



BETHLEHEM  
LUTHERAN  
CHURCH

SEMI-ANNUAL  
CONGREGATIONAL REPORT  
May 2020

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BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH  
SEMI-ANNUAL MEETING  
October 27, 2019

In lieu of President Paul Holmgren's absence, Vice President Duane Anderson called the meeting to order at 9:13 a.m. and welcomed approximately 64+ people in attendance.

1. Opening Devotions

The opening devotion and prayer were led by Pastor Scott Thompson.

2. Approval of Agenda

Tony Nelson made a MOTION to approve the agenda as presented. Pauline Sjordahl SECONDED the motion and it was APPROVED

3. Approval of Prior Semi-Annual Meeting Minutes

Tony Nelson made a MOTION to approve the minutes of the May 5, 2019 Semi-Annual Meeting.

Dan Halvorson SECONDED the motion and it was APPROVED.

4. Reports

A. Pastor's Report (Pastor Scott Thompson)

Pastor Thompson referred to his written report on Page 8 of the Semi-Annual Report, noting that there are changes in how we operate in the world. Congregations have changed – fewer numbers, less dollars. “We are now functioning with fewer offerings to carry out the proposed Mission Plan.” Cuts to ongoing programs have been made, while new pathways of funding have been created. Pastor Thompson reminded congregants that “our God is ever faithful. God will give us the tools and the energy to face the challenges of faith and life ahead of us”.

B. President's Report

In President Holmgren's absence, V.P. Duane Anderson presented President Holmgren's written report as printed on page 9 of the Semi-Annual Report.

### C. Treasurer's Report (Anne Taylor)

Treasurer Anne Taylor read her report as printed on page 10 of the Semi-Annual Report. She extended a 'thank you' to the congregant that gave a \$100,000 gift (of which \$10,000 has been set aside for community gifting). This gift covered the year end deficit and enabled Bethlehem to begin the 2019-2020 fiscal year with \$20,000+ balance. She ended by thanking the faithful stewards of the congregation.

### 5. 2019-2020 Mission Plan Proposal

John Erfle presented the Mission Plan, noting that per our Mission Statement:

- 46% of plan designated to Worship
- 21% of plan designated to Share-Witness-Serve
- 18% of plan designated to Learning
- 14% of plan designated to Welcoming-Outreach

The plan was presented as printed on pages 13-16 of the Semi-Annual Report. Income = \$437,305; Expenses = \$432,516; Ending Balance of \$4,788. The plan was reviewed and discussed. A question was asked about prospects for a Youth/Family Director. Pastor Thompson noted that the church is not abandoning youth, but due to money constraints, would not be hiring a new staff member and look to congregational volunteers and staff sharing. A request was made to include a Balance Sheet to the next report.

Chuck McCoy made a MOTION to approve the 2019-2020 Mission Plan as presented. Tony Nelson SECONDED the motion. The vote was taken by ballot and APPROVED with 48 for the plan, 4 against.

On a MOTION made, SECONDED, and APPROVED, the meeting was adjourned at 10:00 a.m. with the singing of the Doxology.

Respectfully submitted,

Janet Veidt, Recording Secretary

## President's Report

Greetings,

This past year has been an unusual one for all of us I am sure. My plans of retirement and time of new beginnings and adventures turned out much different than I planned. After being gone last fall and early winter caring for my mom and then helping my dad after mom's death I found myself a little bit at a loss of purpose and enthusiasm. I was grateful for the tremendous support of the executive committee, the council and the boards at large for all the work and things that are done and accomplished here at Bethlehem Lutheran Church. Being absent due to the COVID pandemic these last few weeks, I think we can see how much that happens every week here at church.

This past year we continue to explore new ways of improving our visibility and impact within the community. We continued to work on maintaining and improving the facility; and we spent a lot of time working on various scenarios for the pandemic. Finally we worked hard earlier this year with a lot of guidance from John Erfle and the Stewardship committee on the budget. We have continued to track that and have been able to stay on or close to budget for the first time in a number of years. I am grateful for all of you that have maintained your pledges or gone above and beyond.

In closing, I would encourage all of you to find some place whether it is at church or some place else in the community, where you can give an hour or two a week. All of our talents given freely wherever that may be, are an act of our christian charity and compassion.

Your servant,

Paul Holmgren

## Youth Committee

The continuing objectives of this committee are to: 1) include the congregation's young people in the work of Christ, 2) provide for their spiritual growth and nurture, and 3) to promote genuine Christian fellowship for the congregation's young people.

Our committee consists of the following dedicated members: Zach Bunten, Bill Erickson, Mitchell Johnson, Hannah Klassy, Jana Pursell and director Tony Nelson. I thank God for each of you, and for the energy you have brought to the mission of the BLC youth ministry and service.

Our youth have been actively involved in the work of Christ over the past year through a variety of activities. Confirmation and high school youth have been involved in a variety of service projects within the community, including: preparing food donations for the Serious JuJu Skateboard Ministry, serving meals at the community kitchen, and participating in God's Work, Our Hands service activities. This past summer, 8 members of our high school youth traveled to Portland, Oregon for a trip centered on service to the homeless/underprivileged community in Portland and on interfaith awareness by touring a Synagogue, Mosque and Anglican ministry. This summer, the high school youth will have a time of retreat at a cabin on Flathead Lake. This will be a time for bible study, fun and fellowship.

Our commitment to spiritual growth and nurture of the youth is administered through many programs. The Sunday School program for the high school and confirmation youth is coordinated by Gay Lynn Nelson. Tony Nelson teaches high school, and Laura Meskis teaches 7th and 8th grades. Pastor Scott Thompson teaches confirmation classes to an active group of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders on Wednesday evenings. Bethlehem Uth for Faith (BUFF) has an active core of high school youth that meet every Wednesday for discussion and bible study; and meets on the first and third Sunday of each month for fellowship and activities/movies. High school graduates will once again receive a quilt from the congregation (made by our own quilters) as a symbol of love and support from their home congregation.

Christian fellowship for our youth has been promoted through a variety of activities over the past year. The BLC Kids program is on hiatus until we can find two or three adults to lead the youth in grades 4-6. The group would meet every Wednesday along

with high school and confirmation programs. In addition, both senior high and confirmation youth participate in monthly activities, BUFF and other church-wide and inter-generational events.

Our Wednesday evening youth activities include dinner from 5:30-6:00. All ages dine together before going off to their weekly activities. This is made possible through the gracious gift of cooking teams who have volunteered to prepare a meal for our youth. I want to extend a special thank you to the following for their offering of meal prep for our youth: John and Linda Erfle, Mike and Cindy Galvin, Anne Taylor, Janet Veidt, Tam-mie Moore, Jana and Bill Pursell, Carol Vish, Brooke Schmidt, and Libby Zimmerman. Also, a thank you to Kent Gunderson for all of the assistance he gives the cooking teams in set-up and clean-up.

The youth committee has handled each of these undertakings, and the countless number of details with grace. **Thanks be to God for each of them.** It is a gift and privilege to serve with them in Christ!

Finally, thanks to each member of Bethlehem Lutheran for your continued love and support for the youth of our congregation, and for the work of this committee. May our labor bring all of us closer to God in Christ Jesus.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Tony Nelson

## **Fellowship Committee**

Committee Members: Peggy Aagenes-Janzer, Linda Erfle, Bev Aronson, Char Kaber, Cheryl Keith, Debbie Struck, Paula Little, Sandy Lindlief, Judy Hartford, Carol Vish, Sherry Baker, Jan Ulvin, Delphia Blumenthal.

We had a Church picnic up at Lone Pine in August, then moved on to the potluck for the congregation who worked with God's Work-Our Hands. Soon after we started working on the gifts for the shut-ins and the tree of sharing, also making plans for the Avent suppers. AND.. Then came the Covad Pandemic. We have been waiting for things to open up. I know that we are all anxious to start doing what we all love to do "help with all the church many actives"

Next year is a new beginning and all will be good with God!

## Outreach Committee

We do all we can do to proclaim the Gospel and share Christ with our members, guests and the community is our focus!

These are the activities we completed and continuing to do:

As you have noticed the Red Pew Pads are gone. We replaced them with the white card in the holder. It lets us know about our visitors on one side and asks for prayer requests on the other.

We still encourage members to wear a name tag on the 1st Sunday of each month. We are still seeing new faces and this helps us all!

Prayer Partner Ministry continues. Names were exchanged again last fall. We encouraged all to pray for their partner and get to know each other thru the year.

The Prayer Chain continues to be an important way to share the joys and heartaches in our lives. What a great way to help each other than thru prayer.

Soup Supper continues during Advent and Lent. A good time is shared during our meal with the soup and fellowship of our members.

Lutheran World Relief is supported by all of you! We collect school kits again last fall. Thanks to those that assembled them!

The Waldum "Faith Festival" was planned for March. We had our new bishop Laurie Jungling invited to be our guest speaker. We are hoping to reschedule maybe this fall.

Our members that no longer drive are coming to church with the help of a van and driver generously provided by Buffalo Hill Terrace/Immanuel Lutheran, with grants from Thrivent and Memorial Dollars. Thank-you.

Our committee members are- Prudie Eakins, Cindy Galvin, Marianne Gielow, Vic Anderson, Margie Dornfield, and Karen Fisher. As their Chairman, I want to thank each of them for their generous and faithful service. I want to especially thank Cindy for helping me!

God's Blessings, Karen Fisher, Chairman

## **Property Committee**

Committee Members: Bill Pursell, Don Stadler, Elmer Whitcraft, Gary Dahlgren, Mike Galvin, Dan Halverson, Karl Brohn, Kent Gunderson – Adviser

Thanks to Mike Galvin's excellent direction of the Property Committee during the previous eight years there has been relatively little repair or maintenance needed on church properties this year.

We have two larger projects currently in the works.

After challenges securing painting bids, due to busy construction activity around the Flathead we were able to secure a bid from Hagestad Painting to repair, scrape and paint the outside of the church buildings. The project is currently expected to begin in early June depending on the weather.

The other project that is currently under way is an upgrade to the audio-visual system in the Sanctuary. We will be installing four new monitors. Two 75" monitors will be to the left and right of the alter and face towards the back of the sanctuary. A 49" monitor will face the choir and alter. A 32" monitor will be located at the pulpit.

There were a few smaller projects accomplished this year.

We replaced a toilet in the Fellowship restroom. The new toilet is taller than the original toilet.

We removed the hanging hooks and nails from the tall arches in the alter area where Christmas boughs have been attached. This will eliminate the risks and danger associated with volunteers hanging those boughs.

We assisted in the construction of outside steps for one of the church's rental units.

An upcoming project that may take form this year that is being discussed by Council is the development of a kid/family friendly area in the sanctuary in the side room.

Finally, the Property Committee made some pretty good soups for soup suppers. I and the committee also want to thank Kent for all the work he does in fixing, maintain and repairing our facilities, and his extensive knowledge of the inner workings of the church facilities and relationships with vendors.

Bill

## **Worship and Music Committee**

Members of the Worship and Music Committee: Don Beller, Judie Cundy (Chair), Glenda Skeim (Altar Guild), Bev Taylor, and Marshall Jones, Music Director.

A big thank you to the committee members for sharing their time, talents, and enthusiasm to help with the worship and music life at Bethlehem Lutheran Church.

Thank you also to all the individuals who participate in our Worship Service's and especially to the Service Captions who faithfully get the Ushers, Greeters, Cantors, Readers, Assistant Ministers, Communion Assistants and of course to Marshall who directs the Bethlehem Lutheran Choir and the Gosbells, the hand bell choir.

The Committee has had a busy year with some good discussion and recommendations. Some of the highlights are:

- Welcoming and working with our new Music Director.

- Discussion on Worship as One extending throughout the Fall.

- Having more members participate in the Worship Service.

- Continue with no Thanksgiving Eve Service.

- Setting times for Advent Services. Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day Services.

- Help plan Easter Services.

- Using glass cups instead of plastic cups on the first Sunday every month for Communion.

- Working with Pastor Scott on person to person worshipping.

In the middle of March, all church services and activities were suspended per Council, CDC and Department of Health due to the spread of the coronavirus in the Flathead Valley and the Governor's stay at home policy. Bethlehem's doors were closed to person to person worship. Our Sunday Worship Services could be heard on the KOFI Radio Broadcast, view on Facebook Live and could be seen on video later Sunday afternoon. We are so grateful for Pastor Scott, Marshall Jones, Music Director, and Kent Gunder-son, video expert, to guide us into a new way of worshipping on Sunday's and still feel connected as a community.

On May 31, Bethlehem will reopen with person to person worshipping. We still will be practicing sel distancing and limit the gathering size. The Radio Broadcast, Video of Service and Facebook Live will still be available.

Due to this new virus, Worship Service's might change with the recommendation of the CDC and what phase the Governor will announce. We will be gathering in small groups to get started and in the future hopefully we will all be worshipping together.

At this time of uncertainty, we need to remember. ' Nothing will separate us from the love of God'. Blessings to you.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Judie Cundy, Director

### **Stewardship Committee Report**

May 2020

Committee members: Janan Beller, Wayne Pris, Chuck McCoy, John Erfle

It seems like a long time ago back in February when we talked about relationships as the focus of this year's annual giving campaign. We were reminded that relational giving comes from an appreciation and desire to give, not in order to get something we want, but in response to what has already been received. Such is the case and the reason we give to the church. We give out of honor and respect for our creator. We give to those in need as Christ has taught us. We give to provide for a place of worship and for worship leaders to minister to us and to the community. Although the physical relationship we share in worship has been put on hold our relationship with our creator God, Son and Holy Spirit has not and will not ever change.

Thanks be to God that His desire to be in relationship with His creation is not limited to a place or event. You, the church at Bethlehem have remained faithful in your giving even when we cannot be the church as usual. Thanks be to God that your relationship and commitment to our Lord is stronger than any virus or other calamity that we might experience.

Peace be with you until we meet again,  
John Erfle

## Education Committee

### May 2020 Report

Sunday School has been our main focus this year, continuing with some traditions and adding in some new activities this year.

Sunday School started off with an ice cream and cupcake social for Rally Day on September 15, 2019. 25 children signed up for Sunday School while enjoying a variety of games and beautiful weather.

This past fall, Sunday School regularly had about 9-12 attendees.

'Aaron the Allergic Shepard' was this year's Christmas Program. Marshall put together an excellent program including Sunday School students, adults from the congregation, and the choir. The program was held in the Fellowship Hall with great attendance and of course cookies.

The Education Committee hosted an Advent Soup Supper with a couple of other committees and a Lenten Soup Supper in February.

A new addition this year was the Committee putting together 'Lent in a Box' for families with children. Approximately 30 families received these boxes. And there have been requests to continue this in the future.

A couple of events that were planned, including a 'Peep Show' for Palm Sunday and Vacation Bible School had to be canceled due to COVID-19.

With an early end to this year's Sunday School program, we are hoping to put together some activities for families for this summer, similar to the 'Lent in a Box' completed earlier this spring.

Respectfully submitted,  
Vicky Nytes

## Treasurer's Report

As we approach the summer months in the Flathead, we find ourselves, as members of Bethlehem Lutheran Church, in a strange place. We are in between the previous "season" of worshiping, fellowshiping and serving together and the future "season" of worshiping, fellowshiping and serving together.

I am so grateful to be part of a congregation that hasn't missed a beat in this time of social separation from each other. You continue to support your church financially, prayerfully and with acts of service in new and creative ways.

At the end of the first month of BLC's current fiscal year, October 2019, our cash balance was \$18,754. And six months later, at the close of April, our cash balance was \$29,442. There were some larger calendar year-end gifts received that contributed to our healthy financial balance. The changes made in the 2019-2020 mission plan budget have also been instrumental to our current financial positive balance.

The thoughtful, prayerful and consistent gifts given by you, the congregation, is equally important. It is those gifts, faithfully given, as well as prayer, that keep our mission plan thriving and moving forward. Thank you to our congregation of faithful stewards!

God's presence is among us, individually and as a congregation! May our love and trust in His goodness be with us as the people of Bethlehem Lutheran Church in this "in-between" time!

In Christ,  
Anne Taylor, treasurer

