

NEWSLETTER – DECEMBER 2019

Pastor's Page

We may think we live in times like no other. There is political and social unrest that seems to be at fever pitch these days. The world economy is up and then it's down and some economists say we are headed toward another great recession. The predictions of environmental collapse bear increasingly more scientific data to support the prognostications. The mass movement of people in the form of refugees and asylum seekers has become an epidemic all over the world. And so as Christmas approaches in 2019 many people are laden with feelings of hopelessness and are fearful of what kind of future lies ahead.

Jesus was born into a world, not unlike ours, in terms of the people feeling hopeless and fearful. The known world of his time was under the control and domination of the Roman Empire, known not only for its accomplishments, but also for its brutality. People think governmental corruption abounds today; well, corruption in Roman government was rampant too with a lot less legal and governmental tools for dealing with it. You think taxes are bad today, in Rome taxes made it impossible for the average person to make life better for themselves. I think it is fair to say, that the people of Rome in Jesus' time were disillusioned maybe more so than people today.

As Jesus entered the world 2000 years ago amid difficult and corrupt circumstances, so he enters our world today. He didn't enter as a mighty military ruler to quash the Roman government putting an end to its brutality and corruption. He did not enter as some charismatic politician promising to make things different and better. He didn't enter as a benevolent wealthy person who could use money to do a lot of good things. Entering his world in those ways (or, entering our world in those ways today) might bring some change for the good, but it would not last. Over time, the same corruption and brutality, the same stomping down of the common person would emerge again, and again, and again. Jesus entered the world of his time (as he does ours today) to call out the evil and corruption that abounds, to speak truth to power. But he did that while also calling for a change of heart (a change that manifests love and compassion) to be the power that would really make a lasting difference.

So it begins with each one of us no matter our place in life. A change of heart is difficult, but it makes a lasting difference. We see today a surge in white supremacy talk, a surge in fogging up the truth with "alternative facts". We see today a growing gap between rich and poor ... the middle class has been shrinking for decades. We see today more homelessness, more drug abuse, more division and polarization among common folk. Jesus enters the fray of all this too, today. Jesus enters calling for our hearts to change. It begins with us. The question for all of us this Christmas is: ***How can Jesus be born in me to change my heart for good; change my heart for good to those I know and love as well as for the world?***

Praying for a change of heart,

Pastor Rick

Pastor on Vacation after Christmas

Starting on December 27th through January 8th Pastor Rick will be on vacation. He and Jill will be traveling to Nashville, TN for an immediate family reunion. In addition to getting together, they will take some time to remember and celebrate Pastor Rick's son, Carson's, life. Carson died on July 10th of this year.

Filling in for Pastor Rick on December 29th and January 5th will be Rev. Carl Mangold. Handling and pastoral concerns that may arise is Rev. Brian Murphy of Holy Cross Lutheran (cell 480-215-6260, office 480-994-4848).

Midweek Advent Services

Midweek Advent worship services are set to begin on Wednesday, December 4th at 6:30 p.m. This year the theme is the first petition of the Lord's Prayer ... *Our Father who art in heaven. We will be using the Aramaic translation of that petition ... O Creator, the One who gave birth to the universe; you are the sacred source of our being.*

This year we will be using the Holden Evening Prayer format. This is the same worship service we use for the Midweek Lenten Services. Giving the meditation each evening will be one of our own Bethany people. The line-up for the services is as follows:

December 4th - *O Creator* Psalm 8:3-4 Giving the meditation is Rob Driscoll

December 11th - *the One who gave birth to the universe* Psalm 33:6 Giving the meditation is Linda Clark

December 18th - *you are the sacred source of our being* Psalm 139:14-16 Giving the meditation is Karen Maglich

Please come and be part of these worship services. This will be the best Christmas preparation you can do.

Confirmation Day

On December 8th five of our young people will be confirmed. Those five students are:

Lundon Aaby

James Hepola

Olivia Hepola

Samuel Wattier

Spencer Wattier

These students have completed a two year course of study. The topics covered are The Sacraments, The Lord's Prayer, Baptism, Old and New Testament, the Creeds and Affirmation of Faith, Lutheran Worship, and The Ten Commandments.

On December 8th, as part of their Confirmation Day, the whole congregation will be saying the Affirmation of Faith that this class wrote. Every class confirmed at Bethany writes a class Affirmation of Faith as the final part of their two year study. The classes are always quite proud of what they write and we use it over again in subsequent worship services over the years to come.

Please be praying for these young adults as they take on greater responsibility in the development of their own faith journey.

Stewardship Corner

From the Pastor ...

As we move toward the end of 2019 we are grateful for the support that Bethany members have demonstrated commitment in keeping our financial ministry operating. While we have not attained our hoped for budgeted income to date for 2019, we have maintained a solid solvency in paying bills, our staff, and remitting our benevolence offering to the Grand Canyon Synod. December, historically, has always been a strong month, sometimes even outpacing out budgeted expectation. Please be praying for that in 2019!

Again, thank you for supporting our ministry, both among ourselves and to the community. If you can help make December a strong financial month for Bethany, your effort will be most appreciated. If we all do a little bit, taken together, it can produce a big end result. Blessings to you all,

Pastor Rick

From the Treasurer....

Here is a look at income and expenses for October and 2019 year to date:

	Oct Actual	Oct Budget	Jan-Oct Actual	Jan-Oct Budget
Income	\$14,339	\$16,845	\$165,710	\$178,960
Expenses	\$16,042	\$18,504	\$169,921	\$180,978

Income was \$1700 below budget, and we are behind by \$13,250 for the first ten months of the year. Expenses are under budget by approximately \$\$2,459 for the month of October and year to date we are under budget by \$11,057.

Weight Watchers will not be renewing their contract for 2020, which will be a loss of \$5460. We have obtained another renter, with the rent of \$1920.

Thank you for your continued support for financial ministry of Bethany.

Respectfully Submitted,
Carla Roberts