

BETHESDA LUTHERAN

# NEWSLETTER

January 2025

Volume 25 | Number 1



## HAPPY NEW YEAR!

As we ring in the new year, many of us will be setting resolutions for 2025 - things we hope to or not to do, say, and accomplish. These goals can be lofty, unrealistic expectations we set for ourselves, just to abandon my February.

This year, let's set our resolutions with the same joy and faith that led our youth to take the lead on organizing a Christmas program last month.

Faith leads us to take risks, do things we may not normally do, knowing that we have God, and our church family there beside us every step of the way - cheering for us, guiding us, and catching us when we fall.

May God guide us to be present for each other this year, and to make bold, faith-filled decisions!

## CHRISTMAS PROGRAM



*Special thanks to Selah Vanderford and Addison Wenaas, both 9, for their planning and enthusiasm!*

# FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

By Pastor Grant Vanderford

## **Colossians 3: 12-17**

*As God's Chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, humns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

*"Whatever you do, in word or deed,  
do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus"*

On Christmas Eve I asked the children who were at worship what it would be like if we were to celebrate Christmas all year long. Not the gifts, the trees, the lights, the baking (Lord knows we shouldn't indulge the baked goods throughout the year!). I mean what if we took seriously all that the incarnation means – that God chooses us, says yes to us, and puts on our flesh out of love for us?

I think Paul hits the nail on the head in the letter to the Colossians that we read the last Sunday in December, and also written above, in both describing what the Beloved Community already looks like and what it aspires to become even more.

Think of it!! What kind of a world might we co-create with God if we, Bethesda Lutheran Church in Moorhead, Minnesota, took the real work of Christmas that lies beyond December 25 th more seriously? What world would emerge among us and around us if we woke each morning with the resolve to live our baptisms out not in theory or theology but in reality?

**CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE**





When we are clothed in “compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience,” and when we “bear with one another” and “forgive one another” when we have disagreements, we are birthing the reign of God into being.

And this kin-dom, as we hear in our receiving of Holy Communion, is for you, holy and beloved ones.

This kin-dom is being birthed in and through you, by the power of the Holy Spirit, even now, and is calling you forth into the work of Christmas that continues.

Theologian Howard Thurman distills this work so beautifully in his poem *The Work of Christmas*:

When the song of the angels is stilled,  
When the star in the sky is gone,  
When the kings and princes are home,  
When the shepherds are back with their flock,  
The work of Christmas begins:  
To find the lost,  
To heal the broken,  
To feed the hungry,  
To release the prisoner,  
To rebuild the nations,  
To bring peace among others,  
To make music in the heart.

As we enter 2025, I pray that your heart would be filled with love song of Jesus, and that your hands would be moved to share that love.

Peace be yours,



# GLORIAS & STAR WORDS

As we continue the twelve-day feast of Christmas there are distinct parts to our worship that shift, get added, or sound/feel different than they have. One of these is the re-introduction of the **Gloria** or the **Canticle of Praise** in the gathering rite of worship.

Just as the shepherds heard the glorias sung throughout the heavens above the rocky, scrubby fields in Palestine, we, too, hear the echoes of gloria in our worship. Look for this joyous song in the service after we confess our sins and hear God's promise of forgiveness.

**On Sunday, January 5, we celebrate Epiphany in our worship.** As you come forward for Holy Communion, there will be a basket of "Star Words" for you. Take one as a gift to yourself on this day when we wonder what "star" guides us to Christ. Perhaps this star word can be a guide for you this year, a word of grace or a call to action for your faith life.

As always, our worship is just that: ours. We rely on one another to be present, to show up and to bring our full selves. It is in this space and in this time together that we gather to "imagine the world" as God would have it be. Worship is a time to practice being the Body of Christ together before we are sent out to serve and care for our neighbor.

# STEWARDSHIP

By Drew Robinson

Grace and Peace to you in this blessed season of Christmas. As we celebrate Jesus' birth we are reminded of His wonderful gift to us all. And as we reflect on the past year, we are reminded of the many gifts that you all have given to Bethesda. *Thank you!*

Looking ahead, your pledges of financial support allow for us to budget for the church's needs. To date, \$230,000 has been pledged to the general operating budget. While this is a wonderful response to our stewardship campaign, we currently project a need for \$257,000 in the upcoming year to carry out Bethesda's mission.

Specifically, increased funding is needed for:  
1) Fully funding Grant's position as a 100% full time pastor  
2) Increased costs of insurance coverage, and  
3) Continuing to be engaged in the community as a welcoming and inviting Reconciled in Christ congregation.

If you have not done so yet, please complete and return a pledge card to the office. Every contribution, no matter the amount, make a difference and is appreciated. **Thank you again, and have a happy new year!**





# BLOOD DRIVE

Congratulations Bethesda on a very successful blood drive!

Here is the evidence of a loving faith community in numbers:

- 28 participants (22 of which are Bethesda members)
- 19 single unit donations
- 5 power red (double unit donations)
- 1 plasma

In total, 29 single units of blood and 1 plasma donation were given!



## Why give blood?

- Every two seconds, someone in the U.S. needs blood.
- Blood is essential to help patients survive surgeries, cancer treatment, chronic illnesses, and traumatic injuries.
- Donations are lifesaving, and the need for blood is constant.
- Only about 3% of age-eligible people donate blood yearly.

There will be another blood drive in April so everyone who participated in the last one can participate again during Lent! Stay tuned for the date.

Thank you to all who donated, signed up for an appointment, volunteered their time or pulled me aside to share their support, even if they were unable to donate at this time.

Big thanks also to the Parish Life Team and all who helped put on the supper!

*Mary & Mara Wenaas*



# HEALTH MINISTRY

By Tammy Costin

With the beginning of a new year, many will resolve to make changes in their health habits. Diet and exercise are often at the top of the list. Regarding diet, the following informs us on the effects of overeating.

Overeating can lead to a variety of short-term and long-term effects on both your physical and mental well-being. Here's a summary of what you might experience:

## **Short-term effects:**

- Discomfort and bloating - consuming too much food can stretch your stomach, causing a feeling of fullness, discomfort, and bloating.
- Heartburn and indigestion - overeating, especially high-fat or spicy foods, can lead to acid reflux and indigestion.
- Fatigue - the body uses energy to digest large amounts of food, which can make you feel sluggish and tired.

## **Long-term effects:**

- Weight gain and obesity - consistently consuming more calories than your body needs can lead to weight gain and eventually obesity, which increases the risk of various health conditions.
- Diabetes - overeating, particularly foods high in sugar and refined carbs, can contribute to insulin resistance and increase the risk of type 2 diabetes.

- Heart disease - diet high in unhealthy fats, cholesterol, and excessive calories can increase the risk of heart disease and stroke.
- Nutritional deficiencies - overeating often involves consuming calorie-dense, nutrient-poor foods, which can lead to deficiencies in essential vitamins and minerals.
- Mental health issues - guilt, anxiety, and depression can be exacerbated by overeating and the potential for negative body image and self-esteem.

## **Managing overeating:**

- Mindful eating - pay attention to your hunger and fullness cues, and try to eat slowly to allow your body to signal when it's had enough.
- Balanced diet - focus on consuming a variety of nutrient-dense foods to ensure you're getting the necessary nutrients without excess calories.
- Regular exercise - physical activity can help balance calorie intake and improve overall health.
- Seek support - if overeating is a persistent problem, consider talking to a healthcare professional or therapist who can provide support and guidance.
- It's important to take care of your body and mind by maintaining a healthy relationship with food.



# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

By Marty Ohren, Council President

As 2024 comes to a close, I want to wish everyone a safe and Happy New Year.

As we reflect on this season of our church's life, we pause to honor and remember those beloved members of our congregation who have passed on. Their faith, love, and contributions to our community remain a cherished part of our collective memory. The heart of any church is its people—a family united in Christ, committed to supporting one another and serving the community. As we navigate the challenges and opportunities before us, let us remember that our greatest calling is to love and care for each other, sharing God's grace through our actions.

Whether through prayer, fellowship, or outreach, we continue to be a source of strength for one another and a light to the world around us. We can accomplish so



Left to right: Kristin (Ohren) Johnson, Karna Nelson and Kari (Ferguson) Nelson in the sanctuary of the old Bethesda, 1968

much together, reflecting God's love in all that we do. In that same spirit of love and hope, we warmly welcome our new members into the congregation. Your presence enriches our community, and we are excited to journey together in community!

May we continue to grow as one body, supporting and uplifting one another in all seasons of life.

**“Rejoice with those who rejoice, mourn with those who mourn.” – Romans 12:15**

As a church, we remain committed to making the necessary changes to ensure our ministry thrives for generations to come. Guided by faith and prayer, we embrace opportunities to grow, adapt, and serve in new ways, while staying rooted in the timeless truths of God's word.

Together, let us honor our rich history while striving to build support for the church's future in many and various ways. Together we have accomplished great things this past year and united to say “Bethesda Lutheran Church is here to stay.”

I also want to invite everyone to the annual meeting on Sunday, February 2! With the leadership of Pastor Grant and the willingness of the congregation to work together, we will continue to support each other and do God's work.

*-Marty*

# FROM THE OUTREACH TEAM

By Sue Reinhart

## IT'S OFFICIAL!

The Northwest Minnesota Synod of the ELCA transferred Table of Mercy, a mission development since November 2020 to Bethesda on Sunday, December 15 at Bright Sky Apartments in Moorhead.

We had a lovely turkey dinner with all the fixings, cooked and served by a crew of six, with help from choir members, too! There were numerous caps, gloves, socks, and even some toys to give away. Both food and toys were the result of Thrivent Action dollars being used.

The choir sang four pieces from the cantata. Sam made song sheets to share the words to "Silent Night" and "Hark the Herald Angels Sing" with everyone.

It was moving for me to sing together with neighbors I am getting to know and our Bethesda family at Bright Sky. The sound was rich and full. A beautiful moment.

Pastor Rebel Hurd, Director for Evangelical Mission for the NWMN Synod shared her memories and gratitude for

the time, effort, work, creative ways, perseverance and faithfulness with which our Pastor Grant has established this relationship to people with economic, shelter, food, and health insecurities through Table of Mercy.

She encouraged us to show up for one another. Everyone promised to stay in relationship; be together, listen to one another as we walk our journeys in this place.

I must admit I am excited and a little concerned about how this happens. But I am reminded, too, of a song from the cantata, "Angels are making their rounds." I am an alto and our part sings: "Fear not, Zechariah, for the Lord has heard your prayer..." The basses start "Fear not, Joseph..."

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**O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown.**

**Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

So we go forward in our mission and ministry here at Bethesda to stand with our neighbors who have challenges we can hardly understand, to do our best to proclaim the love of God and help as we can.

All are invited to a very important meeting to discuss outreach on Sunday, January 19 at 10:45. The council wants to look at what we already do for outreach and consider how we can fully include Table of Mercy as part of our ministry at Bethesda.

*How will we organize to get ministry accomplished? What is important to remember? Do we have to change or tweak something already happening? Please ponder and pray about where the Spirit is leading us and come share your ideas as we, together, do ministry at Bethesda, in Moorhead, and beyond.*

To close, I am reminded of a prayer from Morning Prayer in the ELW: *“O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”*



*“Don't Call Me a Saint - Dorothy Day” print by Kelly Latimore*



# Thank You!

## YOU MAKE THIS MINISTRY POSSIBLE!

### *Table of Mercy Transfer of Ministry*

On Sunday, December 15th we gathered as Table of Mercy and Bethesda to celebrate Christmas with our neighbors at Bright Sky Apartments with a full Christmas dinner, LOTS of warm socks, gloves, hats, and cold-weather gear to give out, and even the WHOLE Bethesda Choir singing pieces from the Cantata!

We also officially "transferred" Table of Mercy from being a Mission Development to being a ministry and outreach mission of Bethesda!

This important ministry is now fully funded and administered by our congregation! Look for more information about this at the Open Forum on January 19th, 2025!





# CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Submitted by Sharon Olson  
December 10, 2024

- Annual meeting will be on 2/2/25. Council is to have their year-end reports to the office by the end of December.
- Keith Phillips presented on property insurance changes for 2025.
- Pr. Grant wrote and obtained an \$8,000 grant from ELCA Churchwide, which complimented Bethesda on Table of Mercy and would like to see this ministry nationally.
- BAS has agreed to share the cost of all bills jointly needed by BLC and BAS. The increase will be over the next 5 years.
- Evergreen Cemetery is recommending an increase in pay for their staff.
- Photo directory is set to be completed by February
- 2/8 will be the next council retreat



**NOISY OFFERING**



## MONTHLY FINANCIAL UPDATE

	MTD			YTD		
	Actual	Budget	Over Budget	Actual	Budget	Over Budget
<b>Total Income</b>	\$19,676	\$24,910	(\$5,234)	\$255,044	\$272,940	(\$17,896)
<b>Total Expenses</b>	\$16,371	\$23,039	(\$6,668)	\$257,376	\$267,100	(\$9,724)
<b>Net Income</b>	\$3,305	\$1,871	\$1,434	\$2,332	\$5,840	(\$8,172)

# TREASURER'S REPORT

By Nancy Lund

Happy New Year! The final financial statements for 2024 will not be ready for a few weeks yet, but through the end of November 2024, Bethesda is operating at a net loss of \$2,000. General offerings are below budget by \$14,000, partner churches have not made any financial contributions this year, leaving our income short by the budgeted \$9,000.

We're blessed that Bethesda members continue to contribute to Table of Mercy strongly, and that last winter's mild weather and low snowfall resulted in lower-than-budgeted costs for heating and snow removal to offset the majority of the revenue shortfalls, yielding a net loss of only \$2,000 through November.

"Building on Faith" donations through November total \$148,000, and we have sufficient funds on hand to pay all of the

contractors for the summer/fall roofing project. The roofing work is about 95% complete, and workers were at the church the week of December 15 to continue the project. We've also received the final payment for the 2023 hail damage, which was part of the roofing project.

For a sneak preview of the 2025 proposed budget, general giving of \$257,000 will be needed to balance the budget. Through December 15, \$230,000 has been pledged and/or electronic giving is in place to support the \$257,000. These pledges are amazing, and we're so close to meeting our 2025 need!

Please prayerfully consider how your family might support our shared mission and ministry in 2025 by completing an Abundant Life Commitment Card if you have not already done so.

## TECH UPDATES

We have updated the office computer to a new laptop that gives us more flexibility with the latest version of Microsoft.

We have also added the church calendar to the website, which can be found at [bethesdamhd.org/calendar](http://bethesdamhd.org/calendar). This digital version will be the most current place to find Bethesda events!

If you ever need to add or edit an event, contact Olivia in the office at [oliviak@bethesdamhd.org](mailto:oliviak@bethesdamhd.org) or 218-236-1420.

You may have noticed the new monitor that has been mounted on the wall in the south entrance of

the church. This was generously donated and hung by Drew Robinson!

In the next month, we'll be working on reusing the old office desktop computer and using that to serve content to this new monitor. The focus will be to display the new church calendar on the TV and alternate with photos or other happenings occurring at the church. We hope this will allow you to see all the activities that are happening!

In the following year, we'll be continuing to modernize and digitize some of the systems in the church to allow us to become more efficient and be able to reach people in more meaningful ways.





# PARISH LIFE HAPPENINGS

Soup and breads were the meals for this year's Advent suppers! Thank you to all of the chefs that created these tremendous meals. We heard comments like "that was the best wild rice soup I've ever had" and "this chili could convince me to go vegetarian" (okay that one was said by me). Stay tuned for Lent when the Wednesday night suppers will reappear.  
-- Sharon Olson

## 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

# MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM IOWA!

*A note from Roxane West*

Some of you know, and some will be surprised, after 45 years in our Moorhead home we decided to move closer to family. We found an ideal home in Marion (a suburb of Cedar Rapids, Iowa).

Terry is retired, I “think” I will stay retired, and son Tony transferred from Fargo to the Cedar Rapids HOME DEPOT. Terry was busy last summer, anticipating the home sale and wanting everything to be repaired, checked out and nice, from house fixes to trimming and removing trees, painting, new carpets, etc.

I was working at the church, still full time but using earned vacation hours for time at home in moving prep. I enjoyed my 23 years in the church office, but I miss so many that would

come in for help, to chat over coffee, all the daycare staff and kids, choir friends, and fellowship with our lovely quilters. I looked forward to all those moments and the relationships that were built there.

Our grandson, Mason, wife Bailee and children; Talon (3) and Clayton (10 months), have visited many times, taken us to the local Pioneer Village, and let us “babysit” too! We are enjoying every moment.

We recently enjoyed our daughter Sharell’s family and Mason’s family for a three day, two night reunion this November. Many meals, football and frisbee in the yard, diapers and naps, board games, lots of meals and dishes and so much fun!! Sharell’s family stayed a third night and we celebrated three birthdays - an awesome time together.

We have met a few people around us on this street, found a new church, and look forward to many wonderful years in our new community.

We, of course, gave up our landline, so to get ahold of us for a very welcome chat, give us a call!

Roxanne: (218) 422-5358

Terry: (218) 443-4441

Address: 3065 25th Ave, Marion, IA 52302





# OPEN FORUM

JOIN US FOR A CONVERSATION ABOUT BETHESDA'S OUTREACH MINISTRIES!

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 19 FOLLOWING WORSHIP**



	<b>POTLUCK &amp; FAMILY GAME NIGHT</b>					
	SATURDAY, JANUARY 25 AT 5 P.M.					FINISH
	BRING A DISH TO SHARE FOR THE POTLUCK & A BOARD GAME OR CARDS - FOR ANY AGE					
						START

# BETHESDA CHOIR

REHEARSALS ON WEDNESDAYS AT 7 P.M.

# JOIN THE QUILTERS & PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY

QUILTING  
KNITTING  
CROCHETING

WEDNESDAYS  
9 A.M. TO 12 P.M.

AUGUST THROUGH MAY

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 2 | 10:45 A.M.

# ANNUAL MEETING

FELLOWSHIP HALL



# 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



*Thanks to Sam and the choir for sharing their beautifully prepared cantata!*













## Fall Preschool Openings!

4 Star Parent Aware Rated

- EXPERIENCED TEACHERS
- SMALL CLASS SIZE
- WEEKLY MUSIC PROGRAM
- EXPANSIVE OUTDOOR PLAYSPACE
- FULL DAY OR MORNING SCHOOL YEAR OPTIONS

Call today!



### CONTACT US:

Bethesda Lutheran Church  
401 40th Ave. South, Moorhead

Phone: 701-212-6637

Email:

[kari.penas@bethesdaallstars.com](mailto: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  
Financials

## CONTACT

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## OFFICERS

Marty Ohren  
Aaron Wenaas  
Sharon Bungum Olson  
Nancy Lund

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