

Bethany Lutheran Church

"To grow so deep in Christ through worship, education,
and fellowship that we celebrate by reaching out to others."



February
2021

Important Dates

- 2-8 Council meeting 6:30 PM
(Zoom)
2-17 Ash Wednesday Worship
7:00 PM (Facebook)

Contact Information

Bethany Lutheran Church
235 South Second Street
West Branch, Iowa 52358
(319) 643-5998

Pastor Chad Whaley
pastor@wbbethany.org

Office Hours
As a result of COVID,
Pastor Chad is in office much of
the time.

Admin. Assistant: Paula Casper
blcsecretary@lcom.net

Office Hours
Tuesday & Thursday
8:00-11:30 AM

FIND US ON FACEBOOK!

Simply search "Bethany Lutheran
Church (ELCA) West Branch, Iowa"
on facebook and "like" our page!

ALSO FIND US ON TWITTER!

Search @blcwestbranch

God has made everything beautiful in its time.—
Ecclesiastes 3:11 (NIV)

*From the
Pastor*



Dear beloved and faithful people of God,

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! I find it challenging to even turn the television on anymore. Amidst a cold and long winter made even more challenging by the pandemic I find myself venturing down a path that leads to more anxiety, frustration, and overall state of melancholy.

Our new puppy is quite rambunctious. Somewhere it seems I recall someone stating, "A good puppy is a tired puppy." I am not sure about that; however, I do know a good walk/run certainly calms him down, which in turn provides some momentary peace and quiet in our household. In my walks with our dogs, I have tried to be more attuned into observing the beauty of God's creation. I notice how the ice glistens on the branches of a tree as the light of the moon shines upon it. Or, as I was out with them in a recent snowfall how those flakes of snow gently fell from the sky and landed upon the ground.

It's all too easy, in our virtual world in which our eyes are focused on digital screens more than ever, to become distracted from the beauty of God around us. Don't get me wrong. Those digital devices are a most precious gift to keep us connected in this time in which it is all too easy to become isolated. We have witnessed how the Spirit can utilize cameras and online worship for the good of the kingdom. They are also good to capture some of that beauty in the world, like this tree in the courtyard of the church. I simply stood and stared at it and in doing so found myself being drawn closer to the goodness of God and focused on the beauty, majesty, and grandeur of God's creation.

Amidst all we are living in, it made my heart happy and my mindset and mood much brighter. Moving forward, I am going to make it habit of taking that phone out of my pocket and instead of checking emails, social media posts, news blogs, etc., I'm simply going to take a photo and capture the abundant glory of God's creation. If you have any photos you would like to share, email me and perhaps we will make a collage in the next newsletter.

In peace,



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Bethany Books

by Frank Frostestad

This fall, due to the virus, we have not been able to have traditional church and church activities. Technology has helped us stay together and try to function as well as possible during this time. We have been able to have Sunday worship services on line as well as church council meetings, confirmation, education and study groups. One group that met this fall on Monday nights was an adult class that looked at the book *Dialogues On Race*.

From the cover- Dialogues turn conflict into community. Race and racism are so prevalent in US culture, that few stop to reflect upon what race is, why it was created, and how deeply ingrained race has become in American Christianity. It has left American churches segregated in the pews and divided in faith. Can this damage be repaired? *Dialogues On Race* explores that very question. With seven essays from leading Christian thinkers *Dialogues On Race* asks penetrating questions about how the church in the US got to this point, and how, or if, white supremacy can be expelled from American Christianity.

This book is a good adult small group resource that encourages talk about a difficult topic. In a time when so many conversations end in conflict, this resource helps to equip the reader to share their ideas, listen well, and learn from other viewpoints.

God Are You There? is by Kay Arthur. It is about finding God in your life. In order to do so one has to develop the skills to be able to search God's word. She does this in the form of a Bible study. It is divided into a 13 week study of the book of John. This book contains the day by day study, a copy of the book of John, and a leader's guide. This is designed to provide a growing relationship with God. (donated)

Books For Children

The following children's books are suited for prayer. *A Bedtime Prayer* by Sanja Rescek has a rhyming text that is appropriate for special moments and for giving thanks for all God's gifts. A good book for use before bedtime. *Precious Moments Little Prayers* are also suitable for giving thanks to God before bedtime. *Prayers And Poems For Children* is a whole collection of familiar prayers and poems for children. (all donated)

If you would like to check a book out, please contact the church office at (319) 643-5998 to arrange a time to do so. Thank you!

Saints in Worship

It is challenging to get an accurate account of those worshipping online. With that said, we continue to have many joining us for worship on Facebook. God is good!

Thanks for worshipping with us!

Monetary Gifts Report

	December 2020		YTD	
Total Receipts	Actual 19,450	Budget 12,982	Actual 160,569	Budget 155,800
Total Expenses	Actual 17,119	Budget 13,474	Actual 151,548	Budget 161,962

Thank you all for faithfully stewarding the gifts God has entrusted us with in fulfilling the ministry and mission of God here at Bethany Lutheran Church! In so many ways, not just monetarily, God is abundantly providing for our needs.

Birthdays

02/02 Becky Paulsen
 02/04 Del Hughes
 02/06 Hermann Boedecker, Jamie Fetzer
 02/10 Dave Bahnsen, Paul Friis, Kristin McElhinney
 02/12 Katherine White
 02/15 Kyle Colvin, Dave Poppen
 02/20 Joshua Snyder, Jamie Zimmerman
 02/21 Tina Webb, Avery Fonseca
 02/23 Arik Marsh
 02/24 Lynn Lovetinsky
 02/27 Dorothy Holmes

**If you don't see your birthday listed, please contact Paula so we can update our database.*



Southeastern Iowa Synod Anti-Racism Network

For many weeks, a small group has been reading, studying and discussing the topic of racism. You are invited to join us in learning more about this topic. One way we all can do that is participating in the Anti-Racism Network within our synod. Go to the link below to be directed to the synod website to learn more.

<https://seiasynod.org/anti-racism-network/>

There will be an "Anti-Racism Network Conversations" meeting via Zoom on Monday, March 8 at 7:00 PM. You can RSVP [here](#).

Additionally, join the conversation on the network's Facebook page.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ARSEIA>

Racism – a mix of power, privilege, and prejudice – **is sin**, a violation of God's intention for humanity.

– *Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture* (ELCA, 1993)



Southeastern Iowa Synod
 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
 God's work. Our hands.

+

BETHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH
COUNCIL MINUTES—December 14, 2020

The meeting was called to order by President Hughes at 6:36 p.m.

Members present were Del Hughes, Dave Bahnsen, Linda Black, Nancy Bruns, Anne Fetzer, Curt Casper, Kristin McElhinney, Amber Marsh, Alan Beyer, and Pastor Whaley. Also present was Mike Fryauf.

Pastor Chad opened the meeting with a prayer from Martin Luther.

Mike Fryauf approached the council about hosting a *Take Away Hunger* event at Bethany in January. This organization has replaced *Kids Against Hunger*, which Bethany has participated in previously. He said a normal packaging event would include 10 people, but could be modified to use 6 people at a time. Money would be raised ahead of time; the costs are 25 cents per package or \$54 per box.

Pastor's Report:

Grace and peace! It has been a wonderful past month. There have been so many joys. The number of kids signed up for the at-home kits. The ability to teach faith formation to our kiddos in 4th-8th grade. A special thank you to Amber as she has been teaching weekly on Zoom to our 4-6th grade youth. While worship has had to move indoors with just a few of us present, it has still brought me life and energy and I am so proud of the quality of product we are putting out. While it may not be on par with much larger congregations who were in the online space prior to COVID, I have talked to many people and heard positive comments on the audio/visual quality and content of our worship service. A huge shout out to all who assist and the continued financial support from the people of God so we can do this. The Advent wreaths and devotion were a hit and over 30 were distributed. There continues to be great discussion in our class on racism. For the first time in 9 months, I met a colleague face-to-face as I had a short meeting with Pastor Ostrem, Assistant to the Bishop. The Angel Tree is up and running and has been supported faithfully just as in years past. Thanks to Jeni, Hannah and Kami for their help. New people continue to join us online, comment, and help support our ministry financially. Praise be to God! Curt put out the Nativity and JOY sign and it looks wonderful.

Pastor Mark Pries, retired pastor of Zion Lutheran in Iowa City, will lead worship and preach December 20th. Bishop Current and her staff will be providing an entire worship service on December 27th. That will also provide a day off, which means I used up all my Sunday

vacation for 2020. I only took half of the vacation days. I am not exactly sure how the synod worship service will be made available. I think it was a great idea and will give people the opportunity to meet our new bishop, even if it is online. Plus, it is a new and exciting way for the church to come together.

Thanks to Anne who is assisting me in researching and helping figure out the best way to host our annual meeting virtually.

I am chairing the Synod Nominating Committee, which did take up a significant amount of time earlier this month. I am grateful for that time and opportunity. I had the idea to create a video as part of our seeking candidates for the 2022 Churchwide Assembly and that turned out very well.

Of course, there are always the day-to-day routine tasks that I do not need to reiterate. I just wish to close that while 2020 has been challenging in many ways, there have also been countless unforeseen blessings, joys, new ventures that have been life-giving, and I am so grateful and thankful for the Spirit's activity and continued revealing of Christ's presence to us over this year. Howard and Terry Moss and Mary McGee have been attending Bethany for some time and would like to join as members. Curt moved and Amber seconded a motion to accept them as members. Motion passed.

Secretary's Report:

Linda moved to accept the Secretary's Report. Dave seconded. Motion passed.

Treasurer's Report:

Nancy said in November Bethany received \$15,239 in offerings and had \$12,415 in expenses which allowed for a net increase in the General Fund of \$2,824 for the month.

The Budget Committee (Pastor Chad, John Black, Claudia Beyer, Del Hughes, Jill Taylor, and Nancy Bruns) met last week and are submitting a 2021 budget proposal for review.

Dave moved and Curt seconded to approve the Treasurer's Report. Motion passed.

Committee Reports:

Building and Grounds:

Pastor Chad thanked Curt for putting up the nativity scene at the church.

Education and Youth:

Kristin made Faith at Home kits for December for 57 kids and 35 families. These have been very well re-

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BETHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH
COUNCIL MINUTES—December 14, 2020

(Continued from page 4)

ceived.

Amber said the Wednesday evening classes are done by Zoom and are going well.

Kristin and Amber have met with Pastor Chad to plan for next year.

Evangelism and Outreach:

Al participated in the HACAP food distribution on November 17th. About 70 families were served, 15% more than the previous month.

Fellowship:

Anne is planning a Christmas storybook reading event with Del and Sue. This will be recorded in the sanctuary and be featured online.

She is planning to reach out to members this winter with letters since we are unable to do fellowship as a group during the pandemic.

Stewardship: No report.

Worship and Music:

Arlen Ottmar tuned the piano.

The Lector List for 2021 is ready.

Linda will deliver poinsettia plants that were purchased for Christmas.

The Christmas Eve service will be broadcast at 5 p.m. but can be viewed anytime after that on Bethany's Facebook page.

Old Business:

Bethany's Annual Meeting will be held on January 17, 2021 via Zoom.

Nominating committee is working on candidates for open council positions.

Due to continuing high COVID-19 infections, Bethany will continue to remain closed for now, except for special needs.

New Business:

Blood Drive: Wayne Frauenholtz requested use of the Great Hall for a Mississippi Valley blood drive in January. He said that there is a shortage of blood supplies for the hospitals. Al moved to approve use of the Great Hall for this event. Amber seconded. Motion passed.

2021 Budget: Nancy presented the proposed budget to the council. Dave moved to accept the budget as proposed. Anne seconded. Motion passed.

Continuing Education Expenses: Pastor said that,

normally, unused budgeted expense for continuing education were put into a special fund to be used at a later time. Since most of his continuing education was done online and most was free, he recommended that, for this year, the unused amount be left in the general fund.

Local Missions: Bethany's policy is to distribute 2.5% of regular offering to local missions. Eight local missions have been designated for several years. Al moved to continue to support these missions in the same percent as was done in the last year. He also moved to use the Cookie Walk Funds to be equally distributed between the UIHC Chaplaincy Program, Free Indeed Prison Ministry, and the Iowa City Shelter House. Curt seconded the motion. Motion passed. After discussion, it was decided to have Pastor Chad send out a letter listing these missions as an opportunity for members to make individual contributions.

Bank and Credit Card Policies: Linda moved to approve a signature document for use by Fidelity Bank. Kristin seconded. Motion passed.

Further discussion was held concerning Mike Fryauf's request to host a *Take Away Hunger* event in light of the pandemic. General feeling was that we should support it, if it could be done safely. Anne moved to give permission for this event in January. Amber seconded. Motion passed.

Angel Tree Funds: Jeni Schiele said that money contributions were greater than was needed for the Angel Tree needs and she would like to roll unused money over to the school for the reduced lunch program. Dave moved to approve this. Amber seconded. Motion passed.

Opening up the church: Pastor expressed a desire to very gradually open up the church beginning next year, if it could be done safely. It was decided to discuss this further at our January 11 meeting.

At the request at a WBARC meeting, it was decided to have West Branch churches ring their church bells for one minute on Wednesdays at 6:00 p.m. in honor of all affected by the COVID pandemic.

Curt moved to adjourn the meeting. Kristin seconded. Motion passed.

Pastor Chad closed with the Lord's Prayer.



West Branch Area Religious Council (WBARC)

Bethany Lutheran, Springdale United Methodist, St. Bernadette's Catholic,
West Branch Friends, West Branch Friends Meeting, West Branch United Methodist



January 17, 2021

To: WBARC Representatives and Congregations

Re: 2020 WBARC Financial Recap

Greetings Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it." (John 1:5)
This is the promise of Christmas we celebrate all year long. I have found myself repeating this verse often over this past year. Amidst everything we have been through, our hope for today, tomorrow and the days to come is the Light does indeed continue to shine!

As the acting Treasurer of the West Branch Area Religious Council (WBARC) I want to once again thank all of you for your faithful partnership and support of our shared ministry together. Through your faithful stewardship and monetary donations to our joint account we were able to continue our shared mission in assisting those in need in our community.

During 2020 WBARC received \$1,705 in monetary gifts. Thank you all so much! We had mission expenditures of \$1,641.33 as we assisted 13 individuals and/or families with needs such as lodging at Day's Inn, food vouchers to Jack and Jill, fuel assistance, medical expenses, auto repairs for a stranded motorist, clothing and utility assistance. WBARC continued its strong support of food assistance programs within the West Branch Community School District with a donation of \$300.

Additionally, shortly following the onset of COVID-19, we purchased \$100 worth of gift cards from each of the 5 local restaurants. These gift cards were then distributed to people in need. This was also a way to support our local restaurants amidst challenging times.

Once again, on behalf of my colleagues, let me express our gratitude and thankfulness for your commitment and faithfulness to our shared ministry. We do our best to faithfully steward these gifts and see they are making a difference and extending God's care and love to all. We look forward to 2021, our partnership together, and our joint efforts in doing God's work in our community.

In peace,

Chad Whaley
Pastor, Bethany Lutheran Church
WBARC Treasurer



Ash
WEDNESDAY

Ash Wednesday is February 17. With the COVID-19 pandemic, we are not certain exactly what this will look like. At this point, worship is being planned, which will be streamed via Facebook. Look for additional information to be forthcoming. Thank you for your patience!

As for Wednesday's during the season of Lent, thought is being given to that as well.

Faith at Home

These short Bible passages and reflection starters are one more way we are trying to spur conversation about faith at home and also absorb ourselves in the word of God. We hope you find them beneficial.

Scripture Talk

Mark 1:14-15

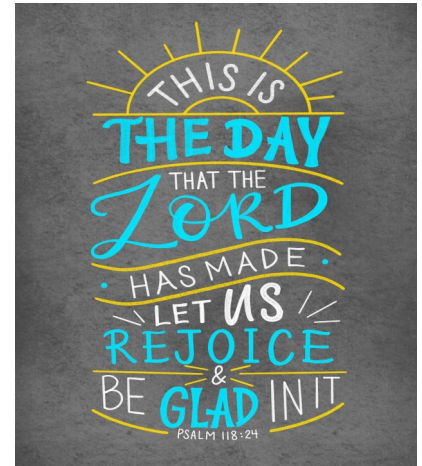
Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

- The good news of God, for me...
- Repenting and believing...
- What Jesus asks of me...

Ecclesiastes 1:2

Vanity of vanities, says the Teacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity.

- All is vanity, or worthless, pointless, without meaning...
- In the long run, life is...
- Meaning, purpose and my life...



Sunday School

Faith at Home Kits

Our March Faith at Home Kit is open for registration! This kit is to help prepare your family for Easter this Lent season and is designed for children ages 2-8. You can register your family here: <https://forms.gle/sxzsh2cddLTaj3Qv5> or <http://bit.ly/blceasterkit>. Registration is open until Sunday, February 21 and kits will be ready for pick-up or delivery the week of March 7th. Here are some pictures of past Faith at Home Kits, our Faith Formation education for children ages 2-8 during COVID. We've had great participation from our congregation and community with 57 kids participating in December, and 24 kids for each of the months of January, November, and October.

Thank you for your continued support and prayers for this program!

Kristin McElhinney



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