** April 10, 2021 Issue No. 15**

Welcome to the Fifteenth issue of the Bethlehem Lutheran Church Newsletter. This biweekly newsletter provides updated communication to all members and friends of Bethlehem Lutheran Church, through April 10, 2021. As a church, strong communication is essential to truly develop and maintain a loving trusting relationship with each other. Articles that follow are submitted by leadership and members that relate information on activities being conducted and planned as we enact our mission of ***“Called to Invite the Community to Know and Grow in Christ.”*** Please note a new addition to this newsletter called “Together in Christ” where we will attempt to personally reach out share the stories of your life both celebratory and where prayers are needed.

**Message from the Pastor –** *Submitted by Pastor Tim Feaser*

**Christ is risen!  Greetings to all!**

 It was certainly wonderful to gather again last Sunday to celebrate not only our Lord's resurrection but also new life for Bethlehem Lutheran Church.  It certainly feels good to be cautiously exiting this pandemic.  We will still socially distance and wear masks; but with daily increasing vaccinations I am feeling safer and glad to be reconnecting with others.

 At worship we will spend the next several Sundays reading again the post-resurrection stories about Jesus.  There are about a dozen of these stories, some similar and others quite unique.  A common thread is that Jesus suddenly appears.  Sometimes people immediately recognize him, other times they do not recognize him until he does something familiar like the breaking of bread.  This actually mirrors my own experience with God.  Sometimes I see the hand of God moving in my life and other times not so much.  I have always been curious to hear about some of the televangelists like Kenneth Copeland who seem to actually hear the voice of God speaking to them.  For some reason God likes to tell him to raise money so that he can purchase a new jet aircraft.  No such luck for me - my 8-year-old car is going to have to go awhile.

Despite the fact that I have never actually heard God talking to me, I do have a sense that God's hand has led me on a faith journey.  Sometimes I only become aware of that fact when I look back on my experiences.  Then I can see how God opened the right doors and closed the wrong ones to lead me towards a new life.  I believe that God will lead our congregation to new life as well!

I have no idea where we are going - never had.  I come from a long line of people in my family with a history of getting momentously lost.  One time I remember ending up at the Mexican border when we were actually looking for a K-Mart.  (In fairness, I should mention that we started out in San Diego!)  Nevertheless, my point is that we do not have to understand the journey in order to be led by God.  Somehow God comes full circle and we end up where are supposed to be.  Perhaps that's one way of experiencing new life.

**Christ is risen indeed!**

**Leadership Team Notes** *– Submitted by Donna Curran*

Th following is a summation of the items discussed and voted on during the congregational meeting held on March 28, 2021. The full set of minutes will be posted and issued by the Leadership Team later this month.

**Introduction Pastor Feaser**

Donna Curran introduced Pastor Tim Feaser to the congregation. He is currently the Vice Pastor and plans are in progress for him to become the Interim Pastor. He will be leading worship services on Sunday mornings. Currently, he is also a part time pastor at Bedford Lutheran Church. Donna thanked our sister congregation in Bedford for sharing him with us.

Pastor Feaser addressed the meeting stating how delighted he was to be at BLC and noted that we can take great pride in having a well-organized and great ministry. Pastor Feaser was the pastor at Trinity Lutheran, a larger congregation, in Maryland for 30 years. He and his wife live at Smith Mountain Lake. He said that our first move is to start worshiping again in person for those who are comfortable doing so. Otherwise, services will still be available online. The first in-person worship was held on Easter Sunday, April 4, at 9:00 am.

**Leadership Team Actions**

Donna noted that the Leadership Team is excited to be worshiping in the sanctuary for Easter. She noted the following actions that the Leadership Team with support from Mutual Ministry Team will be taking as we move forward in 2021:

* Working with Pastor Feaser on moving the church forward under our mission of “Called to Invite the Community to Know and Grow in Christ.”.
* Review of the BLC Strategic Plan.
* Updating the BLC Constitution in coordination with the VA Synod.
* Continuing to consult with staff at the Bishop’s office including Skip Zubrod and Rebecca Walls as we move forward in 2021.
* Reviewing duties of the Leadership Team to ensure that we are following the BLC Constitution.
* Reviewing BLC Financial Best Practices and Selecting an audit committee.

Donna noted that the Leadership Team is doing our best to regain the trust of congregation so that we can feel united again. If any member has concerns, please call any member of the Leadership Team. We thank you for your support and patience during this past year, as we are very hopeful about our BLC’s future.

**Facility Ministry Leader Vacancy**

A Facilities Team Leader is still needed. We have people who are willing to help with maintaining our facilities, but we still need a leader. No candidates have stepped up or agreed to serve in this position at this time. Please contact Donna Curran if interested. We will continue to search for someone to fill this position.

**BLC Recommend Constitutional Changes**

There were several changes made and approved to our constitution. The most major ones are listed below:

* This congregation shall be incorporated under the laws of the State of Virginia. Note: Since BLC is incorporated, this statement is necessary.
* The annual meeting of the congregation shall be held on a date as determined by the Leadership Team to be held between October 1 and December 31.
* Annual Reports will be sent to the congregation by 31 January each year for review and will be considered approved unless there are objections.
* New Leadership Team members will start at the beginning of the new calendar year following the annual meeting at which they are elected. Note: This will provide additional time for orientation for new members.
* The Mutual Ministry Committee will have 6 members that will serve a 2 year term.

**Model Constitution Changes**

The congregation adopt the Amendments to THE MODEL CONSTITUION AS APPROVED BY THE 2019 CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY. Skip Zubrod, VA Synod, encouraged BLC to include these amendments in the church’s updated constitution. (The full changes can be found on the VA Synod website.) Most of the changes are grammatical, however, the more significant items were:

* The congregation may hold meetings by remote communication, including electronically and by telephone conference, if there is an opportunity for simultaneous aural communication.
* Funds given to the Synod are now referred to as “*mission suppor*t” versus” *benevolence.*”

**Budget Forecast**:

Bethlehem Lutheran Church Balance Sheet 3/31/2021 as of 03/23/21

Description Amount

Ending Cash Book Balance March 31, 2021 82,454

Part II Funds (19,000)

Accumulated balance for budgeted expenses was 63,454

 Deficit 2021 Forecast (Apr - Dec) (23,523)

 Check Book Balance December 31, 2021 39,931

1. Mission and Support Back to 7% not 3.5%
2. Interim Pastor from April to Dec
3. Vice Pastor for March
4. Admin Assist for April - Dec
5. Adjust Employer Share of FICA (SS & Med)
6. Forecast Revenue at 100% of Budget
7. Sexton at full pay

 A Special Congregation meeting will be held in April 25th regarding the budget.

**Parish House Sale**

The Leadership Team voted on March 15 to accept from Pinnacle Realty the $110, 000 offer with no additional fees or costs for inspections. These funds will be used to pay off the remaining mortgage (approximately $45,000) on the church. The sale includes the property surrounding the house back to the driveway and parking lot. There is an allowance for Pinnacle to use four spaces in our parking lot behind the house during the week.

We thank Tom Birce for the diligent effort he has put in over the past 18 months to sell the house. Considering the condition of the house this sale was the best offer and consistent with the value of the property when considered against the State Farm property next-door being listed at $120,000. See the minutes of the Congregational meeting to be issued later this month for the full history of negotiations that transpired. The Leadership Team met with Matt Durand and thinks that Pinnacle will be a good neighbor. They are going to invest about $50,000 in the house for remodeling and updates.

Paying off the remaining mortgage will allow us to have more cash on hand and the remaining funds from the sale could possibility be invested for future use.

The sale of the Parish House to Pinnacle Realty and the use of the funds to pay off the remaining mortgage was unanimously approved at the Congregational Meeting.

**Memorial Funds**

The Congregational meeting approved the use of Memorial Funds to upgrade our digital equipment so we can provide virtual services to those at home. Previously funds were most used for paraments and upgrading the sanctuary. Usually, funds are given without being designated for a specific purpose by the family. Two memorials ($1490) do have specific purposes. Undesignated funds are $5721.

Currently, Will Engelke is using his own equipment and previously John Nicholson used his own equipment. Tristan Waller edits the videos and arranges them for the posted online service on Facebook and YouTube. This equipment and process has provided adequate videos, but the quality is primarily suited for home videos, which is not the quality used by most churches We will be purchasing a camera and associated equipment that can be operated remotely during our live services that allows us to stream and record to YouTube and Facebook. This will be helpful in reaching out to more people online. According to Tim Echols, who has priced the new system with his sources, the cost is about $4,100. This will allow us to make some quality videos and stream live not only the services but important large meetings at the church.

**Yard Sale**

There are containers of personal belongings in the back of the Youth Room that belong to Betty Nicholson. She will be moving back to Lynchburg and needs these items moved out of her house. Please do not remove any items as these are Betty’s personal items. We are going to have a Betty’s Sale and help her sort through these items. We are not having a yard sale this year.

**Our Church Life and Mission**

**Gateway -** *submitted by Carolyn Robinson*

Special thanks to Will and Claudette Engelke, Diane Wetternach and Carol Cox for preparing the Gateway meal on April 8 and to Will and Claudette for delivering the food to the Gateway!

BLC is scheduled to prepare the next meal on Thursday, June 10. Valerie Daugherty and Susan Baughman have volunteered to prepare the meal and Carolyn Robinson will deliver the food. Thank you to everyone for your continued support of the Gateway ministry!

**Wicker Basket Donations –** *submitted by Carolyn Robinson*

Donations from the Wicker Basket in April go to the Scrappers. Please support this ministry that provides warm blankets and quilts to children and adults in our local area!

**Care for Our Property – s***ubmitted by Susan Baughman*

Ian and I have spent some time attempting to clear out the wooded area at the end of the driveway and beside the pavilion. We have hauled off several truckloads of branches and debris to the dump where it will be transformed into mulch. If you have a truck and care to do so, please feel free to load up any piles that you happen to see and haul them away. There are also some smaller piles on the side by Whitten's parking lot. We cleaned up six bags of trash, mainly beer bottles from the woods, along with 3 tires with another one still in the dirt. There are a couple of outdoor chairs, but our hands were too full to bring both to the collection pile. There is a broken terracotta pipe, but that needs to remain. We, as a whole, have not been good stewards of this area and need to step up and care for it.

By the way, did you know that Sunday School classes and other meetings used to be held in the woods? Some of the decaying bench supports and one wooden plank are still visible from the parking lot.

Thank you for any support that you can give to help remove the debris piles.

**Planning for 2021 Community Ministries –** *Submitted by Carolyn Robinson*

Just a reminder that the Outreach Ministry team meeting has been rescheduled for **Thursday, April 15 at 10:00 am** to discuss BLC's community ministries for the upcoming year.  We want to develop an annual calendar for 2021, discuss current ministries and options for additional ministry involvement, along with preparation of Thrivent Grants to support outreach ministries.   We plan to meet outside weather permitting.  If we need to meet indoors, we will adhere to COVID guidelines.  If you have any questions, please contact Carolyn Robinson.

**Stewardship –** *Submitted by Will Engelke*

Contribution reports the first quarter of 2021 were provided earlier this week. Praise be to Christ; your offerings indicate we are ready to move on from the challenging year of 2020. The year 2020 has been a hard year for our community and country. The effects of the pandemic have hampered the normalcy of our life socially and economically. The plans for our Stewards of God’s Love program during 2020 were no exception to the disruption caused by Covid-19 closures of in-person worship and fellowship events. But even without those events promoting an awareness of the full meaning of stewardship, our congregation continued to give generously of their time, talents, and treasures. Without those offered gifts we would not have been able to provide the virtual services starting on March 15, 2020 and reach out to those in need with our social ministries such as Blessing Bags, Gateway meals, Operation Christmas Child, Scrappers, Christmas Angels, and Chase the Chill. Praise the Lord for all the good Stewards of God’s Love here at Bethlehem. We together, with the Lord’s loving support, will meet the challenges in 2021 as we rekindle our worshipping, learning, witnessing/caring, and giving back **together.**

We are now meeting for worship; your pledges and offerings (including the Wicker Basket) can be placed in the offering boxes as you enter our sanctuary. If you are unable to attend, your offerings may be mailed to the church office at **7336 Timberlake Road, Lynchburg, VA 24502.**  If you are at church during the week, place them in the Treasurer’s or Financial Secretary’s mailbox at church. Wicker Basket offerings for the month of April is Scrappers, with the third Sunday of each month going to capital improvements. Do not let Covid hamper us from being Stewards of God’s Love and giving back during 2021.

**Together in Christ**

**Tommy Daugherty**

Our prayers remain with the Daugherty family at the passing of our dear brother in Christ, Tom Daugherty, who passed peacefully on Thursday March 25th. Tommy was well loved by all at Bethlehem for his gentle kindness and smile. He will be missed.

**Upcoming Birthdays and Anniversaries**

Blessings and Happy Birthday to:

* April 15, Tom Birce
* April 22, Maurice Bell
* April 28, Holden Neighbors
* May 2, Laura Murrell

Blessings to Those Celebrating Anniversaries:

* April 23, Larry & Sharon Whipkey

**Editor Notes**: The list I am working from may be dated. Please send me any updates on birthdays and anniversaries for future issues of this newsletter. This would include any new members or friends receiving this newsletter. Will Engelke – comdirblcva@outlook.com

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Our Country, Valerie Daugherty and the Daugherty Family, Bonnie Staffeldt, Erin niece of Lynn Suwala, Jackie Hoffman and Son Brian, The Whitmore Family, Wallace and Nancy Gilbert, Betty Nicholson, Della Will, Vern Lauer, Karen and Toby Murphy, Geoff Bell and the Bell Family, Bill Wirth, Frank Robinson, Harrison Neighbors Kitty Page, Garnet Bowser, Pam Benshoof, Aileen Logan, Jay Pemberton, Larry and Dot White, Andy Blankenship, Susan Lewis, Willie Hagen, Pastor Hank and Martha Boschen, Connie Koiner.

**If you know of any BLC members who are hospitalized, sick or in rehabilitation please let Will Engelke, John Goodrich or the pastor know or email office@blcva.org. We want to show our love and support for our BLC family. Thank you for your help.**

**Upcoming Events** *(Contact Engelke with Event Planning)*

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Day | Date | Time | **Activity** |
| Tuesday | 04/13/21 | 7:00pm | **Stewardship Team meeting** |
| Thursday | 04/15/21 | 9:30am | **Scrapper’s meeting, Thursday every week** |
| Thursday | 04/15/21 | 10:00am | **Annual calendar of already planned community ministry events and discuss other new ministry efforts.** |
| Sunday | 04/25/21 | 2:00pm | **Congregational budget meeting at Church** |
| Saturday | 05/15/21 | 10:00am | **Mutual Ministry team meeting** |
| Thursday | 06/10/21 | 6:00pm | **Gateway meal: Valerie Daugherty, Susan Baughman and Carolyn Robinson** |

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**Pastor Tim Feaser**

410-608-9442

timfeaser@yahoo.com

**John Goodrich Treasurer** Office Hours Tuesday 9:00am to 12:00pm
treasurerblcva@outlook.com
If you have any comments about improving the content or structure of this newsletter, please contact Will Engelke at comdirblcva@outlook.com or 434-534-8254.

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