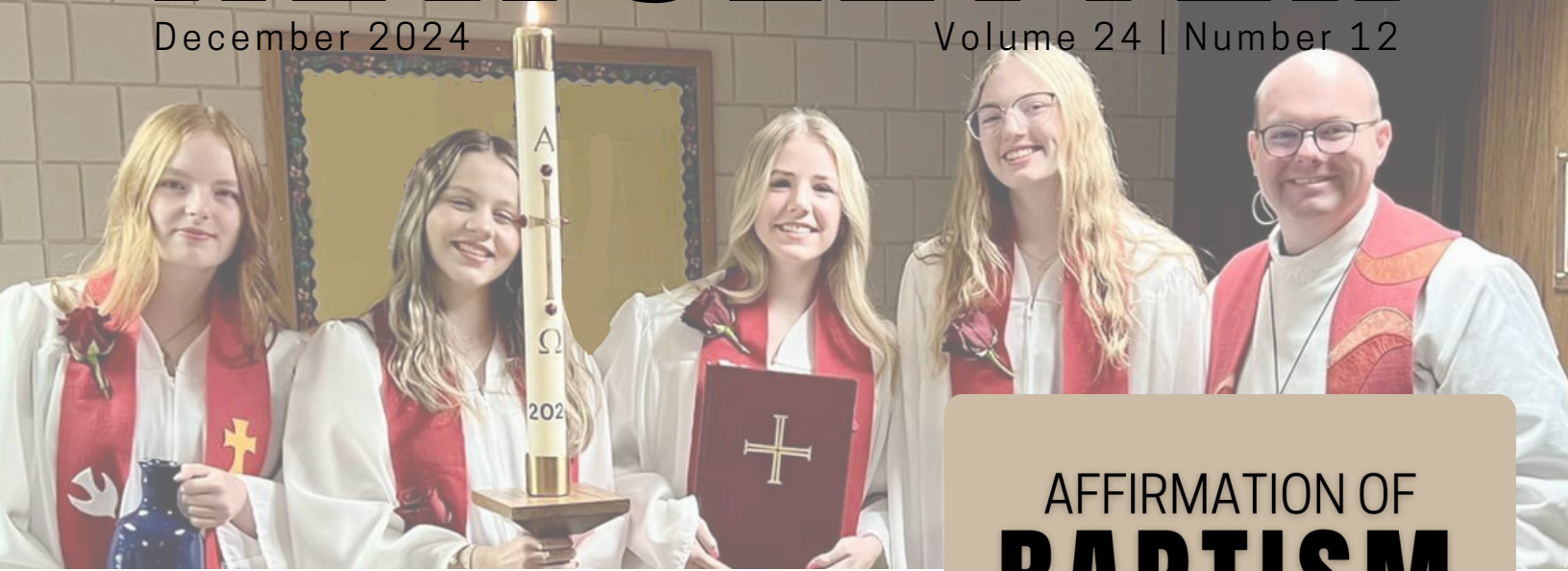


BETHESDA LUTHERAN

NEWSLETTER

December 2024

Volume 24 | Number 12



AFFIRMATION OF BAPTISM

(FROM LEFT TO RIGHT, ABOVE)
ANNA JEAN HOSELTON
CAYLEE AMBERS
HAYDEN RUDNIK
AUDREY KELLY

A NEW FACE IN THE OFFICE

This month we welcome Olivia Kelly, who is our new administrative assistant! Olivia is a life-long member of Bethesda - 19 years and counting! She is currently in her sophomore year at Concordia College, majoring in Environmental & Sustainability Studies and Global Studies with a minor in Social Activism.

We are so thankful to have a familiar face to many, who loves this church dearly, be our newest staff member. Her knack for communication and problem-solving, in addition to that award-winning smile, are a wonderful addition to the office.

Please keep Olivia in your prayers as we all know that starting a new job and learning all of the ins and outs is not easy... Thank you for your continued understanding during these times of change! Office hours will always be the most current on our "contact" page on the website.



Three of the confirmands when they received their First Communion at Bethesda in 2019

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

By Pastor Grant Vanderford

Greetings in the name of Jesus, the One for whom we wait in hope! It's the beginning of the church year. Advent!

I mentioned in the announcements in worship a few weeks ago something like, "Advent is almost here. I know, scary!" I was thinking "scary" in the sense of how fast this year seems to have passed. However, someone from the congregation asked me why I would call Advent "scary." They reminded me that Advent is not a time of fear or worry; it is a dedicated season in the church year that beckons us and draws us in to the Holy Spirit to live in hope-filled anticipation of the Christ. I'm deeply grateful for that reminder from this faithful friend at Bethesda.

"The angel of God comes on the scene, appearing to Zechariah in the Temple - fear not; appearing to Mary - fear not; appearing to the shepherds out in the fields - fear not."



FEAR NOT!

These are the very same words that occur three times in the first two chapters of Luke's Gospel. The angel of God comes on the scene, appearing to Zechariah in the Temple – fear not; appearing to Mary – fear not; appearing to the shepherds out in the fields – fear not.

Many of us spend immense amounts of time and energy walking a razor-thin edge of fear. I mean, we are a worried people, jumping from one thing to the next avoiding conflict and trying to establish our dominance and right-ness in our various relationships - with our co-workers, our family members, and with those in our family of faith.

There are also an overwhelming number of narratives that constantly bombard us on our devices, our televisions, our radios, that center and enflame fear and anxiety, and even disdain for anyone who thinks, looks, or practices their faith differently than "me and mine."

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

We worry about things over which we claim we have no control. Except we do have some control – we can turn off our televisions, put our digital devices down, and look into the eyes of those who live with us and who we love. We can look up and see the spark of the Spirit within them, their belovedness in God’s sight, and maybe even angels who remind us – fear not.

ADVENT

We’re going to have lots of time in the four weeks of Advent and the weeks of Christmas and Epiphany to settle into the good news of Luke’s Gospel. This good news is that even when it seems like the world is falling apart around us, even when we can’t find our footing, even when we are consumed by fear, we are to remember: fear not, God is with us.

There are many ways to connect with one another at Bethesda during December. I hope you’ll check out some of the events and opportunities coming up for worship, learning, and service to our neighbors.

I also hope you’ll take time to read the articles that our beloved siblings who serve on the church council have to say in this newsletter. They show up in amazing ways in this community, leading and guiding us in our mission of being a place of healing and reconciliation for all of God’s beloved.

Fear not, beloved ones. God is with us.



Advent





Photo by Churches United

SUPPORT FOR CHURCHES UNITED

November 25, 2024

A recent statement by Churches United reads as follows: “We are filled with gratitude as local faith communities, first responders, mayors, and partner organizations came together in a powerful show of support for Churches United. Your commitment to our mission is a testament to the strength of our community. Thank you for standing with us!”

Pastor Grant was part of this gathering and was able to share what he’s learned from Table of Mercy about our neighbors who need help in this way.

Each Wednesday during Advent at Bethesda, the free-will offering from the meal will be designated for Churches United. These funds are used to help provide safe shelter, stable housing, nutritious food, and healing care. Please consider generously supporting our effort to care for our siblings experiencing homelessness in our community!

HOW TO STAY UP TO DATE WITH EVENTS

With the update of the church calendar on the website, Church Council has decided to put events and activities front and center to really showcase all of the things that are happening here at Bethesda!

Thanks to a donation by Drew Robinson, we’ll be mounting a

TV in the hallway that will display the current church calendar and list of events that are happening.

Be on the lookout for this fun, new way of viewing what is going on at Bethesda!

A NOTE ABOUT STEWARDSHIP

We are so grateful for the generous response to our Abundant Life Stewardship Campaign for our shared mission and ministry in 2025!

To everyone who has returned your 2025 Commitment Cards, thank you. Your financial commitments to Bethesda help us plan for the year ahead.

If you haven't filled out and returned your commitment card yet, please take a moment to pray the prayer on the back, fill it out, and either mail it to the church, drop it off in the office between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. Monday through Thursday, or bring it with you to worship on Sunday and place it in the offering plate.

Together, we are called to be the beloved community of Jesus. Thanks be to God for all of the gifts of God's people at Bethesda!



PONDERING ADVENT

By Kevin Kopperud

As I reflect today, I think about the joy of anticipation and hope that the season of Advent brings, especially for children. The story of Jesus' birth and all that Christmas entails is a happy, even exciting time of year for many families. As a former elementary school principal, I know this is not the case for every child and every family.

For some children, Christmas vacation means they won't have access to daily breakfast and lunch at school, or have a regular school schedule where a host of caring adults, from bus driver to lunchroom aid to teacher and administrators, ground their days. For many children, there won't be presents under the tree, and there may not even be a Christmas tree because there is no money beyond day-to-day living expenses or because those children don't share the Christian faith tradition. Schools and society in general have become increasingly diverse, which I fully embrace, but the Advent season amidst that context has become increasingly complex and confusing for many children. For some, there may be extra fear right now for families that may not look like yours or mine as they navigate their unknown futures.

In this season of Advent, I also remember something that my father modeled. I grew up on a small family farm in southwestern Minnesota, and every Christmas Eve, I saw my father give extra hay to the cows. I've always remembered this. We didn't have a lot of money growing up, but the lesson was simple: He found a way to give quietly and humbly, even to the animals.

I hope that in the midst of all the sparkle, shine, and busyness of the Advent season, each of us will take time to see—really see—the needs of all of our neighbors and find ways to give to and support them.

CHRISMONS AT CHRISTMAS

Bethesda will soon be decorated for the Christmas season. Children will be invited, along with adults, to put ornaments on the trees. Many will be surprised to find that there aren't any brightly colored balls!

Bethesda's ornaments are called "Chrismons" that are made of styrofoam and decorated with pearls, gold glitter, bits of lace and other such trims.

Lynn Tkachuk is the knowledge keeper of this tradition in our congregation. She has created and cared for these beautiful ornaments for many years. Over time, the church has had several Chrismon decorating parties, and the creators have added their names on the back.

Once the trees are decorated, you're welcome to come up and look closely at the ornaments... there is much creativity and beauty, and sometimes even playfulness in their design. You might

chrismon, *noun*
kriz-,män\

Definition of *chrismon*

: a combination of the words "Christ" and "monogram"

: a Christmas tree ornament that displays symbols of Christ and Christianity; traditionally colored white and gold

: shapes often include crosses, fish, crowns, stars, and the alpha and omega letters of the Greek alphabet

even recognize an ornament that you or your child made long ago. Maybe a name on the back will be a member who is no longer with us, but now has this special memento appearing in our Advent season every year. Thank you, Lynn, for passing on our tradition of Chrismons!

A NOTE FROM LYNN:

I hope to find time in this busy season to have a decorating afternoon! Watch for an announcement about that... If you have gold and white trims that could be hot-glued to styrofoam, they would be a welcome addition to our supplies. If you notice any Chrismons that need repair, please let me know!



Photo from 2021: Lynn with Mara Wenaas, Ingrid Vanderford, Addison Wenaas, & Selah Vanderford

GRATITUDE: PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE

By Marty Ohren, Council President

I hope everyone had a Thanksgiving filled with joy, gratitude, and good company. The Church Council and I want to express our deepest thanks for all that our congregation has accomplished this year. Your strong dedication, faith, and collective efforts have made an impact, and I am truly thankful for each and every one of you.

As a congregation, we are also thankful for the leadership and guidance of Pastor Grant. His dedication and faith continue to be a blessing to us all. We have had an amazing year, and as we continue to make the structural and cosmetic repairs possible because of the Capital Campaign, the building will be in much better shape. Our Bethesda church family took action and set in motion a plan to accomplish our goals.

The congregation has also wholeheartedly embraced and supported Pastor Grant's transition from serving 50% as Pastor of Bethesda Lutheran Church and 50% with Table of Mercy, to now dedicating himself fully as 100%

Pastor of Bethesda. We are grateful for his commitment and leadership as we continue this journey together.

During the past year, we were blessed to welcome new friends into our congregation while also bidding farewell to friends who have passed on. We mourned their loss, honored their memories, and lifted them up in prayer.

As I thought of our shared accomplishments at the church this year, it reminded me that when we join together in faith, there is no limit to what we can achieve.

PAST

At a recent council meeting, Pastor Grant shared some church history from a book that was put together for the 75th anniversary in 1955.

The book showed what a determined and faithful congregation can truly accomplish. There will always be challenges, but we as members will be there to stand together, support our pastor as they lead us, and follow our faith.

The following paragraphs are from "The History of Bethesda: Diamond Jubilee"

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



*Bethesda Swedish Lutheran Church, Moorhead, Minnesota, 1906
Photo courtesy of Clay County Historical Society*

FROM "GRATITUDE: PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE"

"In 1880, Rev. A.F. Tornwell of Stillwater, Minnesota, was sent by the Mission Board to investigate the settlement in the Moorhead area to see if there was enough interest among the settlers to establish a congregation. He found a great many people of Scandinavian descent working for the railroad in the area. He found few were interested in church work, and he reported to his conference that he had little hope for any congregation in the area and advised the settlers to seek homes elsewhere. Among these settlers, however, were four families and three single men who had strong faith and determined enthusiasm, and consequently, on May 4th, 1880, they met at the home of Mr. John L. Bjorkquist and organized the Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Bethesda Congregation.

In the summer of 1880, Rev. J.O. Cavallin, a pastor from Spring Garden, Minnesota, made many trips to see relatives in Moorhead. On one of these trips, the officers of the newly formed Bethesda Church asked him to preside at a congregational meeting for the purpose of calling a pastor. It was said it was a

surprise to him that he was the pastor elected and called. Rev. Tornwell knew this would be difficult, a small congregation meeting in a member's home. Despite the difficult situation, Rev. Tornwell recognized both the need and great possibilities for the area.

"Despite the difficult situation, Rev. Tornwell recognized both the need and great possibilities for the area."

- excerpt from "The History of Bethesda: Diamond Jubilee (1880-1955)"

Rev. Tornwell accepted the role as Bethesda's Pastor in the fall of 1880 with the implication that his time was to be divided between Bethesda and Maple-Sheyenne. At this time, there was no building available in Moorhead, and services were held temporarily in a Fargo School. When the Moorhead School Board decided to sell the land where the original Bethesda was built, Mr. Bjorkquist and Mr. Widing attended the sale and purch-

-ased the property for \$2,500, which was to be paid in 30 days. The charter members pledged \$700, and the citizens of the two towns contributed \$600. Rev. Cavallin purchased the south half of the property for \$600, and the remainder of the cost was secured by loans. In the winter of 1881, the school property was remodeled. The upper half was made into a spacious church auditorium where kerosene lamps provided lights, and a big oblong wood-burning stove provided heat. The lower story was converted into a parsonage, which lasted for 25 years."

FUTURE

Since this account, Bethesda Lutheran Church built two new churches and eventually moved to our present location to build the church we are in now. This building is 50+ years old, and we still strive to do what our original congregants did.

We have strong faith, and we will work together and support each other in a place where all are welcome.

I wish everyone peace during the Christmas season.

-Marty

A MOMENT FOR MISS MARA

Did you know that someone needs blood every 2 seconds?

The Bethesda blood drive is quickly approaching! This event is hosted in honor of our very own Bethesda member, Mara, who is 5 years old and has been the recipient of multiple blood donations.

When you *take a moment* and give blood with Vitalant, you have the potential to help hospital patients just like Mara within our own community, and also nationwide. Daily personal emergencies and ongoing medical needs of thousands of patients require a constant and ready blood supply. It's the blood already on hospital shelves that saves lives.



Miss Mara at the Bethesda Blood Drive in March 2024

BLOOD DRIVE SOON



vitalant[®]

There is still time to schedule one of the 18 open appointments. (So feel free to invite friends and family to join!)

Click [here](#) to sign up! If you need help, Mary Wenaas will have her laptop after worship on Sunday and during Wednesday Advent meals.

Contact Mary with any questions:
701-320-2007
msandness007@hotmail.com

**WEDNESDAY
DECEMBER 11
3-7 P.M.**

**5:30 MEAL
6:30 P.M. VESPERS**

THANKFULNESS ABOUNDS

By Drew Robinson

As the year comes to a close, there are many things in our congregation to be thankful for, not the least of which are the wonderful and charitable pledges made through our Abundant Life Stewardship Campaign. Thank you! Your pledges of financial support ensure that Bethesda can continue its mission of building a compassionate and just community.

Thank you also to the stewardship team for their work in preparing this year's campaign to communicate the financial needs for the

next year; to Pastor Grant for taking the lead on organizing and editing; and an extra thank you to Kelli, Laurie, and Chris for sharing their gifts and experiences with the congregation through their temple talks.

If you would like to use your time and talents to support the church in other ways, for example, reading, leading, or cleaning, then please let the council know! Your works and sharing of gifts – both financial and practical – support the beloved community that Jesus enacts among us.



HOLIDAY EGG BAKE

From the Vanderford family, that was learned from the Olivet Lutheran Church family

350°

45 minutes

Serves 12

Ingredients:

1 dozen eggs
2 (12 oz.) logs of Jimmy Dean sausage
3 cup shredded cheddar cheese
1 cup whipping cream or half-and-half

*optional: onions, mushrooms,
green peppers, etc.*

Directions:

Grease 9"x13" baking dish.
Use a hand mixer to beat together
(raw) sausage and eggs. Pour into pan.

Pour whipping cream over the top.
Spread shredded cheese evenly over the
top. Bake for 45 minutes or until it seems
"set." It will be very hot!

*Easy to refrigerate overnight and
throw in the oven in the morning!

OUTREACH

By Sue Reinhart

It's time to officially turn our beloved Table of Mercy over to Bethesda's outreach ministry! That means we need YOU!

The church has received an \$8,000 grant from ELCA Churchwide to help with this overall transition.

The Bright Sky community offers an important first step for housing people after Micah's Mission. Our congregation will determine how best to support them in that work.

MOVING FORWARD

To celebrate this change, we'll be having a "Transfer of



Ministry" at the Bright Sky Apartments in Moorhead. We do have a \$250 Thrivent card to help with food and supplies, but we'd really love to arrange volunteers for the following as we plan for 130 people:

- Cooking the turkeys
- Making green bean casserole
- Bringing rolls
- Purchasing beverages
- Getting paper products

Special thanks to Adam and Iris Huss for donating 5 large turkeys! Thanks also to Shannon Vanderford and Becky Erickson for doing the stuffing and pumpkin pie!

Stay tuned for more information as the planning continues...

If you can help in any way, contact Sue Reinhart: 701-371-0422
sns80rhart@gmail.com



**TRANSFER OF
MINISTRY
SUNDAY
DECEMBER 15**

6 P.M. | BRIGHT SKY

A PLAN FOR THE NEW YEAR

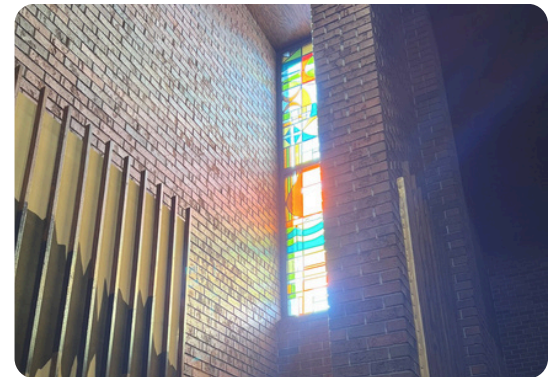
As Bethesda looks forward to 2025, we're planning an open forum after worship on

January 19 to talk about the future of outreach ministry. "Where have we been? What

do we do now?" We need your ideas. Please include Bethesda in your prayers as we discern what Christ is calling us to do. Hope to see you there!

CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Submitted by Sharon Olson
November 12, 2024



- Churches United would like to share a presentation during coffee hour in January
- Part of the “Building on Faith” Capital Campaign will be tithed to Table of Mercy, as previously approved
 - After Table of Mercy, Bethesda will distribute the money to other programs
- Property Committee projects continue
- BAS discussed applying for a grant to purchase a washer/dryer combination. Asked them to get a quote for washer/dryer and plumber. Reviewed the 2025 budget for BLC and the increasing costs of insurance
- Employee performance reviews are scheduled for 2025: Pastor Grant, Tyler and Sam

NOISY OFFERING



MONTHLY FINANCIAL UPDATE

	MTD			YTD		
	Actual	Budget	Over Budget	Actual	Budget	Over Budget
Total Income	\$23,349	\$23,760	(\$411)	\$235,368	\$248,030	(\$12,662)
Total Expenses	\$20,966	\$23,805	(\$2,839)	\$241,004	\$244,061	(\$3,057)
Net Income	\$2,383	(\$45)	\$2,428	(\$5,636)	\$3,969	(\$9,605)



MONEY RAISED FOR TABLE OF MERCY

While the Table of Mercy ministry is in transition, we still have a budget to meet by the end of the year. In support of that, Karen Henschke organized a Holiday Craft Show featuring nearly 20 local vendors, a raffle with donated prizes, and the sale of lunch and baked goods!

The grand total raised for Table of Mercy was \$2976! What a fantastic gift. Thank you to all who volunteered their smiling faces and Saturday mornings to make this event a success!

PROPERTY COMMITTEE UPDATES

Bethesda's Property Committee is identifying future upgrades and work details that are needed to maintain the exterior and interior of our church home! A few of the larger items are noted to the right.

Smaller projects that need volunteers include:

- The original stained glass window from the downtown Bethesda location measures 9' 1/4" X 33'; the frame is painted black and in the shape of an arched window. Do you have any ideas about how we could utilize this art in our space?
- New fabric is needed on the two six-foot pews in the Narthex. Does anyone that owns a staple gun have time to help?

If you are interested in the projects listed here, or are willing to be called upon for others, please let a current committee member know!

Twila Nicholson
Duane Olschlager

John Larson
Aaron Wenaas

MAJOR PROJECTS

- Replace kitchen floor tiles and ceiling tiles
- Adjust door #1 that doesn't always close and latch
- Fix exterior globe lights along sidewalk
- Replace cracked concrete
- Repair erosion of rock and fill along foundation and roof drain gutters
- Spring of 2025: City of Moorhead Public Works will mitigate soil erosion at SW corner of the property along the drainage ditch

WE NEED TO UPDATE OUR

PHOTO DIRECTORY

Sunday, December 1
10:45 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Wednesday, December 4
5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Call Sharon Olson at
701-799-6428 to reserve a time



Noisy Offering

2ND SUNDAY OF EACH MONTH

BRING YOUR CHANGE!

**BETHESDA'S CHILDREN ARE RAISING MONEY
TO PURCHASE ITEMS FROM ELCA GOOD GIFTS**
INCLUDING SCHOOL SUPPLIES, CHICKS, & HONEYBEES



Advent

DINNER @ 5:30 PM
VESPERS @ 6:30 PM

WEDNESDAY MEALS IN ADVENT *SPECIALTY BREADS SERVED EACH WEEK

DECEMBER 4
CHILI & COD CHOWDER

DECEMBER 11
CHICKEN NOODLE & VEGETARIAN GNOCCHI

DECEMBER 18
VEGETARIAN CHILI & CHICKEN WILD RICE

CHOIR CANTATA DURING WORSHIP

SUNDAY
DECEMBER 15
9:30 AM

Transfer of Ministry



Bright Sky Apartments

COMMUNITY ROOM
3305 3RD AVE NW, MOORHEAD

- FOOD
- WORSHIP
- FELLOWSHIP

NEW TIME



Christmas Eve

CANDLELIGHT WORSHIP WITH HOLY COMMUNION
DECEMBER 24 AT 5 P.M.



END OF YEAR

Open House

MONDAY,
DECEMBER 30
1-3 P.M.

DROP IN FOR COFFEE,
TREATS, AND
CONVERSATION
ON THE LAST BUSINESS
DAY OF THE YEAR!

WE ALSO WELCOME
ANY YEAR-END
FINANCIAL GIFTS TO
SUPPORT OUR SHARED
MISSION AND MINISTRY!

people
look
east
&
sing
today

love the
guest is
on the
way



Fall Preschool Openings!

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- WEEKLY MUSIC PROGRAM
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today!



CONTACT US:

Bethesda Lutheran Church
401 40th Ave. South, Moorhead
Phone: 701-212-6637
Email:
kari.penas@bethesdaallstars.com



REQUIREMENTS:

- Must be 3 years old
- Must be potty trained

CHURCH STAFF

Pr. Grant Vanderford
Olivia Kelly
Tyler Pyle
Sam Sadlowsky
Tammy Costin
Billi Jo Townsend

Pastor
Administrative Assistant
Pianist
Choir Director
Health Ministry
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Aaron Wenaas
Sharon Bungum Olson
Nancy Lund

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Vice President
Secretary
Treasurer

