

BETHANY LUTHERAN

Newsletter

January 2024

A NOTE FROM PASTOR:

Happy New Year! For my newsletter article this month I want to answer some questions and address items that some of you have brought to me.

What are those funny metal communion cups/beautiful silver mini chalices? If you received communion in worship during the month of December you would have received wine in a mini silver chalice instead of a glass or plastic cup. I understand these mini chalices to be around 100 years old.

Where did they come from? Did they cost Bethany a lot of money? The mini chalices came as a gift to me to use in places I serve as pastor from my former home congregation. That congregation experienced holy closure in May of 2018. They are my property and as such are not costing Bethany anything to use. I know that former members of St. Andrew are happy to know that these are receiving some use.

Are we going to be using them all the time? No. If you missed the opportunity to be present for communion during the Advent/Christmas season the chalices are scheduled to be used again around Easter.

They look tiny, am I getting as much wine? According to the altar guild for December, the mini chalices seem to use the same amount of liquid as the glass/plastic glasses.

Are we going to have a fundraiser for the audio system/asbestos remediation projects? Yes. Look for official opportunities to give to these projects soon.

Can't I just make a donation now? If you would like to make a gift toward funding either of these projects you are welcome to do so at any time. Please do not feel like you need to wait for an official capital campaign.

Can we go in the basement? It is now safe to go in the basement. I encourage you to go downstairs and take a look if you are interested.

What's all this Thrivent stuff I keep hearing about? We often fund small projects for our congregation with micro-grants that Thrivent calls Action Teams.

Can anyone make a Thrivent Action Team? Anyone with any sort of product from Thrivent Financial can currently apply to host two Action Teams per year.

I have Thrivent, why would I want to do that? More than ten projects for Bethany were funded with up to \$250 in seed money from Thrivent in 2023.

What kinds of things have we funded this way? A very wide variety of projects were funded in full or in part by Thrivent. These included Community Meals, VBS projects, a Sunday School art project, food for our model Seder, painting the fireplace room, postage for our college care package project, fundraising for Peru and more.

I have a Thrivent service/product but have never applied for one of these but am totally willing to do so. Great. Pastor Joan would love to know about that! I can help you with ideas, or we can match you with a project that Bethany is involved with.

Happy New Year, Pastor Joan

Annual Meeting

Our Annual Meeting is **January 21st** right after the worship service, in the Fellowship Hall. The two major items on the agenda are:

Presentation of the 2024 budget and voting on it.

Voting on Calling Pastor Joan Wittrock as our pastor (on a 2-year contract right now).

If you have any other item which you would like on the agenda, please contact Dick Pirwitz before January 7th, 2024. Please plan to attend. We have turned Bethany around in the past year and much of that progress was due to people stepping up and getting involved. Be involved by attending.

From the Congregation President

January 21st marks the beginning of my second 2-year term as president of the Bethany congregation. I began my presidency in 2022 with some doubts about my sanity. Why would anyone volunteer to be president of a congregation with so many daunting challenges?

There were serious questions about our future. We were still dealing with Covid-19 and not-in-person worship. We did not have a pastor and we were advised there was little hope of us having one in the foreseeable future.

But then more people began stepping-up, working hard to keep Bethany going and creating new programs to serve our community. Then Pastor Joan decided to accept a Call to Bethany - and since then we have bloomed. We have an involved congregation with a wonderful pastor. Bethany is in great shape!

Now, looking to the next 2 years, what would I like to see?

I would like to see every member grow in their understanding of just how important we are to each other and to the community – This is our “Big Why” that tells us why we exist. We are a bright, sparkling light of hope and love in a world full of darkness. If we let our light grow dim, if we don’t work hard, our lives and the lives of those around us will diminish and God’s message of love and hope will not be spread. Always keep our Big Why in mind!

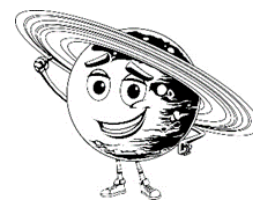
I would like us to find new ways for more of us to be part of the ministries of Bethany.

I would like to expand our ministries and find new ministries, ones that make our light shine brighter.

In 2024 I hope you experience the wonderful feeling that comes from being involved in the Big Why of Bethany. ~Dick

Sunday School News

Thank you to everyone for a wonderful Christmas program! A special thanks to Diane for leading, Linda for accompanying, and all of our high school assistants and confirmation students for participating and helping out as well. Sunday school will start back up on January 7th. We will be exploring the bible story of Jesus accepting Zacchaeus. “When people don’t get along, shine Jesus’ light!” We will also be meeting a new galaxy friend named Ringo.



Save the Date for our Valentines Gathering

When we think of Valentine's Day, we usually think of romantic love. However, it is an appropriate time to think also about God's love through Jesus Christ. Jesus gave us these words "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you," John 15:12. The love that Jesus commanded us to show one another is God's unconditional love. A Valentine's Celebration of Love is being planned for Sunday, February 8th. This is for all adults, not just couples. Come and share Christ's love with your Bethany family with food, fun, and games. Stay tuned, more details coming soon!

December Finance and Property Meeting

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The F & P Committee met on December 12th. Gary Gray, Tim Benson, Dave Kidd, and Jon Williams were present. Elley Dahlke, Dick Pirwitz, and Brian McGuire also attended the meeting. The Committee approved mission support of \$1,000 to the LaCrosse Synod/ELCA, \$65 to Lutheran Social Services and \$65 to the Mauston Food Pantry.

The asbestos remediation project has been completed except for some painting and repairs to an exterior door.

The committee chose to go with Lifeline Audio Visual Technologies for the new sound system. The installation will happen in the next 3-4 months. The system will include streaming capabilities that will be added after the sound system is completed at an additional cost. Fund raising options were discussed.

The committee renewed the contract with the same vendor for snow removal this winter.

The committee finalized the 2024 budget and recommended it to the council for approval. About 96% of the budget is fixed expenses so there isn't a lot of flexibility.

Dick provided the committee with a compensation and benefit package for the Pastor. It will need to be reviewed with the Pastor, and if agreed to, will go into effect when her current contract expires in 2024.

The next meeting is scheduled for January 9th. New committee members should plan on attending this meeting.

December 2023 Council Highlights

The proposed 2024 budget was presented by Gary Gray and approved to be presented at the January 21st Annual Meeting for consideration. About 96% of our budget is fixed costs.

The council authorized Dick Pirwitz to purchase a new computer for the church secretary. The present one is starting to show signs of failure.

We will be installing a TV in place of the black announcement sign over the visitor book in the narthex to improve communication.

We are investing some of our reserve funds in CDs that allow us to withdraw funds when we need them.

Seven blankets were made and lots of hats/mitten/scarves donated for the county warming locations. Thank you to all who donated items and tied the blankets.

The asbestos remediation is complete and it is safe to go downstairs.

Lynxx fiber optic internet will be installed next summer. They gave us the first 3 months free and the cost after that will be half what we pay now.

Care packages were sent to 16 college students. Thank you to all who donated and assembled them.

January 8th at 9:30a.m. we will UN-decorate the church. If lots of people come, it will be done quickly.



Happy January anniversary⁴ to...

Steven and Laurel Miller

01/18

Happy January birthday to....

Community Sharing Pantry News

Dorothy Pierce	01/01
Andrew Dillin	01/02
Adam Heinrich	01/02
Gene Ramer	01/03
Nicole Turner	01/03
Teri Webster	01/03
Mildred Holmes	01/05
RJ Rogers	01/06
Lila Opprieht	01/06
Chelsee Seebecker	01/08
Beth Dibbert	01/09
Kiril Kustief	01/09
Cora Dillin	01/10
Elizabeth Colwell	01/11
Darianne Thomas	01/12
Kane Kennedy	01/14
Baxter Pufahl	01/14
Loana Rojas-Corrales	01/15
Sheri Benson	01/16
Roger Dutzle	01/19
Elaine Barton	01/20
Arika Hutchinson	01/20
Kara Kidd	01/21
Terry Broske	01/22
Judy Droster	01/22
Lauryn Jones	01/22
Julianne Sanford	01/22
William Potter Jr.	01/23
Mary Miller	01/24
Jordy Tabbert	01/24
Kathy Wollmer	01/27
Marina Bauer	01/28
Molly Shultis	01/28
Cameron Goetz	01/29
Carter Seebecker	01/30
Allyson Arens	01/31
Donald Miller	01/31
Alaina Morris	01/31
Chris Pufahl	01/31

As 2023 comes swiftly to an end, we want to take a moment to thank all our area churches and the community at large for all the wonderful assistance that you have been for us in the past year. We are all unpaid volunteers who simply love to be of service. We celebrated our 40th Anniversary this year. This simply would not have happened without your donations of cash and food each year. Your generosity and prayers are what make it work.

We will be distributing over 300,000 pounds of food this year, we will have all the year-end totals in February. It will be a record year for us. Most of our donations come in during November and December. Our budget is \$70,000. Yes, we have to pay for gas and electric, water, sewer, insurance, snow removal and lawn care, etc. just like everybody else. Fun fact – the night of the Holiday Train we did take in \$4,423.29 from people at the event, including the matching amount from the Ron and Barb Brunner Foundation. From November 1st thru the night of the train we took in 13,092 pounds of food at the pantry, with a special thanks to the Bank of Mauston and the Key Club students at the High School. Everyone really stepped up. The Pantry, as well as our families, are all very humbled by all your continued assistance.

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!**

608-847-6690



In Our Prayers

~~ Mark Behling, Bridget Wells, Lynn, Michael Voltz, 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 on YouTube.*****

Worship Reminders

January 7 Worship Service

Lector & Communion Assistant: Jim Miller
Usher Captain: Roger Dutzle

January 14 Worship Service

Lector & Communion Assistant: Rosemary Dellamuth
Usher Captain: David Kidd

January 21 Worship Service

Lector & Communion Assistant: Kathy Noe
Communion Assistant: Karen Fritz
Usher Captain: Bill Potter

January 28 Worship Service

Lector & Communion Assistant: Karen Fritz
Usher Captains: Jeri Shultis and Harold Seebecker

January Altar Guild: Diane Huebner and Linda Bohnert



*** Giving	Cash/Check
November 5, 2023	\$3,642.00
November 12, 2023	\$1,613.80
November 19, 2023	\$1,014.00
November 26, 2023	\$1,506.00
** Online Giving Total for November 2023	\$2,072.78

*** 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.

Gen Fund	November 2023 Actual	November 2023 Budget	November YTD Actual	November YTD Budget
* Receipts	\$9,208.17	\$13,083.00	\$145,292.20	\$143,913.00
Disbursements	\$12,394.47	\$15,490.00	\$144,423.45	\$168,629.00

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