

From the Pastor

The Living Promise

So many of our Bible stories contain a promise initiated by God toward us. Adam and Eve are promised life in a garden Paradise if they keep one simple rule. Noah and his family are promised that God will not only save them from the flood, God will never destroy humankind again by flood. Abraham and Sarah are promised that their descendents will be more numerous than the stars. In their ninetieth decades they have a son who begins what later becomes the People of Israel. When they are living in slavery in Egypt God promises Moses will lead them to a Promised Land.

Adam and Eve walked with God in the evening breeze; that image takes my breath away. Because of their disobedience they were thrown out of the garden. Things went downhill after that, the wickedness of humankind was so great that God regretted creating us. Yet one family stands out as faithful, Noah's. So God destroys evil and starts creation over again; yet sin continues. Sarah and Abraham's children become the people of Israel; they have a relationship with God but they do not always follow God's ways. God meets with Moses face to face; he tries to lead them into God's ways, yet sin remains and God's heart is again grieved.

Despite our ancestors breaking these promises, God remains faithful. God sends prophet after prophet each one condemning sin and assuring us that God will forgive us if we turn from their ways. Each one reminds us that the Lord is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love toward God's beloved children. The results are mixed, some people do repent, some do not; and, even those who return to the Lord continue to sin.

God gives an even more amazing promise to us. *"I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?"* (Isaiah 43:19) God decides I need to come in person. I will send my Son who will tell the people how much I love them and how I want them to live in relationship with me and each other. The Prophet Isaiah tells us, *"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness on them light has shined."* *"For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."* (Isaiah 9:2, 6) This time the promise comes to us as a person, real human flesh and blood, yet fully Divine. Luke gives us a full account; we hear it read each Christmas Eve. The birth of Jesus is God trying to bring us back into relationship.

Jesus is born and lives as one of us but without sin. He does sign after sign to show his divine power. Many believe and follow him. Jesus promises that our sins will be forgiven. He dies so that we might know how much God loves us and that our sins are truly forgiven. Jesus dies to reconcile us to God for eternity. That's the point of the cross; God chooses to wipe away our sins, not because of anything that we have done, but because God is an amazing God of grace, with mercies that are new every morning.

And then God does another new thing, God raises Jesus from the dead destroying death. *Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die."* (John 11:25-26) Jesus says this promise is ours because God can't bear to be apart from us.

We celebrate more than Jesus' birth, we celebrate that we have a God who is relentless in loving us, forgiving us, renewing us, and one day God will restore us and all of creation to its original goodness and all of us to wholeness. We long for that day; we lean into that promise because we know that God always keeps promises. *"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; 'See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away."* (Revelation 21:1-4)

In Christ's peace, *Pastor Lauren*

Thank You!!!!

- The confirmation class for leading worship on December 13th
- Mike Dufault for working with the confirmation class on a Christmas song.
- Mike Lewison for ordering the poinsettias and Christmas wreaths.
- Norma and Art Semle for arranging the poinsettias and Christmas wreaths.
- Dave Jenny's family for putting up the Christmas tree.
- Mike Dufault for changing the banners.
- Mike Dufault and Jay Cleaveland for moving the chancel furniture for the Make Way for Ducklings Holiday Program.
- Carol Haglund for organizing the Christmas dinner.
- Marybeth Lewison for organizing the Children's Christmas program
- David Valenze for arranging for new keys and tracking who has keys.
- Hellen Schoeder for producing bulletins and newsletters.
- For our volunteers who serve at Friends of the Homeless each month.
- Jay Cleaveland for checking our exit lights, replacing batteries in 16 of them so we could pass inspections.
- The quilters for making so many quilts
- For our LOL teachers forming the faith of our youngest members.
- The folks who clean the church each week.
- Bob Duffney for taking pictures of our new members and other events.
- Sue Mariotti for arranging pictures of our newest members. A great catch!

Emergency coverage while Pastor Lauren is away

Now in her seventh year as pastor, Pastor Lauren is taking sabbatical time on the New England Synod Companion Trip to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land December 29th – January 14th. Pastor John Marquis, pastor of Grace Lutheran Church, West Springfield will be available for pastoral emergencies. He can be reached at church 413-734-9268 and by cell 413- 575-2215.

"Souper Bowl of Caring"



During the month of January we will remember the ongoing critical needs of the hungry. The confirmation class will be collecting nonperishable food items, especially soups, as well as monetary donations (cash/checks). On Super Bowl Sunday, February 7, 2016, we will be joining churches across the country that are also part of the *Souper Bowl of Caring*. Our donations will be brought to the Open Pantry.

Urgent notification list

We have a list of email addresses for both churches which we use to inform members when there has been a death in the congregation, and when an event or worship service is cancelled. If you are not on that list and wish to be on it please give your information to the church office.

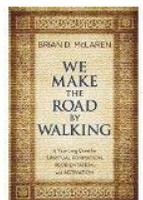


Attention East Church Members – Annual Meeting and Elections

On January 24, 2016 East Church will hold its annual meeting and in that meeting we will approve a budget and elect people to serve in a number of roles. If you have any agenda items please give them to Charlotte Moreau.

Bible Study – We Make the Road by Walking

We will look at scripture from a very different perspective using "We Make the Road by Walking" by Brian McLaren. **Join us Sunday's at 9am behind the organ. Bring your coffee and perhaps a friend.**



Attention Bethesda Members – Annual Meeting and Elections

On January 17, 2016 Bethesda will convene its annual meeting. We will vote on proposed changes to the constitution and bylaws. These are the changes:



Chapter 11.OFFICERS

C11.01. The officers of this congregation shall be a president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer.

a. Duties of the officers shall be specified in the continuing resolutions.

b. The officers shall be voting members of the congregation.

c. Officers of this congregation shall serve similar offices of the Congregation Council. The president, vice president, ~~and secretary,~~ and treasurer shall be voting members of the Congregation Council. ~~The treasurer shall be a non-voting member of the council (voice not vote).~~

d. The Congregation Council shall elect the president, vice president, and secretary from the membership of the Congregation Council.

e. The congregation shall elect the treasurer for a three year term.

C11.02. The Congregation Council shall elect ~~its officers~~ the president, vice president and secretary and they shall be the officers of the congregation. The officers shall be elected by written ballot and shall serve for one year ~~(the treasurer shall serve for three years)~~ or until their successors are elected. Their terms shall begin at ~~the close of the annual council~~ meeting at which they are elected.

C11.03. No officer shall hold more than one office at a time. No elected officer (except the pastor and treasurer) shall be eligible to serve more than two consecutive terms in the same office.

Chapter 12.CONGREGATION COUNCIL

C12.01. The voting membership of the Congregation Council shall consist of the pastor(s), and ~~9 (nine)~~ 5 (five) voting members plus the treasurer ~~which include the officers of the congregation except the treasurer who will have voice not vote.~~ Any voting member of the congregation except the treasurer may be elected, subject only to the limitation on the length of continuous service permitted in that office. A member's place on the Congregation Council shall be declared vacant if the member a) ceases to be a voting member of this congregation or b) is absent from four successive regular meetings of the Congregation Council without cause. Consistent with the laws of the state in which this congregation is incorporated, the congregation may adopt procedures for the removal of a member of the Congregation Council in other circumstances.

C12.12. A quorum for the transaction of business shall consist of ~~a majority~~ 5 (five) of the voting members of the Congregation Council, including the pastor or interim pastor, except when the pastor or interim pastor requests or consents to be absent and has given prior approval to the agenda for a particular regular or special meeting, which shall be the only business considered at that meeting.

BYLAWS

C10.01.01 The annual meeting shall be held between the last Sunday of January and the second Sunday of February ~~on the third Sunday of January.~~

We will then adjourn the meeting and convene again on January 31, 2016 to take a second vote on these changes. After that, we will approve the budget for 2016 and elect people to serve in a number of roles: Congregation Council members, Auditors, Synod Delegates, and members of the Nominating Committee for 2017. If you wish to be nominated, or if you wish to nominate someone, please speak with the members of this year's nominating committee: Carol Haglund and Art Semle.

Camperships/Scholarships

Students who are going to Camp Calumet or are off to college may request a form to apply for a campership or scholarship. Application deadline for both Campership and Scholarship funds is June 1st of each year.



Snow Closings

Unless a storm is very severe and the roads are not passable, Sunday morning worship services will be held each week. However, no one should put themselves at risk by driving, walking or shoveling to attend worship. Your physical health and safety is as important as your spiritual wellbeing. Please use your own judgment when there is snow or ice. Stay inside your home, read the Bible and have conversation with God.

Remembering in Prayer

We all share in the ministry of intercessory prayer. We are called individually to pray each day and as a gathered community of faith in worship. If you have someone we need to include in our prayers please notify our church office.

May God be with them and bless them with wholeness and health.

**2015 Poinsettia Garden
Bethesda Lutheran and East Church**

Given by:

In loving memory of:

Ruth, David & Lucy Carlson

Evert Carlson, Parents & Grandparents

Janet Davies

Loved ones (2)

Tom, Peggy & Joshua Davis

Henry Olsen, Kate Mauke

Tom, Peggy & Joshua Davis

Guy & Rita Davis, Francis Davis

Bob & Pauline Duffney

Denise & Laurence White, Sr.

Bob & Pauline Duffney

Clara Duffney, Irene Patson and Paul Patson

Bob & Pauline Duffney

Richard Derosier & Daniel Keating, Jr.

Shirley Flanders

William Flanders, my best friend

Grace & Diane Goewey

Newton & Marjorie Goewey

Roy & Carol Haglund

Stephen Haglund

Roy & Carol Haglund

Parents Betty & Birger Haglund and Ruth & Leon Poirier

Roy & Carol Haglund

Harold, Arthur & Walter Haglund and Hilda & Earl Nilson

Roy & Carol Haglund

Russell "Coach" Peterson

Pastor Lauren Holm &
Jay Cleaveland

Elna & William Holm

Judy Johnson

Andy Johnson

Judy Johnson

Loved Ones (2)

Lillian Lewison

Michael J. Lewison, husband

Lillian Lewison

David Hodgman, Son-in-law

Michael P., Marybeth, Becky
& Sarah Lewison

Michael J. Lewison, father &
grandfather

Michael P., Marybeth, Becky
& Sarah Lewison

Leonard R. & Eunice Shepard,
parents & grandparents

Michael P., Marybeth, Becky
& Sarah Lewison

Timothy Baldwin and David Hodgman, brothers-in-law
and uncles & Jimmy Shepard, nephew and cousin

Michael P., Marybeth, Becky
& Sarah Lewison

Uncle Ted & Aunt Sophie Buczoki

Given by:

Len & Sue Mariotti

Karen & Greg Pirog

Jeff & Frosty Robbins

Jeff & Frosty Robbins

Arthur & Norma Semle

Arthur & Norma Semle

Patrick & Barbara Venneri

In loving memory of:

Our Mothers and Grandparents

Family

Jeri Robbins

Virginia Hennihan

Arthur & Dorothy Semle and Dorothy Schwalb

Orville & Ann Bray

Anthony Pessolano

Given by:

Tom, Peggy & Joshua Davis

Shirley Flanders

Len & Sue Mariotti

Patrick & Barbara Venneri

In Honor of:

Our Family

My loved ones

Our Children & Grandchildren

Diane M. Venneri

JANUARY 2016

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p>3 2nd Sunday of Christmas 10am Bethesda & East Worship 10am Church of Jesus Christ (Comm Rm.) 12pm Divine Faith (nave) 1pm Eball (Gym) 1pm Living Word (Comm Rm.) 7pm Latino worship (nave)</p>	<p>4 4pm Champion Youth (comm) 5pm Eball (Gym) 7pm Latino Worship</p>	<p>5 4pm ACTS (Comm) 5pm Eball (Gym) 7pm Divine Faith (nave) 7:30pm NA Mtg (Comm)</p>	<p>6 Epiphany 6pm Youth Medieval (gym) 6:30pm Church of Jesus Christ (Comm Rm.) 7pm Medieval (gym) 7pm Latino worship</p>	<p>7 5pm Eball (Gym) 7pm Nar-anon Mtg (Pearson) 7pm A.A Mtg (Comm)</p>	<p>1 New Years Day 5pm Eball (Gym) 6pm Chutters-Anon (South)</p>	<p>2 9am Quilting (South Rm.) 9am Eball (Gym) 7pm Latino worship</p>
<p>10 Baptism of our Lord 10am Bethesda & East Worship 10am Church of Jesus Christ (Comm Rm.) 12pm Divine Faith 1pm Eball (Gym) 1pm Living Word (Comm Rm.) 7pm Latino worship (nave)</p>	<p>11 4pm Champion Youth (comm) 5pm Eball (Gym) 7pm Latino Worship</p>	<p>12 4pm ACTS (Comm) 5pm Eball (Gym) 7pm Divine Faith (nave) 7:30pm NA Mtg (Comm)</p>	<p>13 6pm Youth Medieval (gym) 6:30pm Church of Jesus Christ (Comm Rm.) 7pm Medieval (gym) 7pm Latino worship</p>	<p>14 5pm Eball (Gym) 7pm A.A Mtg (Comm) 7pm Nar-anon Mtg (Pearson)</p>	<p>15 5pm Eball (Gym) 6pm Chutters-Anon (South)</p>	<p>16 9am Bethesda Scap-booking 9am Eball (Gym) 7pm Outside Event 7pm Latino worship</p>
<p>17 Prayers for Healing 10am Bethesda & East Worship Bethesda 1st Annual meeting Fellowship meeting 10am Church of Jesus Christ (Comm Rm.) 12pm Divine Faith (nave) 1pm Eball (Gym) 1pm Living Word (Comm Rm.)</p>	<p>18 4pm FOH 4pm Champion Youth (comm) 5pm Eball (Gym) 7pm Latino Worship</p>	<p>19 4pm ACTS (Comm) 5pm Eball (Gym) 6:30 Confirmation class 7pm Divine Faith (nave) 7:30pm NA Mtg (Comm)</p>	<p>20 Newsletter info due 6pm East Church Board (Pearson) 6pm Youth Medieval (gym) 6:30pm Church of Jesus Christ (Comm Rm.) 7pm Medieval (gym) 7pm Latino worship</p>	<p>21 5pm Eball (Gym) 7pm A.A Mtg (Comm) 7pm Nar-anon Mtg (Pearson)</p>	<p>22 5pm Eball (Gym) 6pm Chutters-Anon (South)</p>	<p>23 9am Eball (Gym) 7pm Latino worship</p>
<p>24 10am Bethesda & East Worship East Annual meeting 10am Church of Jesus Christ (Comm Rm.) 12pm Divine Faith (nave) 1pm Eball (Gym) 1pm Living Word (Comm Rm.) 7pm Latino worship (nave)</p>	<p>25 4pm Champion Youth (comm) 5pm Eball (Gym) 6pm NA Mtg (Pearson) 7pm Latino Worship</p>	<p>26 4pm ACTS (Comm) 5pm Eball (Gym) 6:30 Confirmation class 7pm Divine Faith (nave) 7:30pm NA Mtg (Comm)</p>	<p>27 6pm Worship & Music (Simpson) 6pm Youth Medieval (gym) 6:30pm Church of Jesus Christ (Comm Rm.) 7pm Bethesda council 7pm Medieval (gym) 7pm Latino worship</p>	<p>28 5pm Eball (Gym) 7pm A.A Mtg (Comm) 7pm Nar-anon Mtg (Pearson)</p>	<p>29 5pm Eball (Gym) 6pm Chutters-Anon (South)</p>	<p>30 9am Eball (Gym) 7pm Latino worship</p>
<p>31 10am Bethesda & East Worship Bethesda 2nd Annual meeting 10am Church of Jesus Christ (Comm Rm.) 12pm Divine Faith (nave) 1pm Eball (Gym) 1pm Living Word (Comm Rm.) 7pm Latino worship (nave)</p>						