

# BETHANY LUTHERAN



## Newsletter December



### A NOTE FROM PASTOR:

At this past month's congregational council meeting we were visited by our synod's bishop, Bishop Felix Malpica. One of several important points of conversation was around congregational communion practices. I thought about that discussion this week as a piece of cake was delivered to my home to celebrate a significant birthday of one of the members of our church. One of the pieces of doctrine that Bishop Malpica chose to share with the council was the idea of 'extension of the table.'

What is 'extension of the table'? When we gather to celebrate something like a wedding, birthday, or other special moment it is not unusual for there to be a cake. It is also not unusual that pieces of that cake might be sent to individuals who did not attend the celebration itself. This sending extends the celebration. When we as a congregation meet together to have communion we too meet at a table, the altar. We remember our Lord at that table, those who have come before us, and what God has given us. This is an important ritual and emotionally powerful experience for a lot of our members. When we have finished, our congregation sends bread and wine to people who can not make it to worship with us. This 'extends' our table and the spiritual business that happens here to those individuals. Although it is not the same as attending worship together, it can still be meaningful to receive a 'piece' of what has happened at the table.

When a Beacon team or a pastor brings the elements (bread/wine) to members we do a small worship service. This service usually includes hearing the words we speak at the churches altar during communion and saying the Lord's Prayer. These elements (even the ones that I bring) are normally pre-consecrated. This means that they were part of the celebration at our congregation's table. If you have a keen eye, you may sometimes spot a small box (about four by seven inches) on the altar. This is a home communion kit and has elements in it to bring to someone who is not at worship that day.

I would like to share some additional information about how this works. There are some of you who may read this and want to volunteer to be a Beacon. That's great, please let me know. There are some of you who will read this and want myself or a Beacon team to extend our table to you. That's great, please let me know.

There are some of you who have loved ones or friends that are members of our congregation whom you would like to see receiving home communion. That's great, let's ask them if that is what they want! It is my policy that I do not visit someone with communion who has not in advance stated that they would like such a visit. Beacon teams use a similar policy.

There are some of you who have loved ones or friends who are receiving communion from another congregation's visitation team and/or pastor. That's great, I'm glad they have access to the table in this way. It is my practice that I generally refrain from giving home bound communion to someone under another congregation's pastoral care. This is out of respect for the work of the other congregation and the other pastor.

As always, I am open to having a discussion about any of this. Give me a call if you would like to do so and we will find a time.

God Bless, Pastor Joan

## THE CHRISTMAS GIFT

2

It was December. Christmas shopping and decorating filled our days when we got a call. A married couple at Bethany had decided not give presents to each other that year. Instead, they wanted to give the money to someone in need. They asked Mary and I to select someone to get the money, anonymously, and us to hand it to them.

I had mixed feelings. It was so much in the spirit of Christmas, but the weight of selecting just one person out of the many that needed it made me feel extremely uncomfortable. Who was I to make a decision like that? But we had to decide – and we did - A struggling single mother with several children.

We went to the donor's work to get the gift. It was an unremarkable sealed white envelope. Surely it needed some Christmasy stickers or decorations so it was more in tune with the spirit of the season.

We called the mother, told her we had a present for her and arranged a time to come to her house to give her the gift. She met us at the door. Taking the envelope, she said she had been expecting a fruit basket or something similar, not an envelope. When she opened it, she saw a \$20 bill, then another below it, then three more. The mother's eyes filled with tears.

Then she saw there was a \$100 bill and under that three more \$100 bills—a total of \$500.

The mother shook as she sobbed. She couldn't talk. A very skimpy Christmas suddenly had the promise of lots of food and presents for all those she loved.

As we walked away, I realized Mary and I had been given the best gift all.

- Dick

## LUNCH AND LEARN

Join Pastor Joan for December's lively discussion at our next Lunch and Learn. We will meet on Tuesday, December 19th, from 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Bring your lunch and join in the fun and learning.

## COLLEGE CARE PACKAGES

The Faith Development Committee is working on staying in touch with our college students. We will begin our project with a care package before winter final exams. We are looking for donations of snacks or items that could be included in these packages. We will have our "Boxing Day" on Wednesday December 6th at 11:00 a.m. All are welcome to join us for this event. If you have a college age student and we do not have their address please call or e-mail the office.

## ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING

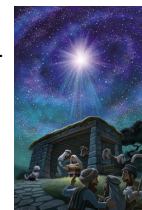
Advent activities will include lighting of the Advent Candle. There is will be a sign up sheet for families to sign up in the Narthex.

## BLANKETS FOR WARMING SHELTERS

Mary Crowley of the Juneau County Health Department has invited Bethany to make or donate blankets, hats, mittens and scarfs for the county warming shelters. We have received a grant to buy material for making blankets. We encourage you to make or donate caps, mittens and scarves. You can put them on the cap and mitten tree in the narthex. On December 10th, after worship, we will tie fleece blankets to warm others. I hope you can help. – Mary Pirwitz, Mission Committee

## SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

The Christmas Program will be held on **December 17<sup>th</sup>**. Sunday school students will be practicing during Sunday school time, starting on November 26<sup>th</sup>. Many thanks to Diane Huebner for leading this again this year! There will be no Sunday school on December 24<sup>th</sup> and December 31<sup>st</sup>. We will start back up on January 7<sup>th</sup>.



## November Finance and Property Meeting

3

- The Committee approved mission support of \$1,000 to the LaCrosse Synod/ELCA, \$85 to Lutheran Social Services, and \$85 to the Mauston Food Pantry.
- The asbestos remediation is to begin Monday, November 20th.
- The new “Welcome” sign has been installed.
- The next meeting is December 12th at 5:30 p.m.

## November 2023 Council Highlights

- Bishop Felix Malpica attended Church Council:
  - ◊ Pastor Joan’s contract ends next September 1st. Asked if we wanted to keep her and if she wanted to stay. Instead of another 2-year contract, he said we could issue a Call to her. We could vote on issuing a call to her at our Annual Congregation Meeting in January. We will work on the paperwork and be ready for that vote.
  - ◊ Discussed why a lay person cannot officiate at Communion. It was educational. There is a 3-month course at Luther Seminary and the Northwest Wisconsin Synod of the ELCA that trains students to be Synod Authorized Ministers who can do most things a pastor can do.
  - ◊ The Bishop was very pleased with how and what we are doing, and sang a blessing before he left.
- Worship Committee reminded us that on Christmas Eve, which is a Sunday, there is a 4:00 p.m. and an 8:00 p.m. service. On Monday, Christmas Day, there will be a regular service, and at noon there will be a Christmas Lunch and game day for members do not have anything scheduled for that day. On December 31st, there will be a Lessons and Carols service.
- The Health Department has asked us if we would consider donating blankets, hats, gloves and scarves to give to the warming shelters in the county. We are tying blankets after worship on December 10th. You can put any hats, mittens and scarves on the Hat & Mitten Tree in the narthex.
- The Council voted to raise the salary of the secretaries by \$2 to \$17 an hour. They did not ask for it, but they are highly skilled professionals and they should make what a fast-food worker in Mauston makes.

## Christmas Game Day



Do you celebrate Christmas with your family on alternate dates and find yourself home on Christmas day with nothing to do? Well you’re not alone! This is the case for many of us. This year you are welcome to join your Bethany Family for a Family Game Day. We will begin at noon with a lunch. Hot turkey sandwiches will be provided and attendees are asked to bring an appetizer, side dish, or dessert to share. Bring your own beverage of choice. After lunch we will spend the rest of the afternoon playing games. We will provide some games but if you have a favorite you want to bring, you are welcome to do that. All are welcome, spread the word to others who may not have any Christmas Day plans. Please sign up on the kiosk so we have an idea of how many to plan for.

## SIGN UP NOW FOR POINSETTIAS!



Is there a loved one or friend you’d like to honor with a poinsettia? You can reserve a plant by filling out a “poinsettia” envelope located at the Usher’s table. Cost this year is \$13 per plant. We have reserved 40 poinsettias from Blossoms and Bouquets. Checks should be made out to Bethany with “flower” clearly written on the memo line.



## Happy December birthday to....

Austin Remington	12/01
Jodi Hoffman	12/02
Emma Ragan	12/02
Tammy Zoller	12/02
Lila Goetzke	12/03
Ken Sanford	12/04
Charitee Seebecker	12/04
Robert Bohnert	12/05
Pam Holmes	12/06
Scarlett Smith	12/06
Alyssa Kidd	12/07
Marissa Nava	12/08
Sara Barton	12/09
Brody Holzberger	12/09
Glen Schroeder	12/09
Marjo Staehling	12/10
Norma Miller	12/11
Wayne Morris	12/11
Tammy Hansen	12/13
Tammy Remington	12/13
Jacob Schiller	12/16
Larry Arens	12/17
Charlotte Lyman	12/18
Brian Colwell	12/20
Ruth Marose	12/21
Myles Miller	12/21
Patti Thomas	12/21
JoAnn Gensch	12/22
Wendy McGuire	12/22
Dawn Hess	12/23
Michaela Honnold	12/23
Jean Schurmann	12/23
Brian McGuire	12/24
Madelin Buda	12/27
Mark Benson	12/28
Craig Dallman	12/28
Richard Noe	12/31



## Happy December anniversary to...



4

Alan and Dianne Peterson	12/03
Wally and Ray Feldman	12/23
Robert and Ruth Pfaff	12/25
Jim and Teri Webster	12/29

### Food Pantry News



We are asking everyone that wishes to make a much needed donation to the pantry during the following months, please do so with cash donations, if possible. We are able to purchase food at a much lower cost than you can buy it at the store and it enables us to get what we are short of when we need it. Thank you for considering this.

**There is a Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) Holiday Train in Mauston this year!** The date is set for December 5th at 4:00 p.m. at the Division Street crossing as usual. The Ron and Barb Brunner Foundation will be matching your cash donations to the pantry. The Bank of Mauston is doubling your cash donations to the pantry from now until December 5th.

### GOD'S CREATION CALENDARS

We are again selling God's Creation Calendars. Price is still only \$6. Profits go to the Youth Ministry. We only have 25 available. See Dick Pirwitz to get your calendars.

Please know that the office does not have every member's information. Please contact the office with corrections and updates.

**Thank you for your understanding, patience, and help in keeping our records up to date!**

## In Our Prayers

5

~~~ Duane Weisenhaus, Jim Henry, Ken Plants, Elwood Syverson, RJ Rogers, Louie Voltz,  
and those who  
suffer with war and disaster.

Please call the church office, 608-847-6690, if you know of someone who needs to be added  
to our prayer list or with any Pastoral Care needs/requests. This list is different than our  
prayer chain.

Bethany's Prayer Chain Coordinator is Audrey Gierhart (608-847-4106).  
If you have an urgent prayer request, call her to share the request.

**\*\*\*Unless otherwise noted, all worship services will be in-person at 9:30 a.m. and streamed on Facebook with the recording available later.\*\*\***

### Worship Reminders

#### **December 3 Worship Service**

Lector: Becky Colwell  
Communion Assistant: Teresa Ellerman  
Usher Captain: Roger Dutzle

#### **December 10 Worship Service**

Lector & Communion Assistant: Brian McGuire  
Usher Captain: David Kidd

#### **December 17 Worship Service**

Communion Assistant: Elley Dahlke  
Usher Captain: Bill Potter

#### **December 24 Worship Service 9:30 a.m. service**

Lector & Communion Assistant: Mary Pirwitz  
Usher Captains: Jeri Shultis and Harold Seebecker

#### **December 24 Worship Service 4:00 p.m. service**

Lector: Mark Dahlke  
Communion Assistants: Mark Dahlke, Elley Dahlke, and Teresa Ellerman  
Usher Captains: TBD

#### **December 24 Worship Service 8:00 p.m. service**

Lector: Sheri Benson  
Communion Assistants: Sheri Benson, Tim Benson, and Karen Fritz  
Usher Captains: TBD

#### **December 25 Worship Service**

Lector: Marie McDonough  
Communion Assistant: Mark Dahlke  
Usher Captains: Marie McDonough

#### **December 31 Worship Service**

Readers: Dick Pirwitz, Mary Pirwitz, Karen Fritz, and Marie McDonough  
Usher Captain: William Potter

**December Altar Guild:** Becky Colwell and Sharon Pufahl



| <b>*** Giving</b>                              | <b>Cash/Check</b> |
|------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>October 1, 2023</b>                         | \$3,370.00        |
| <b>October 8, 2023</b>                         | \$2,137.00        |
| <b>October 15, 2023</b>                        | \$1,611.00        |
| <b>October 22, 2023</b>                        | \$1,842.70        |
| <b>October 29, 2023</b>                        | \$1,699.00        |
| <b>** Online Giving Total for October 2023</b> | \$2,487.73        |

\*\*\* The chart above reflects the financial counts each week from the offering and money that's been sent in and online donations to include: designated funds (Building, Memorial, flowers, etc) and special projects (Ukraine, Mercy Ships, Farm, Toys for Joy, etc).

\*\* Online donations will be reported once a month due to posting issues. Near the end/beginning of the month the weekly amounts were not always accurate.

\* The below receipts reflect money available for operating budget AFTER deducting designated giving.

| <b>Gen Fund</b>      | <b>October 2023 Actual</b> | <b>October 2023 Budget</b> | <b>October YTD Actual</b> | <b>October YTD Budget</b> |
|----------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>* Receipts</b>    | \$12,083.16                | \$13,083.00                | \$135,811.92              | \$130,830.00              |
| <b>Disbursements</b> | \$12,618.93                | \$14,990.00                | \$132,028.98              | \$153,139.00              |

We at Bethany Lutheran Church, Mauston, seek to build unity by instilling hope through:

**ENGAGING**

all generations in the practices and teaching of Jesus,

**WELCOMING**

each other,

**REACHING OUT**

to our greater community.

**Church Office Hours**

The church office is open **Monday – Thursday from 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.** Messages left on the church voicemail are only checked during office hours. For urgent messages and emergencies, contact Pastor Joan at 920-226-0453 or Dick Pirwitz, council president, at 608-548-3561. If not immediately available, they will answer as soon as possible.

**Has your contact information changed? Be sure to let us know!**  
**(608) 847-6690**  
**bethanymaustonelca@gmail.com**