

The Bethlehem Record

The Official Newsletter of Bethlehem Lutheran Church

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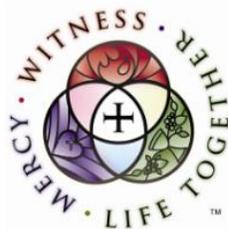
www.BethlehemSylvanGrove.org

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

January 2017

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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

The New Year is upon us. For some reason people love to make new year's resolutions this time of the year. Sometimes it's to lose. Sometimes it's to be better about procrastinating, or just to work harder. Of course, the funny thing is that people are almost expected to fail in these resolutions. You're not actually supposed to succeed, and if you do, you certainly had better not go around telling people about it. Yet, there is something to this cycle. The cycle of trying to do better, failing, and then trying to do better again. In fact, as Christians this cycle is how we live our entire lives. We sin. We ask for and receive forgiveness. We try to do better. Then we sin again, and the cycle keeps on going.

It's a seemingly endless cycle, and it's easy to get discouraged. I'm sure you've at one point or another thought, 'Why do I even try anymore? I'm not going to get any better.' However, that's not the truth. The truth is, that no matter what sin you are struggling with, there's hope. No matter what your particular 'pet' sin is, there will come a day when you longer have to deal with it. A day when you won't have to deal with any sort of sin whatsoever. That day will be truly glorious, for once Jesus comes for us, we will get to live with him forever in purity and

holiness. But because of our sinful nature, we sometimes think of that as a copout. Perhaps you even thought it as you read it. 'Sure, eventually we won't have to deal with sin, but that's only after we die or when Jesus comes back. What about right now?' Well, it is most certainly impossible for us to completely conquer all the sin in our lives. That is true, and clear from scripture. However, it's also clear, that while we might not be able to conquer all sin in our lives, we can most certainly conquer some of them. Think of Paul who turned his back on his Pharisaical and murderous ways. Think of Peter, who straight up refused to be associated with our Lord, even on the night when he was betrayed, but then went on to lead our Lord's Church after receiving absolution. When I say there's hope, I mean it. There's the eternal hope, that we will one day truly not have a sinful nature anymore, but a pure and holy one. But there's also hope for whatever specific sin you are struggling with right now. You can beat it, because the Lord lives inside of you, and gives you the ability to overcome it. So, don't give up on the cycle. Keep on fighting, and one day, hopefully soon, you will conquer whatever sin you are struggling with.

May God bless you all,
Pastor Chris Craig

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January Stewardship Newsletter Article

Celebrating New Years is a celebration of the past and the future. We take stock of the past with thanksgiving and sometimes even relief (that it's over), and we look to the future in the hope and anticipation and perhaps even worry of what it holds.

The point is that New Year's celebrations remind us of who we are as opposed to who we would like to be; what we have done in comparison to what we want to do. It reminds us of our accomplishments, but mostly it reminds us of our failures. What we've lost. Who we've lost.

New Years is our own version of Dickens' classic *A Christmas Carol*. And we all play Scrooge. We are visited by the ghosts of our pasts, presents, and futures.

St. Paul writes: "The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may **abound** in every good work. As it is written, 'He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.' He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way for all your generosity, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God" (2 Cor 9:6-15).

St. Paul tells us that the Lord of all will both supply and increase what you need to give to the church for its work in and for the world. He tells us that this work that God is doing in us will enrich and bless us in every way and through this it will produce thanksgiving to God. With this in mind, here is some practical advice to help you take stock of your giving of years past, which will help you to change what needs to be changed, improved, or done away with altogether.

First, attend the Divine Service to receive God's gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation. If

you've not been faithful in attending worship to hear the preaching of God's Word, to receive forgiveness, and feast of the rich food of our Lord's body and blood for the eternal benefit of your body and soul, then repent and come to receive the gifts God freely gives. God doesn't want your money. He wants you—all of you (Matt 22:20-22).

Second, pray for the Lord's help. Your right as a Christian is to speak with your Father, the King of all creation, freely through His Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ. Go to the throne of grace and ask for strength and wisdom to follow His bidding faithfully (John 15:1-16).

Third, consider what the Church is and what the Church does. The Church is a mercy place. It inhales the mercy of the Father by the death, resurrection, and ascension of His Son through the preaching of the Gospel and the Sacraments. It exhales this mercy in love toward the neighbor. You are a member of the Church, of God's family. Thus, you are not only a recipient of God's mercy, but a bearer of that mercy for the life of the world. You spread that mercy in showing mercy through the generous giving of your income to support the work of the Church in and for the world, as the Israelites did in the Old Testament (Lev 27:1-34).

Fourth, take stock of your current giving in light of the New Testament's teaching on supporting the work of the Church. Are you giving of your first fruits, taking it out of your paycheck first, or does God get what's left over? Are you giving voluntarily and cheerfully? Are you giving proportionally and generously? The Old Testament required a tithe, ten percent. The New Testament gives freedom to be generous, to give more for the Church's work. Are you relying on God's promise to provide and increase what you need to do His work? If your answer is no to any of these, repent. If God gave you His only Son, will He not provide for you all things, even physical things? Trust Him, His Word, and heed it.

So, don't let your past define your future. Rather, commit for the year a generous proportion of your income, which is God's gift to you for this body and life.

The BOCL

The BOCL held their meeting on Tuesday, Dec. 6 at 7:00 p.m. Members present were Kylie Erlich, Tyler Gier, Dena Sorensen, Trey Watson, Ronda Watson, Barb Meitler, Lloyd Gier, Brock Mueller, Ruth Mueller, and Pastor Craig. Pastor started with devotion.

Pastor mentioned that there are two Sunday School teachers that would like to take a break, needing volunteers for this. One person is interested in helping for next year. Pastor suggested possibly having an in-service for all teachers, maybe after church sometime.

Dena brought more information on Brian Young, the speaker on creationism and also the traveling museum that we have scheduled to be at the Lincoln county fair. The Hunter congregation has offered to go in on this with us, and Pastor suggested possibly surrounding circuit congregations would be involved also. Tyler G. moved that the approximate fee of \$2500 for this speaker come out of the general fund, Barb M. seconded, motion passed. If the surrounding circuit churches contribute money-wise it will be funneled through Bethlehem to make it less confusing for the speaker.

Candy sacks for Christmas Eve will be taken care of by Ruth Sorensen, as they have done in the past. Pancake Day is fast approaching, Brock will ask Art Dohl if he will be willing to head this again. Tyler G moved that we create and send out a letter on our yearly stewardship and endowment fund project, this also will work in conjunction with the endowment fund committee. The deadline for this to be sent is Easter. Ruth M seconded, after discussion a vote was cast, five yes, and one no and three abstained. Motion passed.

Guest greeters for January will be the BOCL members. Next meeting is scheduled for Wed. January 11 at 7:00 p.m. We closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted Ruth Mueller

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BETHLEHEM LWML - - DECEMBER 14, 2016

The LWML hosted the congregational Christmas dinner & party in the Parish Hall, after services on Sunday, December 11th. A nice crowd was in attendance. We thank the committee of Euni Thaemert, Barb Meitler, and Justine Dohl for planning and carrying out the plans for this party. Baked Ham & potato casserole were furnished with salads & vegetables brought in by members of the LWML. A 70th LWML anniversary cake was served after we sang Christmas carols, and played Bunco with prizes.

After the above party, the LWML met for a short meeting with collection of Mites, Dime Love Sock funds, and the exchange of Prayer Partner name gifts. We had a short discussion on exchanging Prayer Partner names for 2017. We decided since not everyone was participating in this project, we would try something different this next year. It will be decided in the February meeting what we will do. Wednesday, December 14th, our LWML group served the Advent meal with food leftover from the Christmas party. The same night Ramie was in charge of the FCA supper at the high school.

October Bazaar Project Funds have been sent out by Treasurer Ramie. We note here that the Project CCCS (Concerned Christian Children Society) is now referred to as 'Lead a Child', one of our Bazaar projects.

The LWML Spring Rally will be held here at Bethlehem, on a date soon to be set by us and the Lincoln Zone LWML officers, possibly in March. The committee is working on securing a speaker, and making meal plans for the event. Plans will be made at the February meeting.

President Coleen and Vice-President Shelly plan on making an LWML planning booklet again for the year of 2017. Possibly they will soon have a sign-up sheet for Devotions, Bible Study leaders, and hostesses.

Our next meeting will be Wednesday evening February 1st. We wish you all a MERRY CHRISTMAS & HAPPY (& Healthy) NEW YEAR of 2017! Lois Walter LWML Secretary

Annual Meeting and Elections

The annual meeting and elections for our church will be held on January 22, 2017 immediately following the worship service. The Church Council invites every voting member (any confirmed member age 18 or older) to consider serving in the following positions: Secretary, Elder and Trustee as well as filling vacancies on the Board of Church Life. Contact John Thaemert or any Church Council member if you feel called to serve our congregation in any of these capacities. If you have specific budget items you wish to be considered, please inform a Council member prior to the Council meeting the evening of January 12th. A potluck meal will be served following the meeting. The Board of Church Life will provide beverages and table service. The congregation is invited to bring a dish to share.

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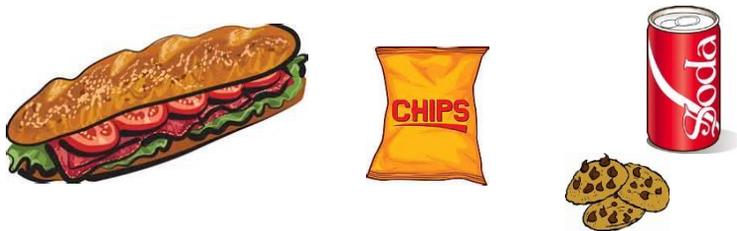
LWML Flower Committee

January 2015
Lorelei Dohl
Tentative schedule

February
Eunice Thaemert & Coleen Ancell
Tentative schedule

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. February 7 – BLTeens
Super Bowl sub sandwich meals
Orders will be taken soon



Baptismal Birthdays in January

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!



Kenneth Becker
Willis Becker
Titus (Pete) Falcon Jr.
Gary Frederking
Tyler Gier
Barbara Groth
Teri Hiitter
Jolene Janssen

Evan Lamb
Jodi Nelson
Douglas Princ
Kent Rahmeier
James Thaemert
Clarence Thrun
Lyle Wohler

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Acolyte Schedule January – February January

- 1 Kaden Gier
- 8 * Valden Dohl
- 15 Grace Chegwidden
- 22 * Rachel Sebesta
- 29* Marshall Hurlbut

February

- 5 Rylan Gier
- 12* Grace Chegwidden
- 19 Rachel Sebesta
- 26* Marshall Hurlbut



* Communion service

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Blood Drive is January 27

On January 27, the American Red Cross will be at Bethlehem to host a blood drive. Why should you consider giving? Consider this: 1 donation may help save up to 3 lives.

Contact Dell Gier for your appointment or call the Red Cross at 800-733-2767. Smartphone users can download the Red Cross donor app and schedule your appointment, or you can log on to www.redcrossblood.org.

Make Plans for the
54th Annual Pancake Day
February 12, 2017



Look for more details in the Sunday bulletins

Usher List 2017

January

Warren Meitler Jason Dohl
Art Dohl Tyler Gier

February

Jerret Kubick Clarence Thrun
Roger Gier Gary Sorensen

March

David Hurlbut Lukas Sebesta
Brody Schofield Mark Sebesta

April

Lloyd Gier Caleb Hirsch
Ryan Gier John Sorensen

May

Larry Groth Dean Thaumert
Art Dohl Dell Gier

June

Lyle Wohler Blake Chegwiddden
Dave Hurlbut Kirk Schulteis

July

Kenneth Small John Sorensen
Jason Dohl Tyler Gier

August

Dean Thaumert Mark Sebesta
Ryan Gier Brock Mueller

September

Gary Sorensen Kirk Schulteis
Lukas Sebesta Warren Meitler

October

Clarence Thrun Lloyd Gier
Jerret Kubick Phil Chegwiddden

November

Brody Schofield Caleb Hirsch
Lyle Wohler Dell Gier

December

Brock Mueller Roger Gier
Kenneth Small John Thaumert



Blessing of the new Parament's and Vestments.

Sunday December 11, 2016 was the formal Blessing of the new Parament's and Vestments. The New Parament's and Vestments were made by LaVerne Kyriss of Catalina Lutheran Church Tucson AZ and given to the Bethlehem Lutheran Church in honor of Pastor Craig's Ordination and Installation. The Rose or Pink color Parament's and Vestments signify Joy, and are to be used during the third weeks of Advent and Lenten Seasons.

Pictures by Emilie Wacker & Marmie Schultz



Flowers for Christmas 2016

<u>From</u>	<u>In Memory Of</u>
Groth Family	Elmer & Margaret Groth
Glenn & Janice Tucker	George & Minnie Delbert & Cora Rahmeier
Trapp Family	Alfred-Eloise-Weldon Trapp LeRoy & Vivian Wright & Wanita
Shirley Krueger & Fam	Ron Krueger
Shirley Krueger & Fam	Fred & Blanche Zvolanek Walter & Leona Krueger
Shelly Keller	
Emilie Wacker	Sidney Wacker The Gier Family

Coming Events at Bethlehem

Also available online at www.BethlehemSylvanGrove.org

January 10 –Elders meeting

January 11 – BOCL meeting

January 12 -- Council meeting

January 23 – LifeLight bible study begins (meets weekly)

January 22 – Annual Voters meeting and congregational potluck

February 5 --BLTeens Super Bowl Subs

February 12 – Pancake Day

Our Weekly Worship schedule:

9 a.m. – Sunday School and BLTeens Bible study (school)

9 a.m. – Adult Bible study (Parish hall)

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



Bethlehem Lutheran Church
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here

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