

Bethlehem's Glad Tidings

Vol. 8 No.1

January 2016

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21 Church Road
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Council Members

Helen Myers

Elinor Ross

Arla Dague

John Ames

Becky Devore

Matt Devore

Molly O'Brien

Rich Beck

Roberta Mong

Carol Brewer

FROM THE
PASTOR 

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I am writing this article on December 23rd. My focus, like most people in our community, is on the wonder of the Baby, the glory of the Star, the hope of the Word made flesh who “dwelt among us full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14)

We've all heard of human nature. Many times, human nature is a phrase used to excuse or describe some ridiculously immoral action on someone's part. Cheating on your girlfriend? That's “human nature.” Calling out of your shift at the Target so you can

go to a Pens game, that's "human nature." Cheating on your taxes, taking a little "under the table," that's just "human nature." Of course we know, to some extent, that that isn't true. While Thomas Hobbes proclaims life in a state of nature is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short,"¹ the Bible looks at human beings and says "It was very good." (Gen 1:31) and Psalm 8 declares human beings to be made "a little lower than God." (vs. 5). God views us with love. God views us with hope. God proclaims us to be "his people," and "children of God" born of the will of God (John 1:13).

Despite our tendency to sin ("all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"), God's love for us is never ending. And that – that alone – is the reason that Jesus came to us as Immanuel, God with us. Out of love for us.

When John says: "And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth," (John 1:14) what John is doing is describing for us the reality of God, of who God is. Just as Genesis describes human beings as "very good," John is describing God as full of grace and truth.

Grace and truth describe the reality of who God is – especially in relationship to the world and to us. God is gracious. God graciously gives us all we need (shoes, clothes, work, food, etc. as Luther says in the *Small Catechism*). God graciously forgives us all our sins, despite our continuing sinfulness (read Romans 7 to get a feel for this). God chooses us as his own. That, indeed is the central act of grace in the Old Testament, where God chooses a weak and sinful people as his own, loving them and caring for them, and forgiving them over and over and over again.

But God is truth as well, in that God is honest with us about the brokenness of this world, and the sinfulness of our own selves. God promises us that we will be washed and made clean, that we

¹ *Leviathan*, Chapter 12.

will be refined by his love, and brightened and whitened by cleansing and rebirth in him.

Grace and truth. Grace and truth are the true description of Jesus the God-Man. Grace and truth are the very nature of the God who loves us. Grace and truth are the challenge we have to witness to in our own lives, and to emulate in our own lives as well.

God's love is with us in this season after Christmas, and dwells among us in grace and in truth.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Asplin

DECEMBER, 2015 – JANUARY, 2016 REFLECTIONS

FROM THE BISHOP

At All Times and in All Places

Our Eucharistic Liturgy reminds us that “it is right and salutary,” indeed “our duty and our joy,” to give thanks to God” at all times and in all places.” It is the very nature of the sacrament called “Thanks!” to be a valid and appropriate word in every circumstance of our lives.

So as our lives in Christian community and in public society move from Thanksgiving to Christmas to New Year's Day, we remember at each turn to give thanks to God through our Lord Jesus Christ for the gift of life. In a spirit of grateful appreciation, our synod staff offers their joyful greeting to you on this page.

And, as our personal lives move through joys and traumas that we cannot anticipate or plan for, especially over these next few weeks, we remember at each turn to give thanks to God through our Lord Jesus Christ, as Holy Scripture teaches us, “in all circumstances.”

(1 Thessalonians 5:18) These next weeks can be very difficult for many because their personal losses at this time of the year only increase a sense of isolation. In a spirit of mutual consolation, our synod staff greets you on this page, and strives to keep you in prayer at all times and in all places.

May our Lord Jesus Christ, our hope and salvation, be yours in full measure this Thanksgiving, this Christmas, and into the New Year.

With you in Christ,

+Kurt

Bishop Elizabeth Eaton's Christmas Message

It is nearly Christmas. The evidence is all around – Christmas carols, decorations and preparations in our homes, in our churches and in the mall. That is not a bad thing. But we are also still in Advent. I want us to consider the deep and holy longing that is a part of this season. It is significant that the words of the prophets and the yearning of Israel in exile are so prominent in the lessons appointed for this season. The people longed for the Lord to come, to act, to redeem them, to take them home. They lived in Babylon, but their hearts were not there.

I think Advent is that way for us. As Lutherans, we do not withdraw from the world but engage it believing that it is a gift. But we also know that it is not quite right, that there is brokenness and pain – the pain we experience, the pain others cause, the pain we cause others.

In some ways Advent created a certain restlessness. It may be one of the few seasons of the year when we become more aware of our longing for wholeness and more alert to the signs that something is approaching. This Advent longing is an awareness that apart from God we are not whole. We find ourselves in the unsettled and restless time between the ending of the old year and the beginning of the new. A thin place where heaven and earth seem to touch, where we draw near to

God realizing, as St Augustine wrote, “You have formed us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in You.”

We Can’t get there by ourselves, and here is the promise and hope of Christmas – the one for whom we long is not content to draw us but fulfills this promise by coming to us as Emmanuel, God with us. In the incarnated Christ, God comes to us, finds us and gives our restless hearts rest.

Merry Christmas, dear church.

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Easton
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Family Promise – December 2015

Recently, several members of Bethlehem Lutheran Church once again had the opportunity to work with the Family Promise Program. Led by Pastor Asplin, Bethlehem hosted an evening with two families that recently found themselves to be homeless and in need of temporary assistance while looking for alternative housing. During the day these families work with social workers filling out job applications, learning how to do job interviews, looking for and applying for housing and assistance and being educated and assisted with other programs available in the community. The children of these families attend school at their home school location. Always, the goal is to exit these families from the program as quickly as possible. Anyone who experiences this opportunity realizes the uniqueness of these individuals from one family to the next and from one family member to the next. In each instance these families have made sure to communicate their appreciation of what others are doing to assist them in their time of need. Some individuals will stay quietly to themselves finding an area where they can relax amid the upheaval of their lives. Other individuals share their stories. To watch these families from varying backgrounds with different values pull together through health issues and adversity is simply amazing.

The families were picked up in a fifteen passenger van at the Family Promise house on East Beau Street, located near the Washington and Jefferson College Campus. On this occasion the dinner which Bethlehem provided was delivered earlier to the house for the evening meal due to previously scheduled meetings being held at the host church. Later, transporting these families merely takes pulling up in front of the house and opening the doors. It was difficult at first to determine which children were members of which family. Four teens were assisting the three toddlers to board the van and get buckled into car seats. A four year old was wanting picked up and then was requesting to sit by a 14 year old teenager. Two of the young teens assisted but were quieter than the rest. All were concerned for an elderly gentleman who had had a heart attack the previous week and was here with his family having had a pacemaker implanted. He shared his story as the trip was made to Christian Assembly of God Church in Bentleyville. One younger father talked about how in the beginning the two fathers of these families did not see eye to eye but how they had all come together as one big family to support each other and assist each other. After a good night's sleep all members of each family were up and boarding the van in preparation for their return trip to the Family Promise House. Children and adults alike were concerned with returning on time in order to be prepared for their school van pickup.

As you reflect on this experience after spending time with these individuals you realize how lucky you are. One has to be thankful for God putting this opportunity in front of them so that they remember there are others out there that have greater needs than our own. Also, any little thing we might do, whether it is driving a van, making a crackpot of noodles or a vegetable casserole or sharing a dessert or sitting and listening to someone share their story can be such an uplifting event for an individual and their family. It can also open our hearts and minds to others reality which can be so much different from our own. I am sure those involved with this program are all appreciative of the experience and have gained as much as the families of Family Promise do but

in a different way. Ours is not to judge but to aide and uplift the hearts and minds of others. May God continue to watch over these families and the churches who participate in this program opening the hearts of all to come and join in this experience.

Lutheran World Relief School Kits

In early December, Molly and Collin O'Brien organized an evening of fellowship and service at the Cabin for the Youth Group. We gathered and put together "School Kits" for Lutheran World Relief.

Why are we doing this, you might ask. Can't we focus on helping kids in our own area?

Well, of course we at Bethlehem do focus on helping kids in our own area! We gave away over 200 backpacks to kids (loaded with school supplies), as well as clothing and shoes during our school days giveaway in Marianna in August. But what we also know, here in Pennsylvania, is that our property taxes also help provide school supplies. If children need paper for worksheets, we help with that. Our schools typically provide pencils and crayons, especially in the early grades.

Now, other states are quite different. As a kid in Texas and in Minnesota, the school year began with a list of required school supplies every student was expected to purchase (including a box of tissues and a box of wet wipes for the classroom).

Similar to that system, most children living in refugee camps run by the Lutheran World Federation are provided teachers to teach them, and classroom space (often outdoors under a tree) in which to meet. What they are not provided are supplies, like scissors, notebooks, crayons, pencils, rulers or erasers. They are able to attend class, but not provided the ability to "DO THE WORK" necessary to learn.

That's where our efforts to help come in. We provided a great start to the next school year for forty children through Molly, Collin and the youth group's efforts!!

The Lutheran World Federation posted this thankyou letter from a teacher in Peru:

Please tell the people who are responsible for sending these Kits that we thank them from the bottom of our hearts. The children will carry these gifts in their hearts, and in their minds they will know that there are people in far away places that care enough to share and send help to people in need.

– Saul Paisig, teacher whose students received School Kits in Peru

Last year, Lutherans gave out over 140,000 school kits. As we know there are refugees all over the world, but lately we have been hearing mostly about refugees from the Syrian and Iraq conflicts. We sent 11,000 school kits to Jordan and 13,000 to Lebanon. Through our efforts, 24,000 families in the midst of the intractable conflicts in the Middle East learned that Christians from the US care enough to help regular people in the midst of terrible times.

We sent a message of the Gospel in December, a message that all of us (but especially, Molly, Collin and the Youth Group) can be proud of.

THANK YOU FROM THE ASPLINS!

What a great blessing it is to be your Pastor here at Bethlehem! In addition to the joy of being with you in times of celebration and times of sorrow, in addition to the new office and new desk I am enjoying as I type this, in addition to the joy of bells and choir, flute and oboe, and drums, you have blessed us with a wonderful selection of gift cards! Thank you so much for your generosity! Our family will have fun using those gifts in the weeks to come!

Merry Christmas and, again, God bless you All!

Pastor, Kristen, Linnea and Johanna

Thank you to the Church Council

We had a challenging year as a church council this year. Any time there is a major building project, with minor disasters and significant changes always a part of it, the time is a challenge. Your church council did a great job through it all: prayerfully, faithfully, constantly serving God, you the congregation and each other through the year. A special thanks to our members going off council this year, Peg Wilson and Janet Fowler, and a joyous welcome to Rich Beck and John Ames who have joined us (each for their first time on council!).

Council's December meeting was at Pastor Asplin's home. At that meeting we elected the officers for this year.

President – Helen Myers

Vice President – Becky Devore

Secretary – Molly O'Brien

Treasurer – Roberta Mong (with voice and vote)

Assistant Treasurer – Collin O'Brien (with voice but not vote)

Congratulations to these officers! Please continue to pray for all the members of church council:

Helen Myers, Becky Devore, Molly O'Brien, Roberta Mong, Matt Devore, Rich Beck, Arla Dague, Elinor Ross, John Ames and Carol Brewer.

PASTOR ASPLIN'S CONTACT INFORMATION

Pastor Asplin's home number is 724-503-4595. His cell phone is 724-678-8798. (pastor.asplin@gmail.com)

WELCA MEETING WEDNESDAY,

The WELCA will meet Wednesday, January 13th at 10:00 a.m. The Bible Study is "Servant – Shaped Soldiers" . Read chapters 1 and 2 of Philipians. We will explore Paul's call to a countercultural approach to citizenship shaped by the gospel. We will see Jesus Christ as both a model and power for living a servant shaped life. Explore how their own lives, especially within their Christian community, express the mind of Christ. The program will be led by Ellen Smith. A covered dish luncheon will be held following the meeting. All women of the church are invited to join us for a morning of Bible study and fellowship.

Knives, knife sets and spatulas are still available for sale.

CHOIR PRACTICE

Choir practice will resume for everyone Wednesday evenings at 6:30 p.m. All you girls and boys who love to sing, please come and join us for an evening of fun and fellowship. Don't forget, if you can play an instrument or would like to sing please join us. Come show us your talents.

FOOD BANK

Don't forget to donate to the food bank. There are three ways you can participate: Through collection of non-perishable food, by giving money in your church envelope or by putting money in the basket in the narthex

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

Please mark your offering envelope indicating what money is to go to the Capital Campaign Fund, by writing one of the following things on your envelope. Capital Campaign Fund, Building Fund or New

Building. If your envelope is marked for the property fund, that is not the same as the Capital Campaign Fund.

DARTBALL SEASON TO BEGIN

As we begin the **New Year players are needed for Tuesday evening** dart ball League. If you are interested in playing, please see Tuffy McVay.

Monday Night Schedule 2015-2016

Jan. 4 th	Bethlehem and Mar/Zoll	Away
Jan. 11 th	Bethlehem and North Ten Mile	Away
Jan. 18 th	Bethlehem and Cokeburg	Home
Jan. 25 th	Bethlehem and Pin Hook	Away
Feb. 1 st	Bethlehem and East Beth	Home
Feb. 8 th	Bethlehem and Mar/Zoll	Home

Tuesday Night Schedule 2015 – 2016

Jan. 5 th	Bethlehem and Chartiers Cross Roads	Away
Jan. 12 th	Bethlehem and Avery Methodist	Home
Jan. 19 th	Bethlehem and First Lutheran	Away
Jan. 26 th	Bethlehem and Holy Trinity	Home
Feb. 2 nd	Bethlehem and Broad Street	Away
Feb. 9 th	Bethlehem and East Buffalo	Home
Feb. 16 th	Bethlehem and C.C.N.A.	Away
Feb. 23 rd	Bethlehem and Fourth Presbyterian	Home
Mar. 1 st	Bethlehem and West Washington	Away
Mar. 8 th	Bethlehem and Broad Street	Home

Practice for Home Games are from 7:00 – 7:15 p.m.

Practice for Away Games are from 7:15 – 7:30 p.m.

**CONFIRMATION CLASSES BEGIN AFTER WORSHIP
AND END AT 2:30 P.M.**

January 10, 2016	Lunch provided by Davis Family
January 24, 2016	Lunch provided by Naser Family
February 14, 2016	Lunch provided by Glotfelty Family
February 21, 2016	Lunch provided by Dayton Family
March 13, 2016	Lunch provided by Sukal Family
March 20, 2016	Lunch provided by Pastor Asplin
April 10, 2016	Lunch provided by Davis Family
April 24, 2016	Lunch provided by Naser Family
May 1, 2016	Lunch provided by Glotfelty Family

2016 WELCA DESIGNATED OUTREACH MISSION

We will be collecting for a new Designated Outreach Mission project which will be Jeremiah's Place of Pittsburgh, PA. They provide a safe haven of respite, health, renewal and support for children and families free of charge during times of crisis. They are in need of non-perishable food, formula, diapers and etc. These items will be collected and taken to the spring cluster meeting and again in the fall. Thanks so much for your continued support for these Outreach projects.

A BIG THANK YOU

A BIG thank you to the choir for the many weeks of practice in performing the Cantata. GREAT JOB!!!! We are so grateful to have such a dedicated choir. They are always at practice Wednesdays and leadership on Sundays. Also to those who take part in singing the psalmody and parts of the liturgy.

BENTWORTH COMMUNITY CENTER FUNDRAISING PROJECT

During the coming Holiday Season of goodwill and giving, the Bentworth Community Center asks area residents and businesses to consider making a financial gift to its building project. The Community Center is the building that houses the Bentleyville Public Library, the Bentworth Senior Center, and the Bentleyville Area Historical Society. The building project is a comprehensive

plan to renovate and enlarge the building to better meet the needs of the community.

As a fundraising activity, the building project is taking orders for commemorative bricks for the patio at the renovated community center. Commemorative bricks provide an opportunity to honor a special person or event in your life while supporting this worthwhile project. A 4" x 8" engraved brick cost \$125 and a 8" x 8" engraved brick cost \$225. Order forms and additional information about the building project can be obtained at the Bentleyville Public Library or at www.bentworthcommunitycenter.com.

BENTLEYVILLE AREA "MEALS ON WHEELS"

The Bentleyville Area "Meals on Wheels" program is in need of drivers. If you are interested and would like to help, please call Donna at 724-239-5887 for more information. It is a great opportunity to help your neighbors.

A LETTER FROM GLADE RUN LUTHERAN SERVICES

Glade Run is the physical presence of God, working to heal children and rebuild families. As such, Glade Run embraces the shame and heals the wounds of children and families, and breathes new life into them.

Glade Run Brings hope to many in a dark world. Glade Run must convince each child and family that they are worthy of love and they do belong, even with their imperfections.

Glade Run embraces an uncertain world. During a management team meeting, conversation was interrupted as a student in our care walking down the hallway suddenly and unexpectedly slammed his body against the conference room door, shouting obscenities and attempting to knock himself unconscious on the door's small glass window. Quickly staff decelerated the youth, calming him with gentle tones and moving with him to a quiet space. In about fifteen seconds the incident was over, but it was a reminder to all of us about who we are, and why we're here.

Glade Run is the front line for those who are suffering and in pain. Most youth who come to live at Glade Run have had

multiple placements and services and many have been sexually and or physically abused and have suicidal ideation or attempts. Children can be so distraught that they may resort to pulling out their hair or cutting their arms or banging their head on a window. Students may be unsuccessful for a variety of reasons in their home school district, including extreme aggression and other disruptive behavioral issues that cannot be maintained in public school settings. Children and youth in our communities are combating severe mental health issues that put themselves and their families at risk. Glade Run has a difficult mission, often dangerous, and our staff stands in the breach of violent and disruptive behaviors to help youth find balance and well-being. A child determined to hurt themselves will often find a way and sometimes injure staff in the process.

Glade Run is a buffer for the community. If Glade Run did not exist, how would the shame, pain and suffering of wounded children be expressed? It would be directed toward parents, friends, teachers, and classmates. It would be expressed in schools, movie theaters, malls and other public places. All too often today we hear how youth and young adults with untreated mental health issues take serious and irrevocable actions that affect not only their own lives, but the lives of countless others. If we can help the children now, we can change their future.

Glade Run is a learning organization. Staff members are human and sometimes the staff misses things, and the organization learns from these mistakes. Consultants are brought in from all over the country to address the complex issues presented by the children and families that come for help to help become better equipped to handle the increasingly difficult issues our students, residents, and clients deal with each day. Comments made by parents, children and other individuals indicate how services can be improved. Learning is essential in dealing with the complexity of the human condition, and Glade Run provides over 2, 000 hours of training to our staff every month.

Glade Run is a safe place for children and families. Although the organization experiences moments of violent and/or inappropriate behavior, it is one of the safest places for children and families. Staff sit with the young lady pulling out her hair and

help her calm down. Staff talks to a young man banging his head on the wall and help him feel safe. Staff goes with children to the hospital so they don't feel alone. Staff work with children in the most appropriate and least restrictive environments possible – be it school, home, or residential setting – to increase their safety. As a Sanctuary certified organization dedicated to providing trauma-informed care, the effects of trauma are well known and efforts are made to understand each child from a perspective of what has happened to him/her to cause behaviors without blame and shame.

Glade Run is a transparent organization. Glade Run consists of people young and old joining with others to help them manage the chaos in their lives. When mistakes are made they are promptly disclosed and corrective action is taken. No simple roadmap exists to navigate the complexity of the human experience.

Glade Run is a unique organization. Glade Run offers many experiential opportunities to engage children and families. There is a greenhouse with outside gardens, a stable with horses and a variety of smaller animals. Glade Run is building a sensory playground with elements specifically designed for children on the autism spectrum. Glade Run also has a spiritual care department and a family support specialist to help parents. Glade Run engages children and families through a variety of means to help children reach their therapeutic goals more rapidly.

Glade Run has changed the lives of tens of thousands through quality programming for over 161 years; helping the children and changing their futures for the better.

The Reverend Charles T. Lockwood, Ed. D.
President/CEO, Glade Run Lutheran Services

Acolytes

Jan 3rd – Kaylie Anderson and Miranda VanKirk (Communion)

Jan. 10th – Austin Naser and Jeremy Naser

Jan. 17th – Kaylie Randolph and Jeremy Woods

Jan. 24th – Kara Blum and Brandon Dayton

Jan. 31st – Linnea Asplin and Madison Allender

Counter

Jan. 3rd – Shirley Schultz, Carol Brewer, Arla Dague

Jan. 10th – Karen Naddeo, John Ames, Jim Hart

Jan. 17th – Helen Myers, Devon Myers, Elinor Ross

Jan. 24th – Shirley Schultz, Ed Conkle, Molly O'Brien

Jan. 31st – Karen Naddeo, Bill Ulery, Becky Devore

Ushers and Greeters

Jan. 3rd – John and Sarah Ames

Jan. 10th – Karen Naddeo and Judy Osborne

Jan. 17th – Eleanor Ross and Shirley Schultz

Jan. 24th – Glenn Higinbotham and Harry Dayton

Jan. 31st – Pat O'Brien and Molly O'Brien

Lectors

Jan. 3rd – Molly O’Brien
Jan. 10th – Jacque Anderson
Jan. 17th – Collin O’Brien
Jan. 24th – Norm Davis
Jan. 31st – Alyssa Wise

Communion Assistants

Jan. 3rd – Linnea Asplin
Jan. 10th – Rich Beck

	<u>Attendance</u>	<u>Offering</u>
November 1, 2015	119	\$9,385.00
Dedication Service		\$ 749.00
November 8, 2015	65	\$6,902.00
November 15, 2015	73	\$3,720.00
November 22, 2015	94	\$3,877.00
November 29, 2015	77	\$3,305.81
Average totals	85	\$5,587.76

Bethlehem Treasurer's Report

Summary of Current Operating Account for November 2015 Approved at Congregational Council Meeting December 15, 2015

<u>Regular Income</u>	<u>November</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
Envelope Offering	\$13,711.00	\$124,530.09
Special Benevolence	\$ 790.00	\$ 7,075.31
Other	\$ 1,294.81	\$ 8,274.16
Total Income	\$15,795.81	\$139,879.56

Expenses

Regular Benevolences	\$1,207.25	\$13,279.75
Special Benevolence	\$ 861.61	\$ 9,491.62
Staff Compensation	\$7,883.05	\$86,740.42
Church Administration	\$ 612.64	\$ 7,430.06
Church Property	\$ 722.14	\$20,937.08
*Mortgage Payment	\$ 699.91	\$ 699.91
Worship & Music	\$ 166.28	\$ 3,414.28
Church Program	\$ 144.78	\$ 8,026.14
Total Expenses	\$12,297.66	\$150,019.26
Total Income over expenses for month		\$3,498.15
Total Expenses over income for year		(\$10,139.70)
Total *Income to capital Campaign thru 11/30/15		\$332,481.54
Total *Expenses thru 11/30/15 (Citizen's Bank)		(\$29,395.47)
Transfer to Community Bank Loan		
Account From Citizens Bank		(\$50,000.00)
Citizen's Building Fund Balance 11/30/15		\$61,234.00

Community Bank Loan Account

Transfer from Citizen's bank	\$50,000.00
Expenses thru 11/30/15	(\$492,132.45)
Balance Loan Account 11/30/15	\$57,730.64

Combined Building Addition Finances **

Total Building Fund Income thru 11/30./15	\$332,481.54
Congregational Savings Contribution	\$165,036.00
Mortgage Community Bank thru 11/30/15	\$144,604.09
Total Expenses thru 11/30/15	(\$521,437.92)
<u>Combined Building fund balance 11/30/15</u>	<u>\$118,964.64</u>

**Total of Citizen's Bank Account and Loan Account