Newsletter Article**

“And on receiving it they grumbled at the master of the house, saying, ‘These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.’ But he replied to one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? . . . I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you? Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?’” (Matt. 20:11–15).

Entry into the Kingdom of heaven is by grace not by works. And this is the point of the parable. Those hired first received the same wage as those hired last. Those hired first, even though they bore the heat of the day, received the same wage as those hired last. Entry into the kingdom comes by grace, by the gracious call and invitation of the owner of the vineyard.

And we chafe against this. We, like those hired first, object to the master's decision. We begrudge him because

of his generosity. We think that those who labored longer should receive a greater wage. And we protest that it's not fair. But that is precisely the point. It's not fair. It's by grace. It's given from God's undeserved love and kindness, not by merit. So we should rejoice. For to ask for fairness, to ask to be treated by what deserve and have earned, is simply to ask for hell.

For God owes us nothing. For by grace you are saved, by his underserved love and mercy. And even though it was undeserved, that doesn't mean it was cheap. It wasn't cheap, but costly. It cost God the Father His own Son. It cost the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, His very life. God's grace is costly grace. It costs us nothing but the cost for God was great. For it was achieved by the shedding of the holy and precious blood and the innocent suffering and death of Jesus. And it is by that shed blood that God by grace calls us to be His own. It is by that death that God by grace gives us entrance into His kingdom.

He doesn't owe us. We're not entitled to anything from God. He is not indebted to us. We are indebted to Him. For we have not lived as He mattered most. We have not loved Him with our whole heart, body, mind, and soul, with all that we are and all that we have. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We justly deserve his temporal and eternal punishments. But unlike us, He doesn't hold this debt over our heads. He has instead place our debt upon the head of His Son, and His Son has taken it willingly so that we would be forgiven and free.

For reasons all His own God has determined to love us. He has taken the punishment we deserve upon himself. He has given gifts to those whom He knows would take it for granted. This is grace. He is kind, forgiven, steadfast. He is slow to anger and abounding in love. For the kingdom of heaven is entered by grace, by His giving not our earning.

He is allowed to do what He chooses with what belongs to Him. But it doesn't work the same way with us. For what belongs to us? Nothing. We belong to Him, by water and His Name. He purchased and won us from sin, death, and the devil by His holy, precious blood and His innocent suffering and death, so that we would be His own special possession. Thus, we have nothing of our own, it all belongs to Him. We are stewards of what He has given to us. And so we give of ourselves, all that we are and all that we have, to those whom God has placed us to care for in our vocations of members of a family, society, and the church.

And if He has done all this for us, how can we not do with everything that He gave us likewise?

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## BOCL

Our rescheduled BOCL meeting was held on Tue. March 17, 2015. Members present were: Pastor Augustine, Gary Frederking, Brock Mueller, Ruth Mueller, Marcy Hurlbut, Warren Meitler, Barb Meitler, Marilyn Wenthe, Tara Kubick, Tyler Gier.

Pastor opened with a prayer. Minutes were read & approved, with one correction, March greeter should have been Warren M, not Gary F.

The next blood drive is set for Friday, March 27, starting a 11:30 a.m. Barb M & Ruth M volunteered to serve snacks.

Confirmation is set for Palm Sunday, March 29 with two confirmands. Gary F. moved that BOCL have a reception for the confirmands after Lent Service on March 25, Barb M seconded, The BOCL will provide punch & cake, Ruth & Barb will furnish the supplies.

Brock M moved that we apply for a Dane G Hansen Foundation grant, Marilyn W seconded, motion passed. Tara K will check into what needs to be done to apply. Different topics were discussed on what we can use the grant for.

The BOCL will provide drinks & table service for Easter Breakfast, we're asking congregation members to provide pot-luck items.

Barb M. moved that Marcy H look into the different types of filming for our church services. Ruth M seconded, motion passed.

We discussed having a new church t-shirt made up, we will discuss more on our next meeting. Gary F & Kylie E will be April greeters. Next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 8 at 7:30 p.m. We ended with the Lord's Prayer. Respectfully submitted Brock L Mueller

**Note:** *The April meeting time has been changed to 8 p.m. due to Elders meeting also that night.*

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### LWML Flower Committee

#### April

*Emilie Wacker Justine Dohl*

#### May

*Annie Dohl, Ramie Schulteis*

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## Baptismal Birthdays in April

*God's blessings to you for all His gifts of grace that you have received, and we pray for many more blessings for Jesus' sake!*



Kim Augustine  
Elda Chegwiddden  
Jenae Chegwiddden  
Zachary Falcon  
Robert Gasper  
Roger Gier

Caleb Hirsch  
Dustin Meyer  
Timothy Meyer  
Vincent Meyer  
Ruth Mueller  
Mark Sebesta

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## Acolyte Schedule April - May

April 2 (Maundy Thursday)*	Rachel Sebesta
April 5*	Marshall Hurlbut
12*	Grace Chegwiddden
19	Rachel Sebesta
26*	Marshall Hurlbut
May 3	Rachel Sebesta
10*	Marshall Hurlbut
17	Grace Chegwiddden
24*	Rachel Sebesta
31	Marshall Hurlbut

\* Communion service

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## Congratulations Confirmands!



Confirmed in Christ on March 29, 2015 (Palm Sunday):  
Hannah Wolting and Kayla Augustine

# Coming Events at Bethlehem

*Also available online at [www.BethlehemSylvanGrove.org](http://www.BethlehemSylvanGrove.org)*

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April 2 – Maundy Thursday worship with Holy Communion – 7 p.m.

April 3 – Good Friday worship – 5 p.m.

April 5 – Easter breakfast at 8:30; Worship with Holy Communion at 10 a.m.

April 8 – Elders meeting at 6:30; Board of Church Life at 8:00

April 15 – Church Council meeting at 7 p.m.

April 25 – Wedding of Corey Gier and Caleb Hirsch

April 26 – Quarterly voters meeting

## *Our Weekly Worship schedule:*

*10 a.m. – Worship Service (Holy Communion on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays and some festivals)*

*11:10 a.m. – Sunday School and BLTeens Bible study (school)*

*11:10 a.m. – Adult Bible study (Parish hall)*

*(education hour change due to the vacancy service at St. Paul, Ellsworth)*

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