

Bethelite

A publication of Bethel Lutheran Church distributed twice monthly.



bethelmadison.org/bethelite

THERE'S MORE HERE THAN MEETS THE EYE

Jesus's Incarnation

Pastor Mike Brown

When it comes to Christmas, almost everyone understands that it is the celebration of Jesus's birth. Christians see in this birth not just a human being but also the incarnation of God. Many see this as unique and unrepeated.

But for Martin Luther, the incarnation wasn't what we might call a "one off" or a "one and done" event, limited only to Jesus. For Luther, the incarnation but gets repeated over and over again. In one of his Christmas sermons, Martin Luther said:

"We see here how Christ, as it were, takes our birth from us and absorbs it in his birth, and grants us his, that in it we might become pure and holy, as if it were our own, so that every Christian may rejoice and glory in Christ's birth as much as if he had himself been born of Mary as was Christ."

Luther taught that incarnation did not happen just once 2,000 years ago and never before and never since, but instead incarnation was present through the entire span

of the universe. The Divine One of eternity, who is beyond space and time, has become incarnate (physically and materially present) within the creation. What this means, good friend, is that you are also part of God's manifestation. In his



birth, Jesus takes on our being so completely that when he is born of Mary, so are we. What we, in the Western church, call "incarnation" and "salvation" has another name in the Eastern church: "divinization" (theosis). We become part of the divine. 2 Peter 1:4 says it plainly, "He has given us something very great and wonderful...you are able to become part of the divine nature!"

The Apostle Paul had the same view of the incarnation as he talked repeatedly about the fact that we are "in Christ". In fact, he uses the phrase more than 164 times. Paul's point, in the words of Richard Rohr, "is that all of us, without exception,

are living inside of a cosmic identity, already in place, that is driving and guiding us forward. We are all en Cristo, willingly or unwillingly, happily or unhappily, consciously or unconsciously."

Paul pointedly asks the followers of Jesus in the city of Corinth, "Do you acknowledge that Jesus Christ is really **in** you?" (2 Corinthians 13:5-6). And he tells the Christians in the region of Galatia

that "God revealed his Son in me" (Galatians 1:16).

In Luke's nativity story, Jesus is called a "light to the nations." But light is less something you actually see than something that allows you to see all other things. Having "faith" in Jesus means seeing the Holy Divine not in one person alone but how God is manifest in the entire cosmos. 🌈

Bethel Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship

Three Services with a Single Purpose

Bethel's three Christmas Eve services are distinct and exceptional. The Family Service at 3:00 PM will feature kid musicians, soloists, and the high energy and fun-filled Christmas songs supported with jazz piano, drums, tuba, guitar, and more. With song lyrics displayed on the Bethel screen on motion video backgrounds, this service will impress with the kind of joyful energy sure to leave every family wanting more. The Contemporary Service at 5 PM will carry the energy on with scintillating renditions of contemporary music as well as traditional Christmas classics. If you want a service you tap your toe to and shout "Amen!" this is the one. The 7 PM Traditional Service will be powered by the expert musicianship of Gary Lewis on Bethel's powerful organ and the Isthmus Brass, Wisconsin's premier brass ensemble.

As unique and spectacular as each service is, each one will be tied together by the message and the single candle held in the hands of each participant. Everyone is encouraged to have one or several candles ready to light for the singing of Silent Night which is a part of each service. Lights get lowered while the natural glow and warmth of the holy flame casts away the darkness. Everyone is also encouraged to dress as you would normally for Christmas Eve. If you are suit and tie or dressy kind of worshiper, then pull it out. Make this a night to remember. If you are a casual attire kind of worshiper, then casual it is. 🎄



A large banner for the Christmas event at Bethel. The background is dark with colorful bokeh lights in shades of blue, yellow, and orange. The word 'Christmas' is written in a large, white, cursive font. Below it, 'AT BETHEL' is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font. At the bottom, there is a dark blue bar with three columns of text: 'CHRISTMAS EVE FAMILY 3PM', 'CHRISTMAS EVE CONTEMPORARY 5PM', and 'CHRISTMAS EVE TRADITIONAL 7PM'. Below the bar, the text 'ONLINE AT WWW.BETHEL-MADISON.ORG/CHRISTMAS' is written in white.

Giving Thanks 2020 Ways in 2020

Together, We Did It!



A heartfelt **Thank You** for Sharing 2,020 Blessings in 2020! You did it! In 17 days the people of Bethel donated over 2,020 personal care items to the Bethel Food Pantry.

From your loving hearts flowed generous gifts of:

Soap: 978 bars

Shampoo: 390 bottles

Deodorant: 395

Other (Toothbrushes, Toothpaste, hand sanitizer, etc):276

GRAND TOTAL: 2039

The Bethel Food Pantry Board, and the hundreds of guests served by the Bethel Food Pantry each year, thank you for demonstrating faith in action. 🌈

Bethel Blue Christmas Service

Monday, Dec 21 at 6pm Online



Many people get “the blues” at some point during the year. Often times these are brought on by the loss of a loved one or other painful experience. When we find ourselves caught in “the blues” it can be difficult, if not

Profiles in Faith



A family that connected with Bethel through two of our events, Back to School Photos and Trunk-or-Treat, are feeling connected. "We were very thankful for Bethel Lutheran Church and for throwing such fun events. It gave our family something to look forward to! Our daughter

got a lot of joy out of being selected as the costume winner."

They were looking for a way to give back. "We were looking for an opportunity to give back and say thanks. We want to instill in our children the value and importance of spreading joy and helping others." Their daughter decided to give part of her \$50 gift certificate from winning the Trunk-or-Treat contest to Bethel's 'Share the Spirit of Christmas with a Neighbor' project giving gifts to residents at MARC-South, a facility that provides day services and personal care to adults with developmental disabilities and the additional challenges of dementia. "Thank you for all that you do to help put smiles on families' faces (even if those smiles are under masks)." 🌈

impossible, to participate in the usual Christmas fanfare with its over-the-top music, cheery decorations, and expressions of “Merry Christmas!” Many might wonder “what’s so merry about it, when my heart is heavy?”

Each year, Bethel offers a quiet, contemplative Christmas worship service for those with a heavy heart. Sharing carols for listening or sing-along, comforting readings from scripture, prayer, silent and spoken, and lighting candles of hope, Bethel’s Blue Christmas provides a safe space for mourners to come together at Christmas time.

Call Pastor Mike or Amy Hartsough for more information at 608.257.3577. 🌈

It's Because of You!

Bethel Horizons Campaign Raises \$3.5 Million

You did it! You all have helped Bethel Horizons to meet our goal of \$3.5 million pledged toward the Horizons 50th Capital Campaign. In March, just as COVID-19's effects became realized, we were nearly \$400,000 away from our goal. Despite the challenges of COVID-19, this \$400,000 in commitments was realized during the past several months. Praise the Lord!

This work would not have been possible without the tireless efforts of our 50th Capital Campaign Committee. This committee was co-chaired by Jack Salzwedel and Dale Mathwich. Members also included Alice Mowbray, Sigrid Knuti and Phil Pielage.

This goal was realized with over 230 people/families providing a pledge in 18 months! This fundraiser is the largest fundraiser by far in Bethel Horizons history and will help set the course for the new Bethel Horizons Master Plan. Over 70% of these pledges have been paid off and the rest of the pledges are due to be paid off by the end of 2022. 🌈

Merry Christmas From A Call to Justice and Mercy

In 1958 when Martin Luther King Jr was stabbed by a deranged woman in Harlem and nearly died, he was visited in the hospital by his mentor, a pastor named Howard Thurman. King asked Thurman, "Where do I go from here?" We might ask the same question.

Thurman was a teacher, pastor, and mentor to leaders of the civil rights movement. He visited Gandhi in India and returned to preach non-violent social activism and to change history. Yet his most remembered advice is this:

"Don't ask what the world needs, ask what makes you come alive, and go do it, because what the world needs are people who have come alive."

Christmas is when we celebrate coming alive. God coming alive in humanity. Coming to live with us. Coming alive in us.

As we face 2021, we ask: "Where do I go from here?" God's answer: Come alive with me.

Lois Landsee to Retire



Bethel's longtime parking lot attendant is set to retire at the end of this year. As familiar a face as there is around Bethel, she was often the first and the last person many people encountered at Bethel. Her last day will be December 31, 2020. Her presence in the parking lot will be missed. While Lois had intended

to retire, as she says "in a year or two," her retirement now is the result of the coronavirus pandemic. For decades, Bethel has relied on the income from the parking lot to fund the attendant's salary. The pandemic has significantly reduced that source of income.

In view of her decades of faithful work in a difficult job, Bethel is inviting cards, letters, and gifts for the Lois parting gift. Please mail your contributions to Bethel Lutheran Church Attention: Pastor Mike, 312 Wisconsin Ave., Madison, WI 53703. Make checks out to Lois Landsee. Bethel letters and gifts will be presented to her at an all staff party (virtual) in her honor in January.



Start by lighting the candles of Christmas that will burn in you – in us as a Bethel community - with joy, hope, courage, peace, grace and love all the year-long.

A quote from Howard Thurman's "A Luminous Darkness," a book he published in the 1960s:

"The fact that 25 years of my life were spent in Florida and in Georgia has left deep scars in my spirit and has rendered me terribly sensitive to the churning abyss separating white from black. Living outside of the region, I am aware of the national span of racial prejudice and the virus of segregation that undermines the vitality of American life. Nevertheless, a strange necessity has been laid upon me to devote my life to the central concern that transcends the walls that divide and would achieve in literal fact what is experienced as literal truth: human life is one and all [people] are members of one another."

Read more about Howard Thurman:
<https://tinyurl.com/y24tzzmr> 🌈



Now Here's Something to Celebrate!

A Financial Update from Treasurer Paul Aspinwall

THANKS. I am thankful for the efforts of Bethel Lutheran Church (BLC) Assistant Treasurer Carrie Arneson, and the Financial Resources (FR) team of Jan Primus, Nate Kublank, Gary Hertel, Tim Semman, and Scott LaMontagne. We have been assisted throughout the year by Accountant Laurie Plum and Accounting Support Specialist Dona Meyer, who stepped in when Penny Duane resigned. The FR team also benefits from the historical knowledge and perspective from Alice Mowbray, Director of Development, and from Pastor Mike Brown.

ACCOUNTING. Carrie has done great work at simplifying and clarifying the accounting reports. While the target is to move towards Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP), BLC is not required to fully adopt GAAP, but we are closing the gap to GAAP, as it were. In November, the Joint Council approved getting a full-time, CPA-qualified Director of Accounting. This was among the recommended improvement from Wegner CPAs consulting people who primarily work with churches and other non-profits.

POLICY. FR team first worked on a revision to the Undesignated Bequests and Memorials policy, and took that to the Joint Council, which approved it early in the year. It was on-time as Bethel has seen several undesignated bequests this year. Mostly they have been added to our general income, but in a few cases where Alice had worked with the people, a portion of the funds were moved to designated areas; the largest example being to use part of a six-figure estate to finish the Bethel Horizons campaign with a \$50,000 gift.

Then, FR, led by Gary Hertel and Nate Kublank, took an Operating Reserve Fund policy and a Savings Fund Policy to the Joint Council this fall, and the Joint Council approved both. For the FR discussion on size of the funds, we consulted with Walter Dewey, head of the Bethel Endowment Foundation (BEF), and agreed with approximately three months of expenses for the

Operating Reserve Fund and six months or more of expenses for the Savings Fund; the Savings Fund will be invested with BEF.

2020 BUDGET – REVENUE. Thank you to all who have remained givers throughout this separated year. Including October, Pledged Income is on track to match the pledged amount. With no in-church since March, Unpledged Income is lagging but could still end up two-thirds of budget. Loose Plate gets hit even harder with no in-church, but even there some people are giving and we could still end up over half of budget. Church use income is the biggest other shortfall, and it is unclear what Christmas giving will be. Parking Lot income is down as several renters had no use for the slot after stay-at-home push; several renters are still paying for slots even as they aren't fully using them. Our budget was made whole on the revenue side with two items – the undesignated bequests mentioned above (over \$200,000 in total), and the Federal Government's Paycheck Protection Program, where most churches applied and were loaned money to keep people employed; we received \$310,000. Application for forgiveness of repayment on the Paycheck Protection Program funds (\$310,000) is underway, and expected to occur.

2020 BUDGET – EXPENSES. The lack of in-church has lowered several expense areas, particularly for food (coffee bar and meals for funerals and weddings), and utilities. In addition, no printing of bulletins has lowered that expense. We are only over on Benevolences, primarily driven by the \$50,000 for the Bethel Horizons campaign that was covered by part of one of the undesignated bequests.

2021 PLEDGES. Even without an in-church pledge Sunday, over 160 of your friends have already pledged. It is not too late, and we look for you to join us as we plan for 2021. 🌈



Realm Corner

Where can I find contact information for other Bethel Members?

Many of you remember the Bethel Directory Book. It was a great resource, where you could find the pictures of your Bethel friends along with their contact information (phone numbers, address, etc.). An asset when the holidays came along and you wanted to send a Christmas card, a card on their birthday or just a little note to say that you were thinking of them.

Where can we find this information, now that we do not have a Bethel Directory? We actually do have a Bethel Member Directory and it is in Realm.

Realm is our church database with all of our member information. If you are a member of Bethel you are in a group in Realm called "Bethel Member Directory". This group gives you access to the contact information of other members, like the old "Bethel Directory Book". The difference is, it is more up to date than the old directory books. If a member family moved right after the book was published people would only have had access to their old address. With Realm, if members keep their profiles updated, by updating it themselves, or sending new information to the Ministry Support Specialist, you will always have access to their current contact information.

Remember one thing, just like the old directory book, people are always welcome to their privacy. Some members opted out of being in the directory book because they did not want their contact information "out there". Now-a-days, "out there" means on the web and the same is true. People may not want their contact information available for everyone.

In Realm, your information is more secure than the old directory book.

First, only members are given a login to access Realm.

Second, only members are put in the group "Bethel Member Directory".

Third, and most importantly, members have the ability to set their own Privacy Settings (the topic of my next Realm tutorial) giving them the control over who, within Bethel, is able to access their contact information. Sometimes, if you are not able to access a member's information, it may be that their privacy setting is set to Staff Only (meaning that only church staff can see their information).

How do you access the contact information for Bethel Members?

1. Sign into Realm using your account email and your password.
2. In the left-hand column, under the Bethel logo... Click on "Groups".
3. Click on "Bethel Member Directory".
4. In the horizontal bar under Bethel Member Directory... Click on "Participants".
5. You can either scroll down through the almost 3000 members or you can use the search bar which is located in the right-hand corner to the left of your name.
6. Type in the persons name and their information will come up. Be sure to spell their name correctly because Realm is very picky. If you are not sure how to spell the last name you can search just the first name and the first letter of their last name and then scroll through. If you don't see what you are looking for, click on more to see more names.

If you would like to SEE how to access member contact information in Realm please watch this video.
<https://tinyurl.com/y5uc7qnh>

If you have any questions, please contact Judy Armelin at judy@bethel-madison.org. 🌈



Seeking the Light

A Christmas Prayer by Henri Nouwen



Lord Jesus,
Master of both the light and the darkness,
send your Holy Spirit upon our preparations for Christmas.
We who have so much to do seek quiet spaces to hear your voice each day.
We who are anxious over many things look forward to your coming among us.
We who are blessed in so many ways long for the complete joy of your kingdom.
We whose hearts are heavy seek the joy of your presence.
We are your people, walking in darkness, yet seeking the light.
To you we say, "Come Lord Jesus!" 🌈

Fireside Chats

Pastor Mike has hosted Fireside Chats each Tuesday evenings to answer questions about the church, the Bible, etc. In October, Fireside Chats started branching out by inviting others into the Fireside Seat. There is so much going-on at and with Bethel that we want to provide the most accurate and up-to-date information and details possible. Continuing through December, other staff, leaders, and ministry volunteers will take a turn responding to your questions especially as they relate to something that they are intimately familiar with. Tuesday Fireside Chats are live-streamed at 7pm on Facebook or viewed on YouTube any time after 8pm. If you have any questions you would like to ask, please send them to christal@bethel-madison.org.

Upcoming Fireside Chat Schedule

Dec 22: Pastor Mike with St. Nicholas 🌈

Men's Current Christian Concern (Thursdays at 8:30am)

Men's Current Christian Concerns continues to meet each Thursday morning via a Zoom video conference. The meeting starts at 8:30am instead of 7am during this temporary rearrangement.

Dec 17 - Partnering With Puerto Rico

Dec 31 - So Long....2020, Thanks For The Nudge

If you have questions, contact Larry Larrabee at 608.249.9982.

The **Men's Friday Book Study** currently meets every Friday from 8-9am via Zoom. The group is discussing *Why Does The World Exist?* by Jim Holt. Contact Larry Larrabee at lar3car2@gmail.com or 608.249.9982 for the Meeting ID and Password.

A Very Bethel Christmas Christmas CD Now Available



Since late summer and with the leadership of Amy Hartsough, Bethel musicians have been secretly and quietly preparing a special gift for you. Since we are unable to enjoy the dynamic music that fills the Bethel sanctuary every

Christmas Eve together in person, Bethel is bringing the music to you! Recording in the sanctuary and in the studio, the following musicians bring you A Very Bethel Christmas: Katie Gerlach, Nathan Gerlach, Patrick Kenney, Amy Hartsough, Linda Warren, Gary Lewis, Alex LeMay, Maddie Melrose, Cindy Terhune Melrose, Benjamin Skroch, Donn Gasner, Doug Terhune, Ian Melrose, Barry Dobbs, Chelsea Lauing, the Bethel Choir, and the Bethel Women's Choir.

This CD is now available and free of charge. To receive your copy, simply email (bethel@bethel-madison.org) or call Bethel (608.257.3577) to request one be mailed to you, come by the church office and pick one up, or simply download it from the Bethel website: www.bethel-madison.org/cd.

Special thanks go to the Bethel Endowment Foundation for providing the funds for this project. 🌈

VIEW MORE OPPORTUNITIES: www.bethel-madison.org/events



BETHEL

LUTHERAN CHURCH

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4 ADVENT

Pastor Mike Brown - Dec 20 at 7:30am, 9am, & 11am

1 CHRISTMAS

Pastor Mike Brown - Dec 27 at 7:30am, 9am, & 11am

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20

- 7:30a Worship Service (live-stream Facebook & YouTube)
- 9:00a Worship Service (viewed on Facebook & YouTube)
- 10:00a Virtual Coffee Hour (Zoom)
- 11:00a Worship Service (live-stream on Facebook & YouTube)

MONDAY, DECEMBER 21

- 9:00a Daily Devotion (Email)
- 12:00p Food Pantry Open 1-3pm (MWF)

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 22

- 9:00a Daily Devotion (Email)
- 7:00p Fireside Chats (Facebook)
- 8:00a Fireside Chats (YouTube)

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 23

- 9:00a Daily Devotion (Email)
- 6:30p Lord's Supper (live-stream Facebook)
- 8:00p Lord's Supper (YouTube)

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24

- 8:30a Men's Current Christian Concerns (Zoom)
- 9:00a Daily Devotion (Email)
- 3:00p Family Service (live-stream on Facebook & YouTube)
- 5:00p Contemporary Service (live-stream on Facebook & YouTube)
- 7:00p Traditional Service (live-stream on Facebook & YouTube)
- 10:00p WKOW-27 Service

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 25 - BUILDING CLOSED

- 9:00a Daily Devotion (Email)
- 10:00a Christmas Day Service (live-stream on Facebook & YouTube)

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 26

- 9:00a Daily Devotion (Email)

PASTORAL STAFF

Pastor Mike Brown - Lead Pastor
pastormikebrown@bethel-madison.org

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