



TOGETHER

STORIES FROM THE BETHLEHEM COMMUNITY

VOLUME 1 NUMBER 2

OCTOBER 2021

MINNEAPOLIS
MINNETONKA



Photo Credit: Lutheran Partners in Global Ministry

FROM PASTOR BEN

Bethlehem is powerful. It's one of the things that I have always loved about this community. Two months ago, an urgent request came from Lutheran Partners in Global Ministry, there was a humanitarian crisis in the Central African Republic (C.A.R.). Because of floods and violence, COVID-19 and surges in food prices, much of the country had been displaced and were living in incredibly tenuous circumstances. LPGM needed to raise \$40,000 in two weeks. The Bethlehem foundation responded immediately with \$5,000 and the outreach team approved an additional gift of \$5,000. That Sunday, I described what was going on in C.A.R. and invited all of you to help provide an additional \$5,000. You gave over \$19,000. I am still overwhelmed by the outpouring of generosity. Thank you, so much. When we come together, Bethlehem is a powerful force for good and healing in this world.

Bethlehem has long cultivated a multi-pronged approach to stewardship. We have our annual

appeals which help to support the day-to-day mission and ministry of the congregation. We have capital campaigns that help to renovate, restore and renew our facilities. They also help to fund new and bigger initiatives and outreach efforts. Then there's the Bethlehem Foundation that faithfully stewards and grows legacy giving so that the future of Bethlehem and its work in God's world is as dynamic as its present. All three avenues for generosity make us stronger. All three avenues help us to be more faithful. All three help us to respond to God's call on our lives to share in the work of healing this world.

When we work together, when we align our efforts and energy, some amazing things can happen. Because all three parts of Bethlehem's stewardship strategy are strong, we are able to do more. We're able to be more generous, we're able to help and respond, and show up for those who need it most when they need it most. Thank you for your ongoing support of what we get to do together in Jesus' name.

YOGANIMALS & DIY SUNDAY SCHOOL

Pastor Heather introduces some fun new activities for children and their families starting this fall.

Often when people hear that I am a pastor of family ministry, their first idea is that I spend a great deal of my time working with children and students. And to some degree, they are correct. Sunday mornings and Wednesday nights bring me into direct contact with kids and students. They are wonderful, curious and full of energy. But my call is to the family or household unit—that means parents, grandparents or caregivers are at the heart of my work.

Did you know that kids spend 90 percent of their time from birth to 18 years of age with their parents or caregivers? And we all know that kids mimic their parents or caregivers, follow their patterns, and share similar interests. That means that parents or caregivers are at the heart of a child's faith formation.

My role then is to walk alongside parents and caregivers to equip them to do the work of faith formation in the home and to provide them with tools to be successful in that. As a Children, Youth and Family team, we are creating new and exciting ways to engage families in the home. After all, home is where the heart is.

Here are some examples:

Recently, I got certified as "Little Lotus Yoga Instructor" and can now teach yoga to kids up to age 12. Starting on September 26, we will be offering "Yoganimals", an in-person yoga class, or families can Zoom in on Sundays in the fall. We will stretch our bodies, learn about animals, and center our hearts on faith. The cost is a donated \$30 and the families will decide where the monetary donations will go.

Families can sign up for a DIY Sunday School: Kids at Home Faith Box! It works like a subscription service, with a nominal fee of \$25 per box (or \$65 for all three). Each box contains 4-5 weeks of faith at home activities including craft materials, science



Pictured above are the great-grandchildren of Bethlehem congregant, IvaneNell Monson, who are having fun with their DIY Sunday School box in New Jersey!

experiments and games all centered on a different bible story. These boxes are available three times a year: Fall, Advent & Christmas, Lent & Easter. We have been sending boxes not only to families in Minnesota, but also to New Jersey, Ohio, and Washington!

Thanks to a generous donation from the Bethlehem Foundation, kids will receive a book bundle about stewardship and generosity on October 10. We have several books, and the words reflect God's gifts of hope, faith and love for the world. By providing parents and caregivers with their very own books, they can read them over and over again. Maybe even learn the stories by heart?

The heart of the matter is this: if kids and students see that faith formation is important to their parents or caregivers, it becomes important to them. That's what is at stake in this world—that the heart of God's love is shared.

HOW BETHLEHEM SHOWS UP



Beacon

INTERFAITH HOUSING COLLABORATIVE

Pastor Meta lifts up how Bethlehem's Beacon Interfaith Leadership Team shows up for this congregational collaborative.

Once a month I gather on Zoom with our congregation's Beacon Leadership Team. There are folks from both Minneapolis and Minnetonka. Emily, our congregational organizer, provides updates and keep us aligned with the work of the whole collaborative. Members of this team share what they know about local housing actions, plans for hosting Families Moving Forward, local support for new affordable housing builds, and opportunities for education and training through Beacon. The agenda is active and abundant. I always learn something new and come away inspired by the work we share with more than 100 congregations.

Other members of this team must feel the same way because we regularly welcome guests, visitors and friends to these meetings! Faithful work has a habit of inviting others to check it out, to find welcome in the mission we share because there are a lot of right ways to help.

This summer I was leading worship when I spotted a familiar face in the pews. Linda and I served on a Beacon Task Force a few years ago. We met with mayors and city planners in the west metro to help Beacon learn which suburban cities were prioritizing affordable housing. After worship, Linda had a few questions about how Bethlehem shows up in the Beacon Collaborative.

How do we organize and prioritize the work? What does our Leadership Team look like and how did it form?

I couldn't wait to invite her to a meeting! I knew the members would welcome her with open arms (figuratively through Zoom), answer her questions, and energize her for the work we all share.

If you'd like to visit a Beacon Leadership Team conversation, let us know. It's not your average committee or Zoom meeting. It's one of the many ways this congregation is helping folks feel known, challenged, changed, and sent for the sake of ministry that matters!



Pastor Meta with Bethlehem community members following a Beacon Interfaith Collaborative meeting.



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CAPITAL CAMPAIGN UPDATE

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WORSHIP TIMES

MINNEAPOLIS
SUNDAYS – 8:45 & 10:15 AM
11:30 AM – COMMUNION
ON THE LAWN

MINNETONKA
SUNDAYS – 9:30 AM
11:30 AM – COMMUNION
ON THE LAWN

LIVESTREAM
SUNDAYS – 10:15 AM
BLCTCMN.CO/STREAM

As of August 30, pledged commitments and non-pledged cash gifts have put us over 70 percent of the way toward our goal of \$2,000,000.

So far we have 319 members of this congregation participating in the capital campaign. We are excited to report that 98 of the 319 participants are new or renewed participants, qualifying for the \$300 added gift from the Bethlehem Foundation. Thank you to all who've generously supported this campaign. If you're not yet participating, we hope you'll consider making a financial commitment to Building a Future with Hope. The campaign continues through October of 2023.

So far \$657,124 has been received and we've put those dollars to work, making monthly mortgage payments, and funding important "plant improvement" projects at both campuses.

We have also already released funds to Global Health Ministries (GHM) that will allow them to begin renovating all 10 of the family housing units at Ejeda Hospital in Madagascar.

Please join us in-person or online on Sunday, Oct 3 immediately following the 10:15 service in Minneapolis. We'll hear from Bethlehem member Kim Dickey from GHM, who will share stories and more information about this project.