

# Bethlehem News



Dear Friends in Christ,

As we travel through this Advent season what are the things on your mind? Do you need to get your shopping done? Are you unsure about how you will celebrate this year? Do you have sending Christmas cards on your mind but can't decide what kind to send? Not sure if you will be able to find a tree or other decorations?

I know it might sound silly but life and the things in it can often worry us. This time of year can bring much happiness and cheer but for some it may also bring anxiety and worry at times. Society's expectations can often overtake the reason for the season.

*And we all know Jesus is the Reason for the Season!*

The Birth of Jesus Christ Matthew 1:18-25

18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. 19 And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. 20 But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." 22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 23 "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us). 24 When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, 25 but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

Imagine the anxiety Joseph felt. The love of his life, the one he was to marry was with child. Society would ridicule him, and he would be the target of much shame and ridicule. From the passage Joseph appears not to worry about himself but for Mary. (unwilling to put her to shame). When we think about it, all our problems might seem a little smaller than that of Joseph. But remember what the angel of the lord said.

**"Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."**

That same message is for us "Do not be afraid". This message of "do not fear" in one form or another appears in the Scripture over 250 times. You are very special to God, and he compares you with precious gems, that is how much God loves and cares for you.

**Zechariah 9** On that day the Lord their God will save them, as the flock of his people; for like the jewels of a crown they shall shine on his land.

God our Father sent Jesus to save and we shall shine as Zechariah mentions. Cast all your worries unto him as we all await His second coming when everything will be set right. So do not fear; when suffering and hardship comes, for Christ reigns now and will forever and ever.

Amen

Merry Christmas

Pastor Karl

## News and Updates



Bethlehem has formed a church Growth Committee as part of our **re:Vitality** efforts (See page 3). The group's goal is to enhance our visibility and our outreach efforts in our community. The committee members are Pastor Glander, Sam Harrison, Steve Hempel, Bob Jurs, Kim Kimbrell, Terri Gerlach and Richard Gerlach. The committee will have its first meeting on December 1 at 12:00 PM. If you would like to join the committee or have ideas to share, please contact Pastor or Richard.



Merry Christmas from those of us on the Board of Education! A few of the youth decorated the tree in the fellowship hall. It looks very lovely. We tried to find a time in December for the youth to meet but seems there are many busy schedules. We will plan to get back on the schedule we had in January. Also in January, we will begin the initial planning for VBS for next summer. When making your New Year's resolutions, consider a Bible study. They are very interesting and even fun. Yearn to learn. Sandy  
**Sandy Grage**



This time of year, our Bethlehem family becomes so busy with Holiday celebrations and outreach activities as well as church preparations. Our LWML ladies spent lots of time planning and working with church members to organize and deliver 97 boxes to Operation Christmas Child. This is a wonderful outreach to a Christian organization that reaches out to thousands of children who otherwise might never have Christmas.

Another activity that our ladies are doing is our Christmas Giving Tree. We will be delivering 29 Christmas packages to special needs children in our community who belong to needy families. Both of these projects are successful largely by the many church members who give generously to these projects as well as the ladies of Bethlehem.

You might have noticed also that the autumn decorations in the fellowship hall have been changed to Christmas decorations. Also blue paraments on the altar to recognize the Advent season.

We are so thankful for the support and generosity of all our church family who make it possible to accomplish these projects in the name of our Lord.

Thank you so much.

**Pam Rugenstein**



So far this year Bethlehem Lutheran has received \$1,398 Choice Dollars. Please continue to submit Choice Dollars quarterly. For 2021 our church has had 11 Thrivent Action Team projects. This was great considering the virus. Other years we had around 18 projects. Please let me know if you are a Thrivent member and are willing to do 2 projects a year. I can assist you with any projects that you may be interested in sponsoring. Contact me t [cash\\_betty@hotmail.com](mailto:cash_betty@hotmail.com) or 239-240-5972. Also use AmazonSmile when ordering so that the church can receive money from them.



The holiday food sacks will be assembled on Sunday December 5. We will be filling 60 bags with food for families in need and then taking them to the Buckingham Exceptional School on December 9. Thanks to the tremendous generosity of Bethlehem Lutheran Church members, we were also able to use the Thrivent gift cards to buy additional food for the sacks and still have enough money to buy 30 turkeys and 30 hams. Thanks to the entire congregation for all your support for this worthy endeavor. Many families will be blessed because of your generosity. **Paul Rugenstein**



GriefShare is a support group that helps and encourages people after the death of a spouse, child, family member, or friend. Participants are welcome to begin attending our GriefShare group at any point. Each session is "self-contained," so a person does not have to attend in sequence. A missed session may be picked up in our next 13-week cycle.

We completed our first -two hour seminar on Surviving the Holidays. The holidays have begun. For many of us this it is our first holiday after our loved one's death, or maybe it's the second, third, or beyond. The coming days we will be facing tough emotions. The focus is on family, yearly traditions, expectations, social events, and "cheer." Easy for emotions to blindsides us. This seminar shows ways to lessen the emotional impact by knowing what to expect and being prepared. Each participant received a Survival Guide that includes daily encouragement and helpful exercises for the days ahead.

For more information please contact Holly Bell at 239-292-7200

or [greyhoundlove@embarqmail.com](mailto:greyhoundlove@embarqmail.com)

Learn more about GriefShare at: [www.griefshare.org](http://www.griefshare.org)

# DECEMBER 2021

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 10:30 Bible Study	2	3	4
5 10:30 Worship 11:30 Bible Study; Confirmation	6 GriefShare 10:00 LVWML 1:00 PM	7	8 10:30 Bible Study	9	10	11
12 10:30 Worship 11:30 Bible Study; Confirmation	13 GriefShare 10:00	14	15 10:30 Bible Study	16	17	18
19 10:30 Worship 11:30 Bible Study; Confirmation <b>Movie Night 5:00</b>	20 GriefShare 10:00		22 10:30 Bible Study	23	24 <b>Worship 7:00</b>	25 
26 10:30 Worship 11:30 Bible Study; Confirmation	27	28	29	30	31 Worship 7:00	

DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES	
14	Nancy & William Weyl
29	Jean & John Rousch

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS	
3	Janet Cessna; Melvin Smith
10	Jean Rousch
12	Ryan Kirsch; Gale Smith
18	Dennis Hartman
24	Judy Young
26	Audrey Vine

May God Bless Each One of You As  
We Celebrate Your Special Day!

## Re:Vitality Revived; Help Define Bethlehem's Vision for the Future

In January 2020, our congregation began the LCMS revitalization program called **re:Vitality**. The program builds upon spiritual vitality and guides the church in positive action for sustainable and healthy ministry for years to come.

The first step in the process was to survey the congregation for feedback. We had 57 people complete the survey about where they see our church at this time. Our results were very encouraging. They indicated that we see Bethlehem as being a mature congregation with a powerful sense of vitality. Our strengths were in the areas of unity and high morale within the congregation; that we are a welcoming congregation to visitors and guests; and that we share a strong belief that Bethlehem will survive in the future.

A big opportunity for us lies in defining and agreeing on the vision and purpose of Bethlehem as a church.

The goal of the survey was to provide a starting point for our congregation to build upon. It is the "you are here" indicator that we need to start moving to where we'd like to be in the future.

The program advisors recommended that we begin our journey by implementing their "*Serving in God's Mission: Strategic Planning for Congregations*" program. The program engages the congregation in defining and reaching agreement on the core values; the purpose; the mission and the future direction for our church.

The first step in the program is for the congregation to complete a specially designed bible study. Pastor will begin this program in his Sunday bible study on January 2. We encourage everyone to attend and participate in setting the direction for Bethlehem.

Bethlehem Lutheran Church  
14531 Old Olga Road  
Fort Myers, FL 33905  
Phone: 239-694-3878

Website:  
[www.bethlehemplutheranfortmyers.org](http://www.bethlehemplutheranfortmyers.org)  
Email: [bethlehemlc@gmail.com](mailto:bethlehemlc@gmail.com)

**Sunday Worship**

**10:30 AM** Worship Service

**Rev. Karl Glander**

[pastorkarlglander@gmail.com](mailto:pastorkarlglander@gmail.com)

239-293-1489

Organist: **Holly Bell**

Church Secretary: **Linda Kirsch**

**Prayer Chain Needs**

Do you know that Bethlehem has a prayer chain that prays for the sick, dying and hurting needs of our church family?

Call or email Linda at (239) 693-5026 or [jlkirsch3@comcast.net](mailto:jlkirsch3@comcast.net)

Your needs will be taken to the Lord!



We will once again be enhancing our church with large poinsettias that have been grown locally. We will fill the front of the church with beautiful red flowers to celebrate the birth of our Savior. The poinsettias will be picked up on December 3. There will still be a few available for purchase if you are interested. They can be taken home after the December 26 service. Thanks to all who have ordered a poinsettia for helping to enrich our worship during this holiday season.

**Paul Rugenstein**



**Bethlehem decorates for Christmas**