

BETHEL NOTES



Sunday, April 26th

**Readings Third Sunday
of Easter**

ACTS 2:14A, 36-41

PSALM 116:1-4, 12-19

1 PETER 1:17-23

LUKE 24:13-35

Bethel Members and Friends,

I write to you about the implications of Governor Bullock's announcement, specifically as it impacts Bethel's plans for re-entry to public gatherings for worship and other activities.

With this announcement coming just Wednesday afternoon, and needing time to ponder it and to consider the counsel and suggested guidelines offered by our Montana Synod Bishop Laurie Jungling, as well as to have a conversation with Bethel's Council and worship planners and leaders, I am **not ready** to recommend that Bethel re-open for public worship this Sunday, April 26th. I **do plan** to participate in the joint led ELCA Great Falls area worship service which will be live streamed from Croxford's at 9:30 am.

Here is **an excerpt** from a Pastoral Letter from MT. Synod Bishop, Laurie Jungling, which she sent out to pastors, LPA's, SAM's to read and consider.

".....I am strongly recommending that ELCA Congregations in the MT Synod extend the "stay at home" directive at least until Sunday, May 3, and use this extra week to prepare yourselves to reopen if that is what your pastor and council together decide is the right option for your congregation."

I agree with our Bishop's recommendation and will be scheduling a time to discuss the Governor's and Bishop Laurie's recommendations, along with my thoughts with the Church Council leadership. Together...seeking God's wisdom and guidance...we will develop and communicate a plan as to when and how we move forward.

With gratitude to God for your patience, prayers, and support as we continue to stay safe and love our neighbors.

Pastor Steve

This Sunday's Worship is a live stream from Croxford Funeral Home <https://livestream.com/accounts/12266866/events/9047778> and bulletin online at bethelmt.org. Link to online service also available on our website.

During our worship service the Sunday we will be celebrating communion. Please click [here to be connected with Communion Preparation Guide](#)

For those who do not have access to the internet, we will be sending a copy of the bulletin. Blessings and prayers to all.

OFFICE HOURS: MONDAY THROUGH THURSDAY 8:00 AM TO 1:30 PM CLOSED FRIDAY

OFFICE TELEPHONE:

(406) 761-1543

WEBSITE:

WWW.BETHELMT.ORG

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BETHELGF.CHURCH@GMAIL.COM



- ✦ Prayers for **Faith Crouch** (granddaughter of Bernice Johnson) who is awaiting a double lung transplant.
- ✦ Prayers of healing **Ed Pottratz** as he continues cancer treatment.
- ✦ Prayers of healing for **Lee Klette**, son of Russ & Cheryl.
- ✦ Continued prayers for **Angela Mart** (daughter-in-law of Jane Mart) as she finishes treatment for breast cancer.
- ✦ Prayers for God's presence and healing for **Linda Juvik** (sister of Sandy Bechard) as she continues treatment for cancer.
- ✦ Prayers of healing for **Cindy Brattain** as she recovers from a medical procedure.
- ✦ Prayers for the **Peoples of Boliva** as they transition into new leadership within the country and prayers for **Pastor Presidente German and the IELB**.
- ✦ Prayers for healing and strength for **Katie Madsen**, niece of Doug Sexe and granddaughter of Arlene Sexe as she is undergoing treatment for breast cancer.
- ✦ Prayers of healing for **Jane Mart** as she is home and continues to heal after surgery.
- ✦ Prayers of healing and support for **Jeremy Hawks** as he prepares for surgery.
- ✦ Prayers of healing for **Ann Tuomi** as she continues to recover from surgery.
- ✦ Prayers for safety and support for **Eric Poser**, Connie Titcomb's nephew as he is deployed overseas.
- ✦ Prayers of thanks for God's healing touch for **Arlena Crandell's son, Mike**
- ✦ Prayers of healing for **Leonard Murphy** as he recovers at home from a recent hospitalization.
- ✦ Prayers of healing for **Marlys Baer** as she recovers from a recent hospitalization.
- ✦ Prayers of healing for **Dale Ost** as he recovers at home.
- ✦ Prayers of healing and God's presence for **Chad Erickson** and family as they await results of medical testing.
- ✦ Prayers for God's presence, peace & strength for **Jim and Loretta Nuessle and their son** (brother, sister-in-law, and nephew of Walt Nuessle) as they face health concerns and for a safe return to their home in MN.
- ✦ Prayers for God's presence, healing & grace for **Bob Norbie** (Mary Lou) as he faces a diagnosis of bladder cancer.
- ✦ Prayers for God's healing presence and mercy for all who face the threat of the Covid-19 virus at home and abroad.
- ✦ Prayer of healing for **Allan Ost**, son of Dale and Leona.
- ✦ Prayers for healing for **Dan Jacobson**, hospitalized.
- ✦ Prayers for God's comfort and peace for **Kim Peachy and family** as they grieve the death of her father Dr. Robert Wynia.
- ✦ Prayers for God's comfort and peace for **Bob and Mary Lou Norbie, Bob's step-mother Arlie** their family and friends as they grieve the death of Bob's father.
- ✦ Prayers of healing for **Bob Walker**, brother of Colleen Walker-Nelson.
- ✦ Prayers of strength, support and comfort for all whom are separated from loved ones especially those in nursing homes and hospitals due to social distancing and also health care works, first responders, and others who working the front lines to fight this pandemic.
- ✦ Prayers for God's healing presence for Trudy (Earl) Terwilliger's brother, **Mark Dillard** who is battling lung cancer and is hospitalized in Washington State.
- ✦ Prayers of healing, strength and support for **Rita Johnson (LaRae Veitch's sister)** as she begins her treatment for pancreatic cancer.

Words from the Bishop: New Life on the other side of Grief

“But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.”

~Lk 24:21a

How many of you are feeling like your hopes have been dashed? Like you’ve lost something important – an opportunity, an experience, an event, a plan, a person?

Many of us may be feeling this way right now. Losses of jobs, of livelihood, of lives. Losses of our plans for Easter or a birthday or graduation. Loss of a vacation or some time with far-away family or gathering for Sunday worship. Even the loss of the normal, of stability, or of the way things were. All of these losses are being experienced by people as our lives are inevitably changed due to Covid19. And as we experience these losses, it is normal to feel grief. Everything has changed and our hopes feel shattered. With such loss naturally comes grieving.

That’s what the two disciples on the road to Emmaus were feeling when they came upon the risen Jesus they didn’t recognize. Confusion, dashed hopes, grief. “We had hoped that he was the one,” they say in their sadness. When people go through a traumatic loss, they often have a hard time remembering details or making decisions or seeing the truth in front of their eyes. Jesus’ travelling companions on the road to Emmaus were no different. Despite the promise of the empty tomb, the disciples felt loss and grief and simply couldn’t recognize Jesus among them.

We too are experiencing loss. We had hoped we’d been able to worship by now; we had hoped for healing by now; we had hoped that things would be different, normal, predictable. But things haven’t gone as expected. Right now, despite the Easter promise of the empty tomb and whether we know it or not, many of us are suffering loss and grieving. And it’s important for us to name that, to

take stock of our emotions and thoughts, and to recognize that we are walking on a journey of grief and all that comes with it.

Think of the various experiences of grief people go through: the **shock** that may still not have worn off; the **denial** while trying to avoid the inevitable; the **anger** and frustrated outpouring of emotions we’ve kept bottled up. Then there’s the **bargaining**, searching in vain for ways out, no matter how impossible. At some point we realize that the inevitable has happened and **depression** hits. Then, hopefully, we can start to seek realistic responses and find the way in our **acceptance**

that what has happened is real and moving forward is our only possibility for life.

All of these apply to our lives now and can be easily seen in ourselves and others as we struggle to face the reality of the Covid virus and its consequences. And since each of us is different we may be in different places in our experiences of grief, sometimes dealing

with more than one of these experiences at a time, sometimes bouncing back and forth between them depending on the day, the hour, the minute.

It is because of this grief and the ways we experience it that we need to take some time to care for our selves spiritually, mentally and emotionally right now. And we can start by inviting Jesus into our homes and lives. “Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is nearly over,” the disciples ask of the risen Jesus they still don’t recognize yet, even though he told them all about himself on the road.

“Stay with us,” we can pray to the risen Christ so that our frustration doesn’t turn into anger or our sadness doesn’t become debilitating. “Stay with us” so that we can face the inevitable



changes with courage and hope. “Stay with us” so that we can take responsibility for our neighbors instead of simply bargaining for our own rights. “Stay with us” so that in our need to get back to a normal that will never be again we don’t rush back to life expecting it to be as it was before.

And when, in prayer or meditation or devotions, we can invite the risen Jesus into our homes and break bread with him and open our hearts to the work only the Spirit can do, it is then that our eyes will be opened to see Christ’s new life working in us and our hearts will burn with the promises given to us on the road of our faith. It’s then, when Christ’s new life enters us, that we can move through the experiences of grief rather than around them and let the Spirit comfort us in grief, calm our fears, and lead us toward acceptance. It’s then that we can be transformed into Jesus’ disciples who see the risen Christ and follow him into new life on the other side.

For there is new and abundant life on the other side of grief. We may not know what it looks like yet, but God has promised it, and in faith we trust that promise as true. Our calling is bigger than any immediate freedom to worship we might demand. It is the call to live even now, even in our grief, in Christ. Until we reach that other side, we can cling to Christ on our road to Emmaus living out the fruit of the Spirit by practicing in all that we do for our neighbors “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.” (Gal 5:22-23)

So hang in there, beloved, and take some time to grieve what you’ve lost. Here are some ideas from my fellow Bishop Laurie (Oregon Synod) **for grieving while social distancing**. But in your grief, never forget that Christ is walking that road with you to new life and love for your neighbor.

In Christ’s love,
Bishop Laurie



Good Morning

*Wishing Y'all
A Beautiful Day
Today!*

God Bless!

Just a note to say hi & Miss ya to all our Bethel friends!! Hope everyone is staying safe & healthy!!!
Joe and Sonja Baumgardner.

EVENTS AT BETHEL

There are a few upcoming events that some may be wondering how/when they will take place. If you have questions about a specific event, please email the church at bethelgf.church@gmail.com or call 761-1543 and we will do our best to answer your questions if a new date has been selected.

Online meetings Men’s Breakfast Electric City Bible and Hope Circle are all meeting on Zoom.

Church Council will meet online in the upcoming days to discuss when to restart services.

Confirmation has been reschedule to June 7th worship service 9:30 am. If we are still not meeting in person, we hold online.

Family Promise Host week May 17th - 24th. Will keep you updated if we are to have a family.

GRACE AND PEACE TO YOU FROM GOD OUR CREATOR, REDEEMER, AND SPIRIT, AND GREETINGS FROM FLATHEAD LUTHERAN BIBLE CAMP!

On Thursday evenings each week during the summer, staff, volunteers, and campers present the Passion Play, which re-enacts the last week of Jesus life. The Passion ends with Jesus' crucifixion, but the narrator announces this: "the good news for all is that the story does not end here."

Storytelling is an integral part of our community. From our news cycles to stand-up comedy to our favorite fictional series, this practice is how we keep track and make sense of who we are and what matters to us. Think about the best stories you know, and the best storytellers you've heard or read. Why do those ones stick out in your memory?



Long before the Bible was written down, people verbally shared the stories that became the foundation of their faith. Maybe they made funny faces at certain parts, added a flair here, a twist there. They balanced incredible imagery and poetry with small, intimate moments of humanity. As life went on, more and more stories were added to the canon. People who heard the stories began to tell them in their own way, and so on. No matter who told the story, though, we believe that, at the core, there is truth and deep meaning. The disciples thought they were at the end of what had been the most important story of their lives. It seemed like the epilogue was going to be "...and they spent the rest of their years in hiding because what they thought--what they hoped would happen--fell through." Yet, suddenly, Jesus is there among them, telling them that his story certainly hasn't ended, and that their stories are really only at, like, the halfway point. Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit on them, and commissions them. Well, not quite all of them. Thomas was missing from this part of the story, and John isn't really interested in telling us where he was. (Last year when I visited, I joked that Thomas must have been out grocery shopping or something when all this happened). Once he gets back, though, the rest of the disciples can't wait to fill him in on the chapter he missed. "We have seen the Lord," they tell him.

Let's pause for a moment, and think back to the gospel text a few weeks ago. The story that day was the death and raising of Lazarus. Thomas makes an appearance in that story, too, and one of significant faith and commitment. Jesus is asked to go to Bethany to heal Lazarus, but the disciples warn--somewhat fairly--that the Jews there were just trying to stone him. Going back there could mean death. But Thomas turns to them and says "Let us also go, that we may die with him" (John 11:16). He trusts Jesus, and maybe he was picking up on Jesus' very human grief. How's that for the person we almost exclusively characterize as "the doubter."

Alright, back to today's story.

John's gospel is the only one where you find this story about Thomas. By including this part, he draws attention to how we process the stories we are a part of, and how we draw out meaning. Thomas has been a part of the same story as the rest of the disciples, yet he is wrestling with what resurrection really means. It's certainly not as straightforward as expected. Verse 25 emphasizes the core of Thomas' dilemma, when he insists on seeing and touching Jesus' wounds. So when Jesus appears to the disciples again a week later, he directs Thomas to do exactly that. Not only does this action confirm that this is the same Jesus who was crucified, but it reveals Jesus as Christ, or "Lord and God," as Thomas exclaims.

Jesus is marked by his experience, and Thomas wants to see that, because it represents the God who takes on death at the hands of an empire and says, "this isn't the end of the story yet. This story will be retold." Resurrection isn't about making things perfect. Jesus doesn't perfectly remedy his body, and as we can see by the surrounding events (in the gospel and in everyday life), the world isn't made perfect by Easter. There is still hurt



and grief and fear. But we have hope that Christ abides with us in those moments, offering peace. Our stories have resurrection, too.

Retelling is a practice of resurrection. That’s why the final two verses are included in the gospel text. We retell “so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.” Jesus commissions the disciples to go out and share the good news with “those who have not seen.” Our faith relies on this story being passed on.

This summer, our curriculum at FLBC is very story-oriented. Our theme verse is Psalm 100:5: “For the Lord is good; God’s steadfast love endures forever, and God’s faithfulness to all generations.” Each day includes a story that exemplifies

God’s love enduring from generation to generation, from Sarah and Abraham, to Joseph and his brothers, to Mary. While these stories may be quickly recognizable to us, many of our campers will not be familiar with them. We are tasked with sharing these stories with them, and discovering together why they matter, by hearing how each camper receives and retells the stories. At the same time, as we learn about these Biblical stories, campers will be participating in their own faith story, and the tales of their day, week, and summer.

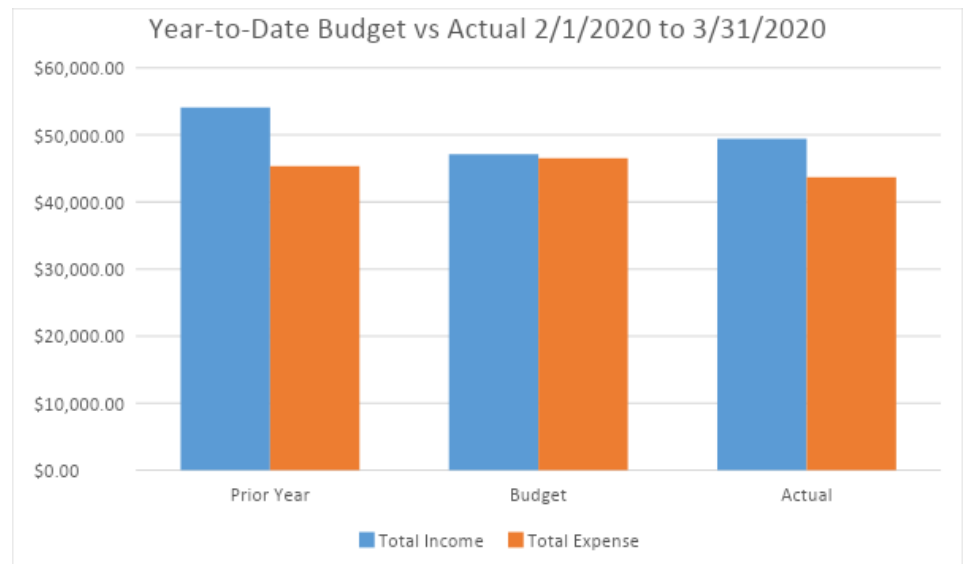
Then, at the end of the week, on Friday mornings, campers participate in the Resurrection Service. As you might expect, this continues the Easter story from the night before. The final words they hear in that service are Jesus’ commission and promise: “And surely, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” My hope is that, as campers begin to depart, they remember those words, and realize that the “always” Jesus is talking about includes them, right now.

We hear and tell stories every single day. They range from the epics of our existence, to the brief exchanges we have with family and friends, along the lines of “did you see so-and-so do such-and-such?” Our lives and our communities are built on the stories we share. Right now, we are in the midst of a challenging chapter. Whenever we reach the next one, we don’t have to be perfect. That’s okay; that’s the beauty of grace. When we retell the story, though, we will encounter significant truths about who we are. My prayer is that recognition of those truths will move the needle of how we center ourselves toward the Truth which is resurrection in Christ.

Our Heartfelt Thanks...

The Bethel Church Council would like to thank our entire congregation for your generous giving during this difficult time of isolation. We are deeply humbled by your loving support of our ministry! At this time of separation, it is comforting to know that we are still a church family and together, we will get through this. We are sharing this graph to let you see the blessings we are so thankful to receive. May the Lord bless you and keep you safe and healthy... until we meet again.

	Prior Year	Budget	Actual	Difference
Total Income	\$ 54,099.69	\$ 47,100.00	\$ 49,444.97	\$ (2,344.97)
Total Expense	\$ 45,377.88	\$ 46,557.00	\$ 43,671.59	\$ 2,885.41
Net	\$ 8,721.81	\$ 543.00	\$ 5,773.38	\$ (5,230.38)



SHARING OUR EXPERIENCE

Since Tami asked us to send her our thoughts about living through this social distancing, I thought I would share with all of you what I think has been one of my greatest gifts during all of this “not seeing one another”. Tami had asked if I could reach out to three couples during this social distancing and just check in with them every now and then to make sure we were all staying connected. I have to say I have the privilege to connecting with three couples - all older (not elderly since they are around my age) and it has been a privilege to touch base with them and get to know them. One of these couples we have known for years. His mom was our church organist when we first joined and I have lots of fun stories about his mom and her little blue Volkswagen Beetle. So I have known this couple for a very long time, but not well, even though John and I have enjoyed their hospitality and wonderful senses of humor. My biggest take on re-connecting with this couple is that they now have a new dog who likes to take walks but is so small none of the dog sweaters would fit - they would fall right off. So is a good thing the weather has warmed up some for doggy’s daily walks.

All three of these couples have family in town so they do not need for me to grocery shop or pick up prescriptions. I basically just call and chat. The other two couples all have some health issues so I make sure I see how they are feeling and if recovery is going well. Thankfully I can report everyone is improving. We chat about family, weather, daily walks, and just everyday life. (It has been mentioned, that it is good that our homes have two TVs and separate spaces.) What we really want to do is sit down and have a cup of coffee and do this in person. Soon, hopefully soon we will be able to do that.

We all agree we miss being in church and seeing everyone. We all agree we can’t wait for the weather to warm up so we can clean flower beds, walk without bundling up, and just enjoy our Montana sunshine. We all agree we are in this together, and because of our faith in the Lord, and the wonderful family we have in Bethel, we too will get through this.


But most important it has given me new friends and new connections. Calling is not a chore, it is a opportunity, a privilege to connect. Thank you Tami for choosing me to make these connections. It has been a wonderful blessing in this time of uncertainty and distancing. God Bless my Bethel family. God Bless Tami and Pastor Steve and all of those who are bringing worship to us on a weekly basis. We (me and all my phone tree new friends) can hardly wait until we can see you and thank you in person.

Thanks again for this wonderful gift you have given me.

Terry Korpela



Electric City BIBLE Study On - Line!



What a great way to connect with one another! Join the Electric City Bible Study on a Zoom conference Tuesday morning at 6:30 am. If you are interested in joining email Laurie Turner at loli51gus@icloud.com and give her an email or cell number and she will send you a link to the meeting.

MEN'S BREAKFAST

Join us for fun and engaging conversation, and insightful discussion of this week's Lectionary texts as we meet through a social distancing approved Zoom video call each Tuesday morning from 7:00 – 8:00 am. Breakfast recipes and ideas will be provided. If you are interested in more information or would like to be added to the call invitation list, click on the email link below and type "breakfast" into the subject line (and then of course press send).

dscholten@dlsconsulting.net



UPCOMING EVENT

**Church Potluck
Date To Be Determined
At Bethel after Sunday Service**

Get your best church potluck recipe ready. When this social distancing storm has passed and we are once again gathering for Sunday Services we will be having a HUGE POTLUCK immediately following our service!

Hope Circle has gone online!
Next meeting
Thursday, May 7th
7:00 PM

If you are interested in connecting with Hope Circle contact Marilyn Carlson
marilyn.j.carlson@gmail.com