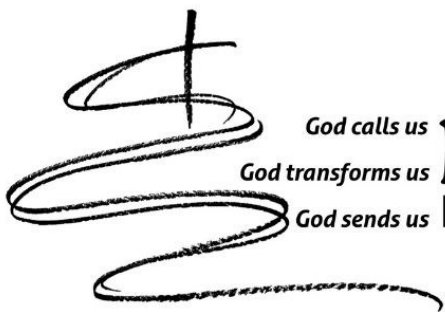


2023

Annual REPORT



God calls us

God transforms us

God sends us

BETHEL
Lutheran Church

Bethel Lutheran Church
1009 18th Avenue SW
Great Falls, MT 59404
406-761-1543

Email: bethelgf.church@gmail.com

Website: www.bethelmt.org

Pastor Jessie Obrecht

A congregation of the Montana Synod
of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Bethel Contact Information

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Choir Director: Jeff Skogley		skogleyfam@gmail.com
President: Sara Sexe		sara.sexe@outlook.com
Vice President: Patty Braget		pdbraget@hotmail.com
Secretary: Laurie Turner		bethelgf.council.secretary@gmail.com
Treasurer: Kelsey Johnson		bethelgf.council.treasurer@gmail.com

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A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDING BISHOP ELIZABETH EATON



Dear friends in Christ,

Over the past year we have continued to experience changes in the world around us. Even as our church finds ways to adapt to this changing world, we find hope in the unchanging and always present promise of God's love through Jesus Christ. We change and adapt not to conform to the world but because we believe that the gift of God's Son is for the world, and that our congregations and worshiping communities are places to gather and be sent into the world, where we will tell the story of God's love in word and deed.

The ministries of our congregations, our synods and the churchwide organization provide ways for the church to move beyond the boundaries of structures and geography and to share God's love with people in our neighborhoods, our cities, our country and beyond. We engage in this ministry knowing that our church walks by faith, trusting in God's promise in the gospel, and that we exist by and for the proclamation of this gospel word. In John 15:5, Jesus reminds us, "I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing." We are connected by the promise that we do all through Christ and can do nothing apart from him.

God gives the Holy Spirit, who uses gospel proclamation — in preaching and sacraments, in forgiveness and in healing conversations — to create and sustain this faith. Just as we rely on God to sustain our faith, we rely on each other to sustain the ministries that offer God's love to the world. Through your generosity to each expression

of this church — your congregation, your synod and your churchwide organization — you add to our collective voice proclaiming God's love for all.

I am grateful for your generosity over this last year. My gratitude spreads far beyond your generous financial gifts. You've shared your gifts of time through countless hours of volunteering, serving and accompanying. You've shared the gifts of your voices as we've tried to discover and learn how God is calling us to be the church now and into the future. And, finally, dear church, you have shared the gift of the realness of God's love with the world around you. Be well, dear church, and stand steadfast in the promise of God's love and grace as you take that promise with you into the world.

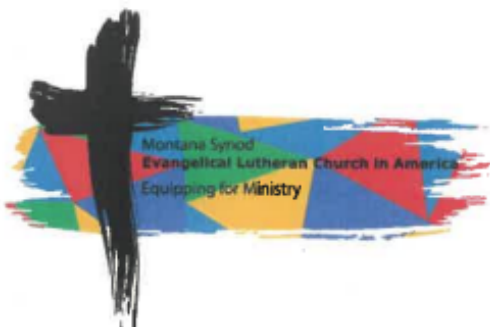


The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

"I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing." —John 15:5

A Message from Montana Synod

Bishop Laurie Jungling



January 3, 2024

New Year's Greetings to you who are part of the Body of Christ in the Montana/N. Wyoming Synod, ELCA! Welcome to 2024!!

As I reviewed my annual report letters from the previous four years, I noticed a common theme—Change! Transition! Adapt! I'm guessing some of you are getting tired of all the talk about change and calls to adapt, and would just appreciate some stability right now. Others of you may be hoping and praying for more change or at least certain kinds of change to come to your lives, your congregation, your community, this nation and even the world. I know I am praying for a transformation from relentless violence and polarization to persistent peace and collaboration across all of human society.

And yet change is upon us whether we want it or not. We can't escape change because to live is to go through change, many changes in fact. So as much as we may wish for stability, our lives as individuals, church and world are changing.

One thing we often forget, though, is that we do have some choice in how things change and that God is constantly active in the change, working toward the new life given in Jesus Christ no matter how much we resist in our bondage to sin. We can choose how we approach change—in faith rather than fear—and we can choose to follow the lead of God's Spirit of Love rather than the hate-filled voices of anger that want to keep us fighting with one another.

In our gospel lesson from John for the second Sunday of Epiphany, Jesus says to Philip, "Follow me" and Philip says to Nathanael, "Come and See." What if during 2024, we as followers of Christ deliberately practiced these two phrases? What if we intentionally sought out ways of coming to see what God is up to in our churches and communities? What if we purposely sought out old and new ways to follow Jesus in our lives of faith and works of love?

What would you and your congregation do first and then next? And what are ways that we as the Synod equip each other in the ministry of the gospel as we "walk the way together" across Montana and Northern Wyoming?

One guide might be the "Vision, Calling and Values" Statement for the Synod which I introduced at the 2023 Synod Assembly. Here they are again:

Montana/N. Wyoming Synod: Vision, Calling, Values

"...to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ...(Eph 4:12)

(Please see the video Bible study on this text on the Montana Synod website www.montanasynd.org)

Vision

A Montana/N Wyoming Synod who is continuously building up and equipping one another for the ministry of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in people's lives, their communities, the synod, the wider church and God's world.

Calling

Equipping the followers of Christ of the Montana/N Wyoming Synod for ministry of:

- 1) *Building Up the Body of Christ; AND*
- 2) *Living Christ's Love into the World*

Values

1. *Proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ's Grace and Love for All*
2. *Engaging in God's Justice for the World, especially the "least of these" (Mt 25)*
3. *"Walking Humbly with God"- in all we do and say (Micah 6:8)*
4. *Pursuing "Unity in Harmony with Diversity" across church and community*
5. *Promoting Relationships and Collaboration across the synod and wider church*


How can we as individuals, congregations and a synod put these into practice in various ways in our particular contexts? How can we support one another in this work of equipping through sharing our time, prayers, energy, and resources?

Over the next 12 months there will be changes coming to the synod including opportunities to participate in equipping one another for ministry. One example is the Montana Synod Assembly, held May 31-June 1, 2024 in Billings, during which we will explore together the theme "Equipping for *Doing Justice*." Other changes will include the arrival of a new Director for Evangelical Mission, some upgrades to the LPA program, and more resources for discerning as a congregation where God may be calling you to go in the future as well as what it looks like to do a Holy Closure of a congregation in a healthy, legacy-leaving way.

As we consider what God has in mind for us in 2024, I want to take this opportunity to say "Thank You!" for the ongoing generosity many of you have shown through your mission support and other gifts you have been willing and able to share. These gifts are deeply appreciated! As you are exploring your own financial realities for the coming year, I invite you to consider increasing your support as you are able in the service of the Christ's ministry across the synod.

May God bless you with the faith, hope, and love of Christ during 2024!

In Christ's Love,



Rev. Laurie Jungling
Bishop, Montana/N. Wyoming Synod

2023 Membership Information

(1/1/2022 to 12/31/2023)

<i>Membership Data</i>	Baptized Members	378
	Confirmed Members	339

<i>Baptized</i>	Sally Seidel
	Samantha Seidel
	Rihanna Whitehead
	Sullivan Davenport
	Charlie Link

<i>Deceased</i>	Doug Kickbusch	Bertha Ferguson
	Thomas Rosenbaum	Nancy Henneford
	Clara Bangert	John Korpela
	Kai Wilder Metzler	Karen Kubas

<i>Confirmed</i>	Adalyn Carlson	John "Jack" Pinski
	Ryan Gilbertson	Rylee Virts
	Tyler Grosenick	Emily Woods
	Drake Lange	

<i>Married</i>	Jonathan Marrs and
	Avalee Olson

Bethel Lutheran Church
Annual Meeting Agenda
January 28, 2024 at 11:00 am

Call to order - Sara Sexe, Council President

Opening Prayer - Pastor Jessie Obrecht

Pastor's Report - Pastor Jessie Obrecht

Approval of 2023 Annual Meeting Minutes - January 29, 2023

Financial Report - Kelsey Johnson, Council Treasurer
February 2023 to December 2023 - Actual Budget
February 2024 to January 2025 - Proposed Budget

Review and Vote Updated Constitution and New By-Laws
- Sara Sexe, Council President

Elections:

New Council Member:

Randy Gilbertson (3 year term)
Christopher Gleason (3 year term)
Kian Ryan - Youth Representative (2 year term)
Tammy Good - (3 year term)
Laurie Turner - (extending 1 year term)

Nominating Committee (need 4)
Sara Sexe (exiting Council member)
Kaleb Stringer (exiting Council member) M
Greg Grosenick (exiting Council member)
Open nominations from the floor

Flathead Lutheran Bible Camp Representatives
Roger and Susan Reppe

Montana Synod Assembly Voting Members (need 2)
Open nominations from the floor

President's Report—Sara Sexe, Council President
Adjournment and Closing—Pastor Jessie Obrecht

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

OPENING LITURGY

Recognizing that our faith is a living, busy, active and mighty thing, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

Teach us to love you with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.

Receive our prayer, O God.

Descend on our hearts, that we may love others in the ways Jesus loves us.

Receive our prayer, O God.

Empower us to be enthusiastic in pursuing your vision for our congregation

Receive our prayer, O God.

Move us to engage issues in our community in Christlike ways, and to pursue deep and authentic relationships with those with whom we serve and partner.

Receive our prayer, O God.

Strengthen us to face the barriers we encounter in doing your work, learning to work with others amid disagreement.

Receive our prayer, O God.

Give us the ability to adapt to the cultural, economic and social changes that occur in the neighborhoods we serve.

Receive our prayer, O God.

Guide us to be a healthy congregation that learns from its failures as well as its successes and offers wisdom to others.

Receive our prayer, O God.

As we strive to become the church that we proclaim to be, raise up leaders who focus on the gospel of freedom, forgiveness and reconciliation as given to us through God's indescribable act of love in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Renew us daily in our baptism that we may discover vitality in our relationships with you, each other and those we serve in the world.

Amen.

Pastor's Report



Greetings Bethel, and Happy New Year!

Lately our Scripture readings have been filled with stories about “callings” and the active work of the Holy Spirit. As the church together, I feel like everything we do is about these callings and watching out for the Holy Spirit. We listen for the voice of God in our world, do our best to be attentive to where the Holy Spirit is working, and jump in to be apart of that work as the Body of Christ. Here at Bethel this past year, it has definitely been a year of “callings” and being brave about what the Holy Spirit is calling us towards.

As we began 2023 one year ago, we had a turnover of five Council Members and our long-time bookkeeper Bonnie Sears. We have been blessed to have courageous leaders in this place who answered the call during this time and took on huge responsibilities in the life of our church. Most notably this year our Council Exec. Team, Sara Sexe, Patty Braget, Laurie Turner, and Kelsey Johnson. While half of this group was brand-new to Council at the beginning of the year, they ensured that our transition in bookkeeping was always looked after, and that Council was continuing to learn together and upkeep the governance and financial needs of our Congregation. Thank you for your leadership, Exec. Team!

Another group that has done impeccable work in the last year is our Property Management team. Whether it be snow removal, new asphalt, fixing lights, or ordering new chairs for our sanctuary, this team has been ready to take action whenever needed. So next time you see something looking beautiful or fixed quicker than you could ever imagine, thank the members of our Property Management Team!

In 2023 some things were consistent with how they have been for a long time here at Bethel, and one of those things was that we had a large VBS program that was a smashing success! This year Tami was able to take some vacation that ended up landing on VBS week, and while we were a bit nervous about her being gone, members of our congregation stepped up and took the reigns to make the week run smoothly! A huge thanks to Patrick Ryan for his leadership with our Junior Counselors, and to all the volunteers who make VBS incredibly successful year in and year out.

I wish that I had enough space in this report to write out everyone who has been answering God's call in ways that lift up and support our congregation this past year, but my report might rival the length of the Bible if I went that far! I want to make sure I thank our LOGOs teachers and volunteers, ELCA World Hunger leaders, Council members, musicians, altar guild, Bible Study members, and so many more in this report. I also want to make sure that I thank the many employees that make this place work, Tami Grosenick, Jeff Skogley, Anna Johns, our tech team, and our children's church leaders. You all make this place operate and keep us on our toes, and we appreciate that more than you'll ever know!

On top of all of these thank you's, I want to thank each and every one of you for your extreme generosity this year. As you may hear or read throughout our meeting time, this year we accomplished the milestone of our mortgage going under \$100,000. We also financially ended the year on a high note where giving was up and covered all our yearly expenses. In a time in history where that is immensely difficult for many congregations, I want to say THANK YOU for supporting this place. THANK YOU for sharing what you have, and being willing to financially connect with the ministry and family that is created here.

Finally, on a personal note, I want to thank you all for your prayers and support as Jade and I have gone through losing our son, Kai. When we lost Kai, I knew that I would not be able to truly care for you all and show up in the way a Pastor needs to, and I requested some time to rest and heal. While that was an immensely difficult thing to do, I cannot express how important that time was for me and my family. I am thankful for the Montana Synod and their work to help arrange that time of healing. I am also thankful for the ways that you all stepped up during that time and filled the gaps that were present, and the ways that you have been patient with me as I reacclimate to returning to this work of being your Pastor. I appreciate your hugs and your love, and your constant prayers that have buoyed my hope in these months. I am honored to be your Pastor, and grateful to be back in this place to walk through yet another year together answering God's call.

In Gratitude,
Pastor Jessica Obrecht



Jubilate Choir



God's Work, Our Hands Sunday



May Day Baskets



Golf Tournament

President's Report

As I look back at 2023, I continue to marvel at the strength of our congregation, including our Council members, Greg Grosenick, Kaleb Stringer, Laurie Turner, Patty Braget, Jeanne Rankin, Shannon Marr, Kelsey Johnson, Ava Fossen, as the Church navigated through a busy and difficult year. Pastor Jessie Obrecht ensured that all Council members received a copy of *Live In Grace, Walk in Love*, by Bob Goff which helped to guide us through our decisions.

Kelsey Johnson became the new Council Treasurer, after Dena Wagner-Fossen's six year tenure, and was just beginning to get familiar with the books, when our long-time bookkeeper retired at the beginning of February. Rather than re-hiring an employee and re-establishing a Financial Secretary, Kelsey and Dena recommended that the Council try using an outside company, Deffinbaugh Financial Services, to keep our books, complete payroll and quarterly taxes, and assist in paying Church bills. In this decision, the Council was cognizant of the fact that some of the prior bookkeeper's duties would have to be undertaken by others, and Council did not want to overburden Administrative Assistant Tami Grosenick, who already does so much for the Church.

Tami and Kelsey Johnson worked together with Deffinbaugh to set up the process, maintain the Church's finances and stay current on Church debts. While this initially proved to be an incredibly time-consuming task, Council has recognized the benefit of this arrangement, and plans to continue with Deffinbaugh. Kelsey and the Audit Committee, consisting of Warren Johnson, Dena Wagner-Fossen, Dave Scholten, and Tim Lightbourne, have worked to evaluate our processes with Deffinbaugh and provided a plan to improve them in the future.

Despite diligent efforts, the Council also was not able to locate someone to perform an audit-like review of the Church's books, without the added expense of formally hiring an accountant. In reviewing the Constitution, and contacting Synod representatives, we learned that most of the churches in the Synod do not conduct the more formal reviews of the books that Bethel had recently performed. Therefore, the Council determined that the review of Bethel's books will be accomplished through the capable congregation members on the Audit Committee.

Throughout the year, Council Vice President Patty Braget was instrumental in making sure that the congregation's outreach was robust. In April, she organized a luncheon for Child Protective Services (CPS) and later worked with Tammy Good to update the CPS visitation rooms so that parents and others who interact with the served children can have engaging activities. In September, for God's Work, Our Hands Sunday, Patty organized activities at various locations around town. Congregation members stocked cupboards at FISH, made and served a spaghetti dinner and sorted clothing at the Angel Center, cleaned and organized at the Women's Center of the Cameron Family Center, sent cards to residents at an assisted living center, and cleaned up the yard of a church member.

Secretary Laurie Turner worked diligently to maintain communications and minutes of Council meetings. The Council also decided, on Jeanne Rankin's suggestion, that a summary of the monthly minutes be added to the *Bethel Notes* so that Council could improve timely communication with the congregation. Laurie ensured that these summaries were added for congregation information.

The Property and Maintenance Committee, Warren Johnson, Jim Carlson, Tim Lightbourne, Greg Grosenick, Debbie McCarty, Chad Elkin and Randy Gilbertson, had a very productive year. The asphalt on the west side driveway of the Church was patched, as replacing the driveway

proved to be too expensive. Some of the damage to the driveway was a result of heavy vehicles, such as the City sanitation trucks, using the driveway. The Property Committee then worked with Tot Lot and the City sanitation to move the location of the garbage cans, to reduce the impact on the newly patched surface.

Another activity of the Property and Maintenance Committee was searching for new chairs for the Sanctuary, as the old chairs were in need of replacement. A congregational meeting was held in June, resulting in the approval to order the new chairs. The congregation generously donated the majority of the funds for the purchase of the chairs, with the remaining paid from Memorial Funds. A number of old chairs were kept by the Church for the Fellowship Hall and for overflow use, as was needed for Christmas service this year. The Committee also coordinated replacement of the Gathering Place refrigerator with one that was donated by Sandi Cummings.

The Mission Endowment Committee organized a nine week series of classes from Financial Peace University, ranging from budgeting to buying and selling your home. The Committee also held a Palm Sunday Breakfast-VBS fundraiser, May basket deliveries, the second Annual Summer Celebration at the end of VBS, and an All Saints Day Potluck.

Tami Grosenick and Colter McCarty continue to seek outside assistance in improving our Sanctuary microphone and streaming issues, so that our live streaming can be more successful and a useful resource for members and others who cannot be present on Sundays. After this is accomplished, the Council would like to work on the live streaming capabilities in the Gathering Place as well.

From August through October, congregation members Jim Carlson, Dave Scholten, Rev. Steve Nelson and Rev. Jessica Crist, and Rev. Sara MacGilvra Branom, Chaplin at Peace Hospice, stepped in to preside over Sunday worship, so that Pastor Jessie could take time off during which she and Jade could begin to recover and cope with the devastating loss of their son Kai. Tami Grosenick tirelessly worked to keep the Church operational during this time. Many congregation members went above and beyond to help out as well, including Sandy Pepos assisting Tami for Sunday services, and Hope Circle members taking over the VBS Holiday Bazaar fundraiser, so that Tami could focus on Logos and other activities.

With the able and much-welcomed assistance of Dena Wagner-Fossen and Shannon Marr, I worked on updates to Bethel's Constitution and Bylaws so that they would comply with Montana Synod recommendations. This proved to be a longer project than was initially anticipated, but we were able to get the changes made with Synod approval. These documents will be voted on by the congregation at its January 28, 2024 annual meeting. The Council also approved updates to employee personnel policies, and consolidated Church policies into Continuing Resolutions that Shannon and I presented to the Council.

Finally, the Nominating Committee advised that Christopher Gleason, Randy Gilbertson, Tammy Good and Kian Ryan accepted their calls to be new Council members, filling the seats that will be vacated by Greg Grosenick, Kaleb Stringer, Ava Fossen, and me. Laurie Turner graciously agreed to continue on Council for an additional year, which will help with Council continuity. Sue and Roger Reppe agreed to again be FLBC representatives this year. These nominations will be subject to the election at the annual meeting.

I feel so fortunate to be a part of this wonderful, giving and supportive congregation at Bethel. I genuinely appreciate the opportunity to have served on the Council these past few years. God's blessings to you all!

Respectfully submitted by Sara Sexe

Proposed Budget 2024—Income

					2023 Budget	Feb-Dec 2023	2024 Budget
Ordinary Income/Expense							
	Income						
	4501 • Other Revenue				\$0.00	\$174.95	0.00
	4400 • Investment Income						
		4401 • Int/Div Income			\$0.00	\$141.21	\$0.00
	Total 4400 • Investment Income				\$0.00	\$141.21	\$0.00
	4300 • Other Reimbursements						
		4304 • Other Reimbursements			\$2,000.00	\$9,080.63	\$2,000.00
		4301 • Altar Flowers			\$650.00	\$635.00	\$650.00
	Total 4300 • Other Reimbursements				\$2,650.00	\$9,715.63	\$2,650.00
	4200 • Rental Income						
		4202 • Other Building Use			\$0.00		\$0.00
		4201 • Tot Lot Child Care			\$38,052.63	\$36,086.01	\$39,308.37
	Total 4200 • Rental Income				\$38,052.63	\$36,086.01	\$39,308.37
	4001 • General Fund Offering Received				\$220,488.26	\$204,293.84	\$220,488.26
	4020- Campital Campaign						
		4021	Mission Freedom		\$15,000.00	\$27,172.31	\$15,000.00
	4100 • Designated Funds Received						
		4101	Pastor's Discretionary Fund		\$500.00	\$476.67	\$500.00
		4102 • Family Promise - Bethel			\$0.00	\$220.00	\$0.00
		4103	VBS		\$5,500.00	\$4,983.20	\$4,500.00
		4104 • LOGOS			\$5,500.00	\$4,845.84	\$5,000.00
		4105	Prayer Shawl Ministry		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
		4106	Youth Gathering		\$1,000.00	\$0.00	\$1,500.00
		4113	Jean Humphrey Mem Camper Fund		\$500.00	\$0.00	\$500.00
	Total 4100 • Designated Funds Received				\$13,000.00	\$10,525.71	\$12,000.00
	Total Income				\$286,540.89	\$288,234.16	\$286,796.63

Notes...

Proposed Budget 2024—Expenses

				2023 Budget	Feb-Dec 2023	2024 Budget
Expense						
5700 - Utilities						
			5701 - Electricity	\$8,000.00	\$7,826.23	\$9,500.00
			5702 - Gas	\$5,000.00	\$3,815.13	\$6,000.00
			5704 - Telephone and Internet	\$1,700.00	\$1,718.95	\$2,200.00
			5703 - Water, Sewer, Garbage	\$7,500.00	\$6,549.40	\$7,500.00
			Total 5700 - Utilities	\$22,200.00	\$19,909.71	\$25,200.00
6100 - Designated Funds Disbursed						
rename			6106 Youth Gathering	\$1,500.00	\$0.00	\$1,500.00
			6102 - Family Promise - Bethel	\$1,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
			6101 - Pastor's Discretionary Fund	\$1,500.00	\$397.35	\$1,500.00
			6103 - VBS	\$4,500.00	\$2,897.71	\$4,500.00
			6104 - LOGOS	\$5,000.00	\$4,561.21	\$5,000.00
			Total 6100 - Designated Funds Disbursed	\$13,500.00	\$7,856.27	\$12,500.00
5400 - Administrative						
			5409 - Software	\$0.00	\$812.47	\$500.00
			5401 - Advertising	\$168.00	\$275.00	\$250.00
			5402 - Bank Service Charges	\$30.00	\$38.93	\$50.00
			5403 - Copier Leasing/Maintenance	\$5,000.00	\$4,835.81	\$5,000.00
			5404 - Employee Expenses	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
			5405 - Misc. Admin Exp	\$0.00	\$1,971.19	\$0.00
			5406 - Office Supplies	\$2,500.00	\$1,193.96	\$2,500.00
			5407 - Postage and Delivery	\$1,500.00	\$862.47	\$1,500.00
			5410 Dishwasher Lease/Maintenance	\$0.00	\$1,595.00	\$0.00
			5408 - Technology & Equipment	\$2,500.00	\$57.88	\$2,500.00
			Total 5400 - Administrative	\$11,698.00	\$11,642.71	\$12,300.00
5300 - Benevolence Expense						
			5307 - Project Graduation	\$200.00	\$200.00	\$200.00
			5305 - Synod House Support	\$1,000.00	\$0.00	\$1,000.00
			5304 - Family Promise - Great Falls	\$1,250.00	\$937.53	\$1,250.00
			5301 - Montana Synod	\$16,536.62	\$14,436.04	\$16,536.62
			5302 - ELCA Missionary Support	\$2,000.00	\$1,166.45	\$2,000.00
			5303 - Flathead Lutheran Bible Camp	\$3,500.00	\$2,634.71	\$3,500.00
			Total 5300 - Benevolence Expense	\$24,486.62	\$19,374.73	\$24,486.62

Expenses continued next page

Proposed Budget 2024—Expenses cont.

			2023 Budget	Feb-Dec 2023	2024 Budget
Expense					
5200 - Ministry Expenditures					
	5206 - Music and Licenses		\$1,000.00	\$1,023.54	\$1,000.00
	5207 - Worship Supplies		\$1,500.00	\$1,414.82	\$1,500.00
	5208 - FLBC Camperships		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
	5217 - VANCO Online Giving Expense		\$1,000.00	\$416.70	\$1,000.00
	5210 - Christian Education - Adult		\$1,500.00	\$1,297.37	\$1,500.00
	5211 - Christian Education - Youth		\$1,000.00	\$707.97	\$1,000.00
	5214 - Hospitality and Fellowship		\$1,500.00	\$1,381.35	\$1,500.00
	5205 - Altar Flowers		\$1,000.00	\$977.50	\$1,000.00
	5209 - Pastor's Expenses		\$3,000.00	\$1,675.38	\$3,000.00
	5213 - Synod Assembly		\$700.00	\$585.00	\$1,500.00
	5201 - Pulpit Coverage		\$600.00	\$1,600.00	\$1,050.00
Total 5200 - Ministry Expenditures			\$12,800.00	\$11,244.63	\$14,050.00
Payroll					
	Accompanists		\$5,000.00	\$4,112.90	\$5,000.00
	Hourly Wages		\$40,013.19	\$25,387.23	\$28,058.16
	Nursery Attendant		\$2,000.00	\$1,810.00	\$2,000.00
	Worship Tech		\$2,000.00	\$1,020.00	\$2,000.00
	Paid Benefits				
	Pension & Benefits		\$15,148.08	\$15,492.92	\$17,019.86
	Social Security Offset		\$6,031.37	\$4,703.16	\$5,657.65
Total Paid Benefits			\$21,179.45	\$29,391.05	\$22,677.51
Pastor					
	6560 - Pastor's Housing		\$24,000.00	\$21,000.00	\$24,000.00
	6565 Pastor's Insurance		\$6,879.36	\$6,019.44	\$7,499.52
	Pastor Salary		\$45,202.00	\$39,551.82	\$48,583.00
Total Pastor			\$76,081.36	\$66,571.26	\$80,082.52
Payroll Taxes			\$5,000.00	\$0.00	\$5,000.00
Salary: Jeff S.			\$5,574.00	\$5,109.40	\$5,574.00
workers compensation insurance			\$1,406.19	\$475.72	\$500.00
payroll -other			\$0.00	\$290.00	\$0.00
Total Payroll			\$158,254.19	\$133,355.62	\$150,892.19

Expenses continued next page

Proposed Budget 2024—Expenses cont.

				2023 Budget ▼	Feb-Dec 2023	2024 Budget
Expense						
5600 - Property						
Mortgage		5500 Thrivent Loan Interest &		\$32,040.00	\$29,370.00	\$32,040.00
		5610 - GF Fire Rescue - Safety Inspect		\$60.00	\$63.00	\$60.00
		5609 - Property Taxes		\$2,000.00	\$4,293.15	\$2,000.00
		5603 - Grounds Maintenance		\$7,500.00	\$10,491.60	\$7,500.00
		5602 - Fire Alarm and Suppression		\$1,000.00	\$554.00	\$500.00
		5604 - Pest Control		\$1,000.00	\$1,105.91	\$1,000.00
		5601 - Insurance		\$7,000.00	\$7,094.00	\$7,000.00
		5605 - Janitorial Supplies		\$600.00	\$1,423.17	\$600.00
NEW		Janitorial Services		\$7,500.00	\$0.00	\$10,800.00
		5606 - Normal Maintenance and Repair		\$8,500.00	\$11,974.07	\$8,500.00
Total 5600 - Property				\$67,200.00	\$36,998.90	\$70,000.00
Total Expense				\$310,138.81	\$252,753.71	\$308,787.93
Net Ordinary Income				-\$28,597.92	\$35,480.45	-\$21,991.30
Other Income/Expense						
Other Income						
Net Other Income						
Net Income				-\$28,597.92	\$27,789.58	-\$21,991.30

Notes...

Mission Freedom Debt Reduction

Mission Freedom was originally formed with the goal of retiring our \$450,000 mortgage associated with our facility remodel. The campaign solicited pledges to fund our monthly mortgage payment of \$2,670.00 and to prepay principal.

This is a 30-year mortgage with the interest rate changing at year 10 and year 20. The interest rate will change to the market rate in June of 2025 and June of 2035.

The congregation graciously submitted pledges totaling approximately \$300,000 for our initial campaign. Bethel reduced the balance of the mortgage down to \$146,411.86 by 12/31/2022, which marked the end of the initial Mission Freedom Campaign. Over the course of this fiscal year Bethel has now reduced our mortgage debt to \$118,747.96 as of 12/31/2023.

The generosity of the members of Bethel has been a huge blessing and we have received additional funds at the end of 2023 for the mortgage that has now taken our loan below \$100,000.00. Thank you so much, all of you! Since we have paid down significant principal over the life of this loan, we are on track to retire the loan by 2025. We are hoping to have it completely paid off before the interest rate change in June of 2025.

In 2021 the Finance Committee made the recommendation to the church council to fund the mortgage from the annual budget rather than launching a third capital campaign. The congregation can still designate giving to Mission Freedom. If there is not enough giving towards the mortgage in a given month, the mortgage will be paid through the general budget.

Respectfully submitted by Kelsey Johnson, Bethel Council Treasurer

Insurance Report

Bethel continues to be insured through Brotherhood Mutual Insurance Company as we have for several years. We had no claims during this past year.

Our policy runs for a one year period ending June 1, 2024. We have blanket property coverage of \$1,597,000 with an estimated break down of Building \$1,388,000, and personal property of \$209,000. Our liability coverage is \$3,000,000. We continue to monitor our coverages for adequacy and to ensure our premiums remain in line.

Respectfully submitted, Jim Carlson.

Property Management Report

The property and management committee meets on a bimonthly basis to act on facilitating the upkeep of the buildings and grounds and light maintenance of Bethel's property. We do the research on the projects needed to be done in and around the church and present our recommendations to the church council for funding.

In the past year there have been several projects undertaken and completed to maintain or upgrade the church and grounds. Thanks to Jim Carlson, the project leader, we have replaced the chairs in the church and have donated, to various nonprofits (thanks to Mick Davis) the older chairs that were still usable. Thank you to the many members who contributed to this project to keep the costs down. We also had the driveway to the west of the church repaired and had the city move the garbage collection out to the north street to eliminate the heavy garbage trucks damaging the pavement further, Tim Lightbourne was the project leader. Deb McCarty and helpers have been keeping the grounds in shape. The VBS Junior Counselors painted the storage sheds. TLC has moved in a new shed where the Boy Scouts had been. We entered into a 3 year contract for mowing and snow removal with a local company who is also in charge of the aging sprinkler system. Light maintenance on the property is always a continuing process. Several smaller projects were done during the Our Work Our hands weekend, thanks to various members of the congregation.

Currently Randy Gilbertson is researching the possibility of getting a grant from Northwestern Energy to convert the fluorescent lights in the buildings to LEDS.

If you see a maintenance issue that needs to be addressed please let Tami know and she will contact the committee to make sure it gets done.

Thank you, Warren Johnson, Committee Chair

FISH! Report

Bethel served at FISH February 27-March 3, May 15-19, August 7-11, and October 2-6. For these 4 weeks we gave out 5827 lbs of food to 100 families. These families were comprised of 133 adults and 31 children. For 2023 FISH gave out 76,114 lbs of food to 1168 families which were comprised of 1,594 adults and 690 children. The number of families served in 2023 was up slightly from that of 2022. Bethel donated 911 lbs of food this past year. This was an increase of about 150 lbs from that of 2022. Twenty members of Bethel serve at FISH. Mary Gernaat is Bethel's FISH board member. Bethel's donations of food and cash, and the work of our volunteers are very much appreciated.

Respectfully submitted by John Blank

Bethel Outreach and Giving Report

This past year, our Bethel congregation continued their outreach to our local social workers and Child Protective Services (CPS). Our local CPS Staff works tirelessly to advocate for the needs and rights of those whose voices are often less heard by our society. They are vital to helping families, particularly those experiencing hardship, while ensuring families have access to the resources they need to thrive. Like so many critical professions in our world, social workers deserve extra praise because of the significant sacrifices they make every day to better our communities.

We began our year by inviting Micaela Stroop, CPS Child Welfare Manager, to speak with our Wednesday night Logos youth. Micaela spent some time speaking about what the mission is for Child Protective Services and explained how they service our youth and their families. The youth were able to ask questions and hopefully have a better understanding of what this department does for our community.

In February we had our Logos youth make 63 “Thank You” cards for all the workers at the CPS office. The cards were full of joy and happiness and inspiring words! The department responded with “I just got your package in the mail ☐! Those cards are adorable and have put many smiles on our workers faces since receiving them! Thank you so much!”

In April, with the help of our generous congregation, we gifted the CPS office staff with a yummy luncheon. Thanks to our Bethel family, we provided the department with custom meat and cheese sandwiches, salad, chips, and some delicious desserts! Thank you to our wonderful helpers that donated and prepared food, decorated the luncheon room, and helped to set up and clean up after the luncheon. We also enjoyed spending our time visiting with the staff during their lunch. We had one supervisor come up and tell us how wonderful this luncheon was. She said that the staff very seldom get to sit down and enjoy their lunch together, so it was nice to have them all together on one room! She also said how nice it was for them to be able to slow down and have a sit-down lunch, instead of in their car on the road.

A summer meeting with the CPS staff who facilitate family visits, kicked off our final campaign effort. The staff shared items on their Wish List which would help enhance their visitation rooms and gave us a tour of the rooms. Their commitment to making these important visits positive and memorable for families experiencing separation and hardship was evident, with the overarching goal to provide warm, welcoming spaces that encourage conversation, creativity and interactive play. We began by sprucing up the outdoor area by donating a patio table umbrella for shade and a cornhole game to complement the play structure and grassy play area. In October, the Bethel congregation generously donated toys, art materials, and games on the Wish List, as well as giving monetary donations for area rugs in each of the four rooms. The staff was overjoyed with the care and thoughtfulness of the items as they unpacked the donations and refreshed the rooms for families. The rooms now have cozy play spaces on soft rugs to enjoy a multitude of activities and the staff was most appreciative of Bethel’s outreach.

Respectfully Submitted by: Patty Braget and Tammy Good

Mission Endowment Report

Mission Endowment committee members include: Johnna Lightbourne, Janet Smith, Jim Carlson, Greg Grosenick/Shannon Marr (council), Jo Ann Dullum, and Pastor Jessie Obrecht.

Continuing the lessons from the 2022 ELCA's REBOOT camp, we decided to try something new but also build on the successes we had last year. In order to build relationships outside the Church community, we proposed to the Council and received approval to host a Financial Peace University (Dave Ramsey) class. This class teaches the process, called Baby Steps, of managing money and how to get out of debt, which is one of the greatest problems in our society. We had 3 participants with over \$25,000 in debt. By the end of the 9-week class, 2 of the participants had applied the "bigger shovel" lessons and gotten 2nd and 3rd jobs to remove the debt in their lives. One participant, who had experienced homelessness as a child, even took the class home to her parents so they could learn the process also. The response to this was very positive and they said they would encourage us to continue hosting these.

We focused on building up the Church community through different events throughout the year. Our first event was to host a Palm Sunday Breakfast-VBS fundraiser. Then in May, we handed out over 200 May Baskets to the community, including Hospice. The Summer Celebration was on VBS Family Night. This included the VBS kids camp songs, face painting, and food trucks. In November, we hosted the All Saints Day Potluck. It was an opportunity for food, fellowship, celebration and support of our Bethel family.

I believe we reached our goal of starting small and achieving success. Thank you to Bethel for supporting the efforts of building relationships, both within the church but also out into the community. We hope these efforts continue with other events and ministries in 2024.

Janet, Jim, Johnna, and I have served between 3 - 5 years on this committee and we all will be stepping down. We have all enjoyed being a part of this group and would encourage other members of the Congregation to prayerfully consider serving.

Respectfully submitted, Jo Ann Dullum



ELCA World Hunger Report



Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Way to go Bethel! Our Christmas ELCA Good Gifts goal was to raise \$2500 to create clean water access for a village. We exceeded that goal with enough left over to also build a latrine!

As this new year begins, let us continue to give generously to ELCA Hunger and Disaster relief . With wars, climate change, bad governments, and many other factors the need continues to be great. As part of the ELCA, together we can make a difference!

Our ELCA Hunger ministry works responsibly in more than 60 countries worldwide as well as in the USA in a variety of ways. Our mission ministries include work in areas of education, healthcare, agriculture and farming, sanitation, supplies, development, housing, food, sustainable projects, community and care, micro loans, emergency, care bibles, and Christian education and much more. Our ELCA Disaster Response serves in various important ways in areas of disaster.

We see clearly in the scriptures, that as a part of our identity as God's beloved children we are to have a heart for and care for the poor. In Deuteronomy 15:11 we read "For the poor will never cease out of the land , therefore, I command you, you shall open wide, your hand to your brother, to the needy and the poor in the land. "

Yes, there will always be human need in this imperfect world, so we are to remain faithful. As we read in Galatians.6:9 "And let us not grow we in well doing for in due season. We shall reap if we do not lose heart."

Giving Report

	Hunger and disaster	Good gifts.
2021	\$13,762.43	\$1325.00
2022.	\$15,229.27	\$765.00
2023	\$16,109.62	\$2650 clean water, other \$449.95

Keep up the good work, Bethel! God bless!

Respectfully submitted Colleen Walker-Nelson



LOGOs Youth Ministry

A year of rebuilding. We started out this LOGOs year with a smaller number of kids in all ages. Throughout the year, our youth brought friends and neighbors who joined and enjoyed our weekly fellowship.

In the service projects throughout the year were thank you notes to Child Protection Services staff, canned food for FISH!, and cereal drive for FISH!. We also invited special guest from CPS to talk about being kind to others, especially children they interact with since you never know what other are going through.

We had 4 families who utilized our scholarships with a total of 6 children.

Along with our weekly bible lessons and games, we had a total of 6 family worship services and included learning handbells to play during our services. I am so very proud of how well our youth led worship along with Pastor Jessie. They developed strong public speaking and leadership skills.

Some of our special events were our Christmas Program and Family Worship, Christmas Party, CANstruction, end-of-year carnival and Palm Sunday Family Worship.

We would not have been so very successful if it hadn't been for our volunteers. Kitchen and Meals led by Kelsey Johnson, with Judy Johnson, Jeanne Price, JoDee Black, Sue Reppe, Steve and Colleen Walker-Nelson and Kelly Daniel. With LOGOs parents volunteering during the year.

Our AMAZING teachers Amber Pinski, Pre-K through 2nd, Laura Kupfner Pre-k through 2nd and 3rd & 4th, Jo Anne Dullum 3rd & 4th, and Johnna Lightbourne 5th & 6th, Pastor Jessie Obrecht and Sandy Pepos 7th & 8th, and Colter McCarty and Janet Smith High School.

I also want to thank the Bethel Congregation who are so supportive of this youth ministry program and they kids who participate in Family Worship. It is because of all of our church family that we have a loving and supportive environment for our children to grow.

Respectfully submitted by Tami Grosenick



Flathead Lutheran Bible Camp

Flathead Lutheran Bible Camp

2023 ANNUAL REPORT SUMMARY

"Thank you for the incredible generosity and hospitality. We had a wonderful weekend. The sauna is lovely. Your staff is so helpful and kind. We love FLBC — it is such a sacred place." ~ Weekend Retreat Guests

2023: THE YEAR AT A GLANCE

<p>The year-round staff, led several Outreach programs, for youth at churches — only a 'few' had to cancel because of snow</p> <p>JAN '23</p>	<p>Summer staff recruitment: Karen, Program Director, & Richie, Wilderness & EE Director, visited college campuses around the country to recruit the best summer staff ever! Including 5 international staff!</p> <p>FEB '23</p>	<p>Year-round staff, travel to Lutherhaven for summer planning retreat & to learn from our counter parts in camping ministry in Idaho.</p> <p>MAR '23</p>	<p>Pastors Grant & Amanda Applehans accepted the call to serve as Co-Associate Directors, overseeing development, marketing, retreat programming, day camp, volunteers etc.!</p> <p>MAY '23</p>
<p>A wonderful summer with 2,225 campers, learning through activities, worship and Bible study, with our theme, "Holy Trinity — Wholly Love"</p> <p>Cabin #1 is now the new Sauna dedicated to God's glory in honor of Don Stadler, volunteer builder.</p> <p>SUMMER '23</p>	<p>Celebrating 80 years of ministry! Over 300 people gathered to hear retired directors Rev Gary Cockrell and Brad Abbott, share the history of the camp. Cindy Pokorny created beautiful photo presentations of the 80-year history of FLBC! All enjoyed a picnic, and concert with 'Just Move.'</p> <p>JULY 1 '23</p>	<p>A notice of \$35,000 given to the Shalom Home...construction begins with contractor Tim Rogge. Architect, Gretchen Krumm</p> <p>AUG '23</p>	
<p>Goal reached to re-build the outdoor chapel, with 27 benches adopted. Construction began this fall. Amphitheatre remodel fund raising project begins. 55 benches needed, \$750 each, with a plaque for each one.</p> <p>SEPT '23</p>	<p>Program begins to engage donors in Naming an Endowment, for staff scholarships. \$25,000 per year for 5 years, for a total of \$125,000 to start generating funds for staff scholarships. To date, two funds have been established.</p> <p>Pastors Grant & Amanda Applehans installed as Associate Directors.</p> <p>FALL '23</p>	<p>We welcome new Community staff members, and plan the programs for the Harvest Festival, Grief retreat, the Bible in 24 hours, Advent retreat, young adult retreat and much more!</p> <p>WINTER '23</p>	

2023 BY THE NUMBERS!

1742 guests (retreats/events/EE Students) served during our fall, winter, & spring programs • **150** participants served in 3 communities during Fall/Winter/Spring through our outreach program • **7** weeks of regular FLBC Summer Camp for youth, families, and groups + **2** additional weeks of serving Intermountain Residential and Montana Youth Diabetes Alliance! • **815** Youth, on site campers (week-long, day campers and partial week campers) • **191** Glacier Wilderness campers • **154** Week-Long Family campers & Grand campers • **1065** Summer Retreat guests (June, July and August) • **18** weeks of Day Camps in congregations, with over **380** campers! • **50** Incredible adult volunteers • **58** Summer staff from **13** different states and **3** countries joined our **12** year-round staff to make **1 AWESOME TEAM!**



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Vacation Bible School—Patty Braget

Praise and thank you to all our Bethel family for another successful Vacation Bible School!

This year we had 4 counselors from Flathead Lutheran Bible Camp who led our 62 campers in a week full of prayer, songs, lively activity, devotions, laughter, crafts and a VBS camp sing-a-long. Their daily focus was on: Who is God the creator? Who is Jesus? Who is the Holy Spirit? Who am I? and Who are we?

The weather was perfect and we held small group games and community building activities outside, bible study was in the sanctuary and crafts in the Fellowship Hall.

We could not have had such a successful week without our 22 fabulous junior counselors. They arrived full of energy and their willingness to help in any way. They were wonderful mentors to our youth, helping to make our days successful.

Our junior counselors, led by Colter McCarty and Warren Johnson, completed a fun and colorful service project, by painting our sheds in the back parking lot. They followed their painting activities up with dinner and some fellowship time.



Our week was highlighted by our Summer Celebration that was had in conjunction with the Mission Endowment Committee. Brian's Top Notch food truck and Mr. Frosty Ice Cream treats supplied the food. The campers, led by FLBC Counselors and Jr. Counselors entertained with songs and stories from Camp Week.

There are so many people to thank for making camp a huge success. We had over 20 adult helpers show up to help us with our weekly activities. Special thanks to Pastor Jessie, our musicians, Pastor Steve Nelson, Keenan and Patrick Ryan, all of our kitchen help; Sandy Pepos and her whole committee who served snack and a delicious lunch every day. Marilyn Carlson for managing the registration table and putting out fires all day. For Udo and Terree Wozny for all the wonderful craft projects they created and for John Blank and Marilyn Carlson for running "crafting" all week with the campers. Our Pre-K and Kindergarten teacher, Della and all her Jr. Counselors, signage and games for the Summer Celebration Jo Ann Dillum. A huge thank you for all the food that was provided and the free will donations from our congregation members and our campers.

This year our campers helped with our service project, by donating items to be used in the visitation rooms at Child Protective Services. The children donated, toys, books, paint canvas, paints, crayons, markers, art supplies, rocking horse, fidget toys, sensory poppers, cars, trucks and so much more. These items will be used in the rooms while the children in protective care have visitations with their parents.

Respectfully submitted by Patty Braget



2023 Annual Meeting Minutes

January 29, 2023

The meeting was called to order at 11:00 by President Warren Johnson. The meeting was held in-person and online by zoom. It was determined that we had a quorum. President Warren informed us that the purpose of this meeting was to approve the budget and hold elections. Pastor Jessie shared an opening prayer. Pastor thanked the following members for their continued support throughout the past year:

- Tami Grosenick for “making our world go around”!
- Jeff Skogley, Sharon Mueller, the pianists and other music makers
- Mission Endowment
- The tech support staff for bringing our online services to the members at home.
- Bethel Council for getting us through the pastoral transition, and Covid
- The incoming council members
- Members going off council: Warren Johnson, Dena Wagner-Fossen, Anne Vanatta, Allison Marr
- Greg Grosenick for returning for one more year
- Bookkeeper Bonnie Sears, who is retiring after seven years
- The Nominating Committee: Sue Hesse, Pam Dougherty, Steph Cummings, and Marilyn Carlson
- The congregation—while budgets are important, our love for one another is more important.

Pastor concluded by thanking the congregation for welcoming her and put out a call for everyone to consider serving on the council

Approval of 20220130 Annual Meeting Minutes - The January 30, 2022 minutes were reviewed. Terry Korpela moved to accept the minutes as presented. Jeff Skogley seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Financial Report - Dena Wagner-Fossen shared the balance sheet. Basically, we were under budget for giving, but also under budget for spending. The cost of living is up about 7% in this area, and was taken into consideration in the proposed budget. A motion was made by Doug Sexe to receive the February 2022 to December 2022 balance sheet as presented. Carrie Ann Elkin seconded the motion. Motion carried.

The proposed budget was presented. We gave thanks to the Budget Committee composed of Dena Wagner-Fossen, Kelsey Johnson, Warren Johnson, Mike Kubas, Dave Scholten, and Pastor Jessie. Anne Vanatta made a motion to adopt the February 2023 to January 2024 budget. Earl Terwilliger seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Continued on page 27...

Elections - The nominees to serve on the church council for a 3 year term are Patty Braget, Kelsey Johnson (Treasurer), and Shannon Marr. Ava Fossen will serve 2 years as Youth Representative, and Greg Grosenick will extend one year.

Dena Wagner-Fossen moved to accept the slate of candidates to council, Donna Vinnedge seconded. Motion carried.

The Nominating Committee consists of the outgoing council members, Warren Johnson, Dena Wagner-Fossen, and Anne Vanatta. One more member is needed, and Lynn Ryan has volunteered for this position. Sara Sexe moved to accept the nominations as presented. Terry Korpela seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Roger and Susan Reppe were nominated to be the Flathead Lutheran Bible Camp Representatives. Anne Vanatta moved to accept the nomination. Terry Korpela seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Stephanie Cummings and Laura Kupfner were nominated to serve as the Montana Synod Assembly Voting Members representing Bethel. Tamy Scholten moved to accept the nomination. Mim Mikulecky seconded the motion.

President's Report - President Warren reflected on the positive things that have happened this year. If our giving continues toward debt reduction over the next 4-6 years, we should be successful with Mission Freedom and retire our building debt. He said Bethel will not only survive, it will thrive! Warren also spoke briefly on new chairs, which we will address this year possibly in an "Adopt a Chair" campaign. The drive on the west side of the church will have to wait, but the property committee will look at patching the holes for now. Warren thanked the congregation for their work, prayers, and tithes.

Closing and Adjournment - In closing, Pastor Jessie led us in the Lord's Prayer. Terry Korpela moved to adjourn the meeting. Melody Skogley seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 11:40.

Respectfully submitted by Laurie Turner, Bethel Council Secretary

