

August 2021

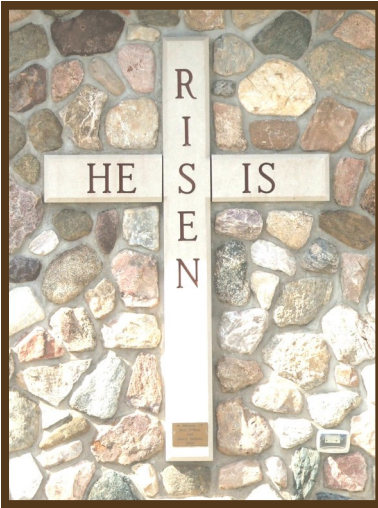
The Bethany Messenger

The newsletter of Bethany Lutheran Church

130 O'Dill Drive, Norway, Michigan 49870 906-563-8472

Rev. Dave Johnson, Pastor

www.norwaybethany.org office e-mail: bethanyoffice@norwaymi.com



Bethany is best known as the village outside of Jerusalem where Lazarus, Mary and Martha lived. The word "Bethany" is from the Hebrew for "place of welcome." Our mission statement reflects the good news of our message to all: "Joyfully we profess our faith through God's unconditional love. Here and now God dwells in all our lives, bears our sins on the cross, and forgives us all."



Discovering Jesus

Vacation Bible School

1:00—2:45 p.m.

Monday-Friday, August 2-6

Ages 5 - 12

Gathering in the Crossroads Pavillion

Join the fun of **Vacation Bible School** this summer through a partnership between Bethany Evangelical Lutheran Church, Grace United Methodist Church, and Norway Evangelical Covenant Church and presented by the Dickinson County branch of Child Evangelism Fellowship, reaching children worldwide since 1937.

Children join an adventure of discovery as they learn about Jesus and his love through Bible stories, songs, and games.



Since 1937

CEF
CHILD EVANGELISM
FELLOWSHIP®

Reaching children worldwide™

One helper per afternoon is needed. Please contact Pastor Dave to volunteer. Call or text him at 651-769-3365 or e-mail ftp565@yahoo.com.

PASTOR'S PROFOUND PONDERINGS

John 12:8 – You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me.”

Katie and I recently rearranged our living room. One of the things about doing this task and having six kids in the house, is first picking up and cleaning everything in advance even before we even begin moving things around. However, the problem with moving everything around is that you start to discover things that have been long since hidden out of sight; things that we once thought were lost to the void, much in the same way socks mysteriously disappear into that same void. Which in turn leads to another round of picking up and cleaning.

However, the worst part of moving things around and rearranging is when it comes time to move the couch (es) is also discovering those long, lost items, but on a much larger scale. We had rearranged the toy boxes, the tables, and all the other things that needed to be moved around so that we could be ready to move the couch. Sweeping, mopping, and vacuuming all along the way. Yet once we moved the couch to the spot we wanted it to be, there was a whole other mess to deal with that was probably as big, if not bigger than the mess of stuff we had just cleaned up. To be honest, the task seemed daunting and self-defeating. How could we even accomplish what we hoped to accomplish when it just seemed like it was never-ending? However, we did it and the space looks so much better for it!

Okay, so how does this connect to the words that Jesus says to His disciples? This is probably one of the most confusing and most abused phrases that Jesus has said. People have taken this to mean that we don't need to worry about the poor because there will always be poor people, we need to focus on Jesus instead. Or others will say that Jesus was talking about His impending death and that the disciples can focus on the poor after He's gone. Yet, what if this was not about any of that? What if this was spoken as a challenge to the disciples?

Just before this, the disciples, or in the Gospel of John, Judas rebukes Mary for using the expensive perfume to anoint Jesus' feet. The argument is that the perfume could be sold and given to the poor. What if Jesus' response was more like this, “You really think that money by selling this perfume is going to cure poverty? It's going to take a lot more than that; you're focused on the wrong things.” I see this not as Jesus saying, “well there are poor people and it'll never get better so why even try.” I see this as Jesus challenging the disciples to do what it takes by following Jesus' example to eradicate poverty.

Isn't this the challenge? Jesus' ministry was all about challenging the proud, the arrogant, and those in power as well as lifting up those who had been beaten and downtrodden. Jesus was working to break down the things that kept us all from being the people that God has created us to be and work towards a better world. Jesus embraced the things that kept us separated from God and each other on the cross so that we could be free to do God's work in this world. This would include challenges such as poverty that is going to take a lot more than throwing money at the problem. It's going to take getting involved in the messiness of peoples' lives in the same way Jesus got involved in ours, carrying the burdens with those who carry heavy burdens in the same way Jesus carried ours, and challenging the powers that oppress and perpetuate the problems instead of fixing them in the same way Jesus stood up for those who could not stand up for themselves.

And yes, the task seems daunting. The moment you make a little bit of progress, you're going to lift up that couch and see an even greater mess. However, let's rise up to the challenge and meet it head on. Let us be the people that this world needs; let us be Jesus to the people in our community in such a way that we can make progress in ending things such as poverty, hunger, and all the things that should not be a reality in the world in which we live.

In Peace



Pastor Dave Johnson

Dear Bethany Congregation:

I want to thank you all for the heartfelt retirement card with thoughtful scripture, message and gift card.

My years at Bethany were so much more than a secretarial job—meeting, greeting, working with so many people and developing friendships. I loved (for the most part-haha) all aspects of my job.

Now, I'm enjoying retirement, spending more time with family and friends, and hoping to travel more.

Thank you all again and I hope to see you soon.

Linda



WEEKLY EVENT CALENDAR

These weekly events provide opportunities for fellowship, learning, and growing in Faith at Bethany Lutheran Church:

Community Coffee, Great Room, every Tuesday at 9 a.m.

Cover Girls, Classroom, every Tuesday at 10 a.m.

Women's Online Bible Study, via Zoom every Wednesday at 10 a.m.

Men's Breakfast and Bible Study, Great Room, every Thursday at 7 a.m.

Women's Bible Study, conference room every Thursday at 10:15 a.m.,
led by Pastor Dave and Pastor Irene White

Bethany Prayer Circle

As Philippians 4:6 says, "in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. Members of Bethany have expressed interest in a "prayer circle," forming a group who privately share prayer requests with each other. If you have ideas on how to move forward with this, please e-mail Pastor Dave, ftp565@yahoo.com.

Looking for Readers and Communion Assistants

Volunteers are now needed to serve as communion assistants and to read the lessons and prayers at worship. Sign up at the in-person worship service or contact the church office to take part in this weekly ministry.

***Would you like to contribute flowers for Sunday worship?***

For a \$17.50 payment to Bethany Ladies Guild, flowers in memory of loved ones or in celebration of special events are set next to the altar and available to take home after worship or on Monday morning. Contact the church office to sign-up to offer flowers.

Blessed communion kits and bulletins are available to pickup every Saturday afternoon from 1:00 – 2:00 and Sunday morning from 8:00 – 8:30 in the Bethany parking lot. Bulletins may also be downloaded from the Bethany web site. Please call Pastor Dave if you want to talk about home communion or the delivery of a communion kit to your door. Call or text him at 651-769-3365 or e-mail ftp565@yahoo.com.

The Grief Share Support hosted by Bethlehem Lutheran Church and First Presbyterian Church in Florence, Wisconsin is meeting every Tuesday from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. at 409 Lake Avenue through September 7. For more information, call the parish office at 715-528-4851.

With gratitude and warm wishes, we say goodbye to Lori Ward who has resigned as our church secretary.

*Happy
Birthday*



*Happy
Anniversary*

| | |
|-------------------|----------|
| Tasha DeBernardi | 08/02/71 |
| Sierra Oman | 08/02/95 |
| Dace Mollick | 08/07/12 |
| Danielle Bjorkman | 08/08/94 |
| Dallas DeBernardi | 08/08/06 |
| Don Losey | 08/20/48 |
| Linda Hawkinson | 08/23/50 |
| Bill Borga | 08/28/57 |
| Olivia Maule | 08/30/00 |

| | | |
|---------------|----------|----------|
| John & Diane | Aune | 08/17/86 |
| Bill & Sally | Borga | 08/19/78 |
| Don & Peggy | Gattra | 08/02/69 |
| Jeff & Corrie | Maule | 08/25/08 |
| David & Julie | VanHolla | 08/17/96 |



A message from Rev. Katherine Finegan,
Bishop,
Northern Great Lakes Synod

"I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."
~John 6:51

Dear Northern Great Lakes Synod,

I remember my First Communion on Easter Sunday of my 5th grade year of school. On the Maundy Thursday previous, our community of faith gathered for a Seder Meal and even though it was Lent, I had an Epiphany. That meal, coupled with the worship experiences of The Three Days (also called The Triduum: Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday with Easter Vigil), connected the dots in my 11-year-old mind to the chronology of the passion story. Calling Holy Communion the "last supper" actually made sense for the first time. One would think that this would have been obvious, but I confess it was not. Until that Maundy Thursday Seder, I didn't quite understand the flow and connectedness of Jesus' last hours. When Easter Sunday came, there were two worship services with a brunch in between. I had to stay for both services, so I went to communion twice that morning. My parents thought that was funny and I remember not really understanding why.

I would guess most of us have a First Communion story. And those who are older will remember when Holy Communion was celebrated far less frequently – annually even, then maybe monthly, then every other week, and for many of our congregations, our pre-pandemic rhythm was weekly.

For the last thirty years or so, our church body has encouraged weekly communion so that people will be reminded with a clear and tangible sign, a sign they can taste and touch, that Christ is with them, and they are forgiven and loved. After all, this news is so good it is just that difficult to believe. We need to be reminded regularly. In the words of Luther, "This is most certainly true."

But then the pandemic made worshipping together in person unwise. And what is Holy Communion without the gathered assembly?

Faithful people tried to answer this question in consideration of our theological traditions and in new practices meant to meet the challenges.

- Some fasted until we could gather again, relying on the presence of Christ in the Word proclaimed, personal devotions, and Bible study through online or written communications.
- Some provided a combination of online worship followed by communion offered in the parking lot, referred to by some as "drive through communion."
- Some encouraged online viewers to provide their own elements at home, bread and juice/wine, which was consumed during an online communion service where people were gathered virtually.
- Some encouraged bringing your own elements to parking lot worship, broadcasted through a short-range FM transmitter, so people were able to worship together, separately in their cars.
- Many gathered for worship outside and came up with creative ways to safely distribute the elements, including the newly invented "communion pods" with wafer and juice prepackaged.



How much of these new practices will continue post-pandemic remains to be seen. As we enter August, our gospel readings will highlight the words of Jesus regarding his identity as the Bread of Life and the importance of eating and drinking in memory of him. Week after week we will hear about Jesus and bread and body and blood.

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I do believe it is not uncommon for weekly preachers to feel like they have nothing left to say about Jesus and bread by the third week.

With our gospel readings so focused on Jesus as the Bread of Life in the coming weeks, and as the Church emerges from pandemic challenges and begins to reestablish former practices, now is a good time to consider again what is Holy Communion and how do we best honor its practice so that what we do and think and is “good, right, and salutary.”

In October, as part of Lifelong Faith Formation, I invite you to join me in reflecting on how our sacramental theology has been challenged or affirmed by pandemic practices and wrestle together over questions that the pandemic has brought to the fore. For example:

Can I record the service and press replay at the consecration part so I can have communion at home at a time when it's more convenient?

Do we still need a pastor if our dad has been blessing the elements at home?

If a TV preacher had tried to offer communion during their program pre-pandemic, there would have been a holy uproar. Why has that changed?

What have people found to be most meaningful? What has fallen short of that?

If I don't have communion every week, or if I missed it for many weeks, will God hold that against me?

What are the pros and cons of having weekly Holy Communion?

What effects has the pandemic had on people's understanding of the presence of Christ in and out of the community of faith?

What is non-negotiable for communion to be holy?

As a kid, I was glad when there wasn't Holy Communion because then there would be a children's sermon – a concession, I'm guessing, to those who were concerned with the length of the worship time. As a young adult, I found that I missed communion if it wasn't offered, but also found the liturgy of the weekly communion service to not leave a whole lot of room for any other creative worship ideas. During the pandemic, I found that I preferred to wait until I could eat and drink with the Body of Christ, that is, my siblings in Christ as the gathered assembly. For me, anything less than that felt, well...less than. And I found it was important to me to give and receive the words “for you” on a one-to-one basis and not collectively.

During the pandemic, our congregations and pastors have done their best to navigate all the questions and decisions that the pandemic demanded. It has not been easy. I have taken comfort in remembering that this is Christ's church and whatever mistakes we made in the last year, God will have another 100 years to correct before the next major pandemic strikes. However, I do believe there is room for us, as people of faith who love our church, to pause and reflect on what we believe are the essential components of our worshipping life. Whether this reflection happens in your own devotions, with a group in your congregations, or as part of our Synod wide conversation, I believe there will be blessing.

Jesus commands us to eat and drink. Add to that the promise of his presence, and we have more than enough reason to desire a spot at the Lord's Table. In good Lutheran tradition, that invites the engagement of both head and heart, we are blessed to wrestle with the question...and ask it again...what does this mean?

Yours in Christ,

Bishop Katherine Finegan



Synod Offers Fun and Interesting Online Classes for Adults

The Northern Great Lakes Synod has announced the upcoming schedule of Lifelong Faith Formation. Open for registration in late July, the online classes for adults begin in September 2021 and include:

Ezekiel Bible Study with Pastor Tommy Richter;

Intermediate Biblical Greek with Pastor Nicole Hanson-Lynn for people who have previously studied Greek;

Walking Together: Companionship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, led by Luanne and Bishop Emeritus Thomas Skrenes;

A Book Study of *Friedman's Fables: "Metaphors for Family Systems Thinking,"* with Pastor Jim Duehring, Assistant to the Bishop (who is also leading a one-session introduction to the approach); and

Holy Communion Post-Pandemic: What, When, Where, Who, and Why, a two-week series with Bishop Katherine Finnegan.



For more information, visit www.nglsynod.org/lifelong-faith-formation or contact Lori Ward at (615) 519-1969 or lori.ward@nglsynod.org.



FORTUNE LAKE
A place of grace in Crystal Falls, MI

FALL FEST OCTOBER 2, 2021 QUILT & FINE ARTS AUCTION FUNDRAISER

Fortune Lake and the Sisters of the Cloth are pleased to announce that Fall Fest is *on* for 2021! The date of the event is Saturday, October 2, and we are planning for a hybrid in-person event with a live auction as well as a virtual silent auction. Our 2021 Fall Fest will include the following:

- **A live in-person auction** of a limited selection of hand-made quilts
- **A Country Store** featuring smaller hand-made items to be purchased on site
- **A draffle** (drawing-affle) for opportunities to win unique prizes and gifts
- **A silent virtual auction** featuring a large selection of homemade quilts and other hand-crafted items, which will begin September 22 and conclude October 2 and is open to anyone, the world over!
- *Tentative: brunch and bake sale*, to be determined at a later date

Please mark your calendars and make plans to participate in the ways you see fit! More information will be shared on the website as details are worked out.

Donations of items are welcome for the auctions, the draffle, and the Country Store! All items must arrive at Fortune Lake by September 1 and must include the donation form which is available online.

<https://fortunelake.org>



Bethany Evangelical Lutheran Church
130 O'Dill Drive
Norway, MI 49870

Return Service Requested

«First Name» «Last Name»

«Street Address»

«City» «State» «Zip Code»

LET US PRAY. The ELCA Prayer Ventures for August 2021 include these suggestions and many more:

Pray for people in our country and around the world who are suffering from persistent drought and extreme heat. Ask God to keep them safe, restore life-giving water to their lands and grant us the wisdom to use our water resources with respect, responsibility, restraint and concern for the present and the future.

Give thanks that God reveals the true Jesus and what he has accomplished for humankind through Scripture and the work of the Spirit. When gathering for the sacrament, give thanks for the clarity of Jesus' words: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh" (John 6:51).

Though we have different gifts, perspectives, life experiences and passions as siblings in Christ and children of God, pray that we will receive and take to heart God's assurance that our faith and baptism unite us to do God's work in the world, together.

Give thanks for the critical work and ministry we accomplish together in the world through Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR). Pray for LDR and its partners as they bring God's hope, healing, renewal and assistance to people whose lives have been disrupted by disasters in the United States and around the world.



**For the full monthly Prayer Ventures throughout the year,
visit <https://www.elca.org/en/Resources/Prayer-Ventures>.**

**For daily devotions written by the people of the
Northern Great Lakes Synod visit: <https://nglsynod.org/prayfaithfully>**