

The Visitor

January 2018

The Newsletter for Bethany Lutheran Church

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Bethel Park, PA 15102

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To e-mail messages to the office: admin@blcbp.org



WORSHIP SERVICE EACH SUNDAY WITH HOLY COMMUNION WILL BE AT 11:15 A.M.

UPCOMING DATES TO REMEMBER AT BETHANY

(Look inside The Visitor for more information on each event)

ANNUAL MEETING REPORTS

All committee and financial reports for the Annual Meeting Reports must be submitted by Sunday, January 14, 2018 for preparation purposes.

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

The Annual Congregational Meeting will be on **Sunday, January 21st immediately following the 11:15AM Worship.**

Join us as we take time to review our past year's ministry and plans for the coming year.

The Evangelism Committee is providing a hot ham and cheese luncheon to follow the meeting.

Bethany continues to seek ways to be the hands of Christ in our community and in the world.

BLC WOMEN'S GROUP

Tuesday, January 9th at 11:00 A.M.

STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, January 18th at 7:00 P.M.

EDUCATIONAL MEETING

Friday, January 19th at 7:00 P.M.

CARE AND SHARE MEETING

Tuesday, January 23rd at 11:00 A.M.

COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday, January 25th at 7:00 P.M.

COUNCIL RETREAT

The Council Retreat is scheduled for January 27th beginning at 9:00 A.M.

CHOIR PRACTICE!

Every Wednesday at 7:00 P.M.

FLOWER CHART

The 2018 Flower Chart is posted on the bulletin board in the Narthex.

PLUM BOARD MEETING

The next PLUM Board meeting is scheduled for January 28th at the Lutheran Church of Our Savior.

EVANGELISM COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, February 1st at 7:00 P.M.

MUSIC AND WORSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING

To Be Determined

PLUM Pastor's Newsletter Article from Pastor John Gropp:

Dear Partners in Ministry,

As we enter 2018, it has all the earmarks of being as exciting and unpredictable as any of the years of our past. The one thing of which we can be certain is that the Lord will place challenges in our path that will give us pause, but which are not insurmountable if we remain faithful to our Lord's call. I believe that we are in for a great year. As our individual congregations continue to stabilize and reach out to those beyond their doors in their ever-evolving roles and possibilities of "God's Work, Our Hands," and as the advantages our Pittsburgh Lutheran United Ministries (PLUM) cooperative ministry is experienced less as a disadvantage and more as an opportunity, we cannot help but have an exciting year. Remember, "All things are possible for those who love the Lord." Mark 10:27b.

As we are just starting winter and beginning our New Year, I would like to share with you the following story:

Earl Palmer, the pastor of University Presbyterian Church in Seattle, Washington, writes that there are three critical elements in skiing downhill:

1. *You need to aim your body down the fall line.*
2. *You need to keep your weight on the downhill ski.*
3. *You need to go fast.*

He explains, "If your body is not aimed down the fall line you cannot turn effectively. If your weight is not on the downhill ski, you will catch the edge and fall. If you have no speed, you will force your weight around and likely fall. You need to master all these elements to race effectively. The problem is that all three run counter to our instinct of self-preservation. All three seem contrary to reason and good sense. Yet any skier knows that without these you cannot ski well."

Likewise, Palmer says, the same applies to our Christian giving. "It runs counter to our instincts, giving us an insecure feeling that we will fall short in other areas. But the reality in giving, like skiing, is that when we tithe the opposite is true. Instead of falling on our faces, we actually begin to move with freedom down life's slope, enjoying the gift of the moment rather than living anxiously in the uncertainty of changing conditions."

—<http://luthersem.edu/stewardship/resource>

The same counter-instinctive actions must be taken when we are driving on icy roads—we must turn into the slide and pump our brakes (newer cars have brakes that apply and pump themselves).

As we begin 2018, I would like to do two things:

- First, I would like to thank each of you for the many and varied ways that you used your God-given time, talents and resources to support the ongoing ministries of your church this past year. In all honesty, without you, not much would get done.
- Second, I would like to challenge each of us to stretch for the new year. Think about it. (And this is not the reason we should give but is a part of the reality of our giving.) As within each of our homes, the cost of everything is increasing such as our utilities, energy, insurance, supplies, and food. Just to maintain the necessities at last year's levels will require more from us than last year. The same is true within the life of your church. But do you know what? The real blessing of giving is that it makes us happier. Also, there is something that is yours to give that is without price, and yet is priceless – that is your gift of faith in our God who saves us and your love for your neighbor. If we are truly honest with ourselves, we are all able to tithe in all areas of our lives—financially, time and talents—one is not more significant than the other or can be replaced by the other. So I challenge you seriously to tithe wholeheartedly in the name of our Lord and His church. After all, God has been the originator of ALL the gifts in your life.

As in the story above, skiing is counter to our instincts, as is riding a bicycle, flying in an airplane, or driving a car. Yet, with practice, these can become second nature to us. The same is true with "tithing your time and your resources." With the chaos and busyness of our lives, we can easily forget what is important to us. For instance, the following illustration hones in on what is important for some:

Are we possessed by our possessions?

"When the landing gear of US Airways Flight 479 collapsed at Charlotte several years ago and the crew ordered an evacuation down the emergency slides, almost half the passengers reacted by grabbing for their carry-on luggage One man grabbed two bags. Another struggled with a large bag. A woman blocked the aisle struggling to get a garment bag out of an overhead bin."

—William R. Phillippe, *A Stewardship Scrapbook*
(Louisville: Geneva Press, 1999), 124.

We are so inundated and overwhelmed with the world's communication of selfish values that we become desensitized to God's grace and truth. Let us not get to the end of our lives and find that like the people on the plane, we spent our lives grasping for things of little value.

Why not try tithing? Reexamine your life from an abundance point of view rather than a scarcity point of view. Try exploring from an "I can't" stance to an "I'll try." I think you will be surprised by the outcome in experiencing the promised rewards of faithful living.

In Christ's Service,

Pastor John J. Gropp

For the 2018 Lenten Journey which begins with Ash Wednesday on February 14th (Valentine's Day), this year we will be looking at stewardship. Plan on attending for a refreshing, challenging experience of how God reaches us with His blessings.

THOSE WHO SERVE THIS MONTH

Greeters:

11:15 A.M.	Kris & Dan Volpatti
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WORSHIP SERVICE SUNDAYS – SCHEDULE

Date	Communion Asst. 11:15 AM	Reader 11:15 AM	Acolyte 11:15 AM
1/7	Michael Unger	Michael Unger	Nick Usouski & Alison Hanna
1/14	Cathy Irwin	Nena Kratsas	Jason Turske & Megan Turski
1/21	Sydney Litzenburger	Deborah Wanamaker	Julie Brooks
1/28	Jane Scheeser	To Be Determined	Jeremy Blocklin

FLOWERS AND ETERNAL CANDLE

1/7	OPEN
1/14	OPEN
1/21	OPEN
1/28	OPEN
Eternal Candle	OPEN

You may either take the flowers with you after the service, or if you prefer, you may leave them on the altar. Cost of **flowers** is **\$60 (\$30/arrangement)** per Sunday. Cost of the **eternal candle** is **\$20** per month.



FLOWERS AND ETERNAL CANDLE
 The 2018 Flower Chart is posted on the bulletin board in the Narthex.
 The cost per arrangement is \$30.00.

USHERS' SCHEDULE FOR JANUARY
 Chuck Conn, Nick Kratsas, Leigh Brooks

OFFERING COUNTERS' SCHEDULE FOR JANUARY
 The Offering Counters for the month of January are Sandy Lutz and Sydney Litzenburger.



PRAYER CHAIN

Anyone wishing to be on the Bethany Prayer Chain, please contact Cathy Irwin by email at cirwin77@hotmail.com, or Terry Simony in the Bethany Church Office by phone: 412-835-9221.

PARISH EDUCATION



BETHANY ADULTS: WE'VE BEEN MISSING YOU!

Sunday School isn't just for kids anymore. In fact, it never was!

This little reminder is to encourage the men and women of Bethany, regardless if age, to join the adult class which meets **every Sunday at 9:45 a.m.** in the old church sanctuary. Just follow the aroma of perking coffee. (Sometimes there's even a little something to go with it). LaMonte Yarroll leads this class, but members have always had a say in what we study.

This class has no tests, and everyone is encouraged to express opinions about our lessons.

If you're the quiet type, that's fine, too. We'd still love to have you with us.

Our Bibles are always close by during class, but this is much more than a just a Bible study group.

We're currently going through "by heart," a video and book on Luther's "Small Catechism."

Please...come join us and see what we're talking about!



NURSERY NEWS

The Children's Nursery is Available During the 11:15 A.M. Worship. The nursery will open at 11:00 A.M. each Sunday. Bethany's Nursery is not staffed but available for children ages 6 and under.

We ask that you please accompany and supervise your little ones in the nursery.

Parents can feel free to take their children to the nursery immediately following the children's sermon.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION



ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

The Bethany Lutheran Church Annual Meeting will be immediately following worship on **Sunday, January 21st.**

The Evangelism Committee is sponsoring the hot ham and cheese luncheon to follow the meeting.

We are asking for the congregation to please bring the side dishes to share.

The sign up form is located on the bulletin board in the Narthex.

Please indicate which sides you are will and able to bring.

Thank you!

Bethany Lutheran Evangelism Committee



LET YOUR VOICE BE HEARD!

Choir practice will meet each Wednesday at 7:00 P.M.

Please join us!!!



SNOW IS COMING. SNOW IS COMING!!!

And, when it does, the front sidewalk will need shoveled. This would need to be done Sunday morning, and as needed at other times. If you would like to be added to the list of those willing to help, contact Auggie Burns at 412-308-8820.

THANK YOU



Thank you for all the prayers and cards I received while I was recovering. And a special thanks to Bethany Lutheran Church Women's Group for the candy and cookies.

God Bless...

Matt and Betty McKee

FELLOWSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

From the Desk of the Pastor:

Dear Friends in Christ,

Exciting events and grace filled days are happening at Bethany Lutheran Church! Because of you, your family, and our congregational family, the gospel is being boldly proclaimed and the joy of God's grace in Christ is celebrated in marvelous ways. Indeed through our ministry together countless lives are being touched with the love of Christ.

As we look ahead to ministry as a family of faith, we are embarking on an initiative that will help us grow in ministry and ways we can bring connections with people and Christ. This initiative is a three-year discipleship and generosity growing opportunity for the whole congregation. Our ministry initiative is called "**First, We Give Of Ourselves**". This emphasis will be a celebration of our ministry and growing in the delight of God's grace. As we consider the gift of grace in Christ, we will also explore the joy of our giving in grace.

This first year of the stewardship program, the focus will be "**Giving in Grace**". We will explore together the wonderful gift of God's grace in Christ and how it is the foundation of our discipleship and giving. Next year, our focus will enter around the second facet of our ministry initiative, "**Giving In Gratitude**". We will explore the spiritual nature of gratitude and how it encourages us to give of ourselves in response to God's grace in Christ. Then the third year, we will follow through with the focus of "**Giving in Generosity**". What does it mean to experience God's generosity and to give with generous hearts? These are questions that will engage our sense of discipleship and invite us to grow in the sharing of gifts for ministry. We are looking forward to this three-year period being a time of intentional growth in discipleship and generosity.

Our Kick-Off Sunday for "**First We Give of Ourselves: Giving in Grace**" will be Sunday *February 11th*. We will have a celebration of ministry and the sharing of commitments of how we can "give of ourselves" in ministry on Sunday, *March 18th*.

Another important element of this emphasis is an "all congregation" Bible Study entitled "**Giving in Grace**" which will be a part of our Wednesday Lenten dinners and service following the dinners. You are invited to be a part of these conversations.

Plan to be on hand in worship and join in the Lenten series every Wednesday in Lent. We will explore how we first give of ourselves. How exciting it will be to grow together in discipleship and the joy of generosity.

Rejoicing in God's Grace,

Pastor Melba

Seminarians

- **Sue Devine - Attending Luther Seminary, in St. Paul, Minnesota**

Donations may be made to Susan Devine, via her home church:
Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church
3102 Sherwood Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15204



Congregations and individuals may write their checks directly to "Trinity Lutheran Church" and, in the memo line, write "**Susan Devine (Seminarian Support)**".

- **Steven Gallego - Attending Trinity Lutheran Seminary, in Columbus, Ohio**

Donations may be made to Steven Gallego, via his home church:
East Liberty Lutheran Church
5707 Penn Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15206

Congregations and individuals may write their checks directly to "East Liberty Lutheran Church" and, in the memo line, write "**Steven Gallego (Seminarian Support)**".



Further details are found in the link below:

<http://plumofpa.com/Seminarians.htm>

Also the news and events from all PLUM churches are updated frequently at this link:

<http://plumofpa.com/WhatsNew.htm>

CELEBRATIONS WITHIN OUR CONGREGATION IN JANUARY



Happy Birthday to the following individuals:

1-January Ronald Stowers	14-January Karen Bianco	24-January Naomi Yarroll
2-January Jennifer Hucko	15-January Mitchell Stowers	26-January Julie Brooks
7-January Amelia White	17-January Sandy Burns	27-January Janice Currie
12-January Taylor Vargo	17-January Robert Monte	31-January Irene Campbell
12-January Joan Weisman	20-January Melody Hanna	31-January Russ Posch



Happy Anniversary to the following couple:

19-January Joyce & Barry Bruni	
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NEWSLETTER

If you have information that you would like to appear in the newsletter, **please** either e-mail the information to Terry Simony at admin@blcbp.org, or drop it off at the church **NO LATER THAN MONDAY, JANUARY 22ND BY 10:00 A.M.**, for the **FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER**.



Looking for signs of Spring!

