

October 2020

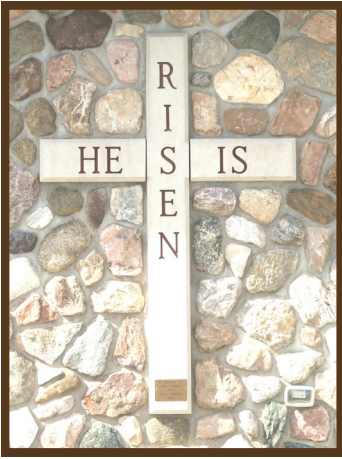
# The Bethany Messenger

*The newsletter of Bethany Lutheran Church*

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

Rev. Dave Johnson, Pastor

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."



## Welcome to Worship

**Bethany Lutheran Church welcomes you at 9 a.m. every Sunday  
for worship indoors and live-streamed online on Facebook.**

**See our web site for a link to the service, which remains available after the worship hour.**

*Lord of the feast, you have prepared a table before all peoples and poured out your life with abundance.  
Call us again to your banquet. Strengthen us by what is honorable, just, and pure, and transform us  
into a people of righteousness and peace, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen*

## Communion Kits and Bulletins available for pickup

For those who worship online, Pastor Dave will continue to bless communion kits which are available for pickup every Saturday afternoon from 1:00 – 2:00 pm and Sunday morning from 8:00 – 8:30 a.m. in the parking lot at Bethany Lutheran Church. This will be done so that anyone worshipping with us online on Sunday morning will have the opportunity to receive communion with the community. Bulletins will also be available for pick-up from Pastor or can be downloaded from the Bethany web site. If you need someone to drop off a communion kit at your doorstep, please let Pastor Dave know by calling or texting him at 651-769-3365 or by e-mailing him at ftp565@yahoo.com.

**Bethany's Mission Focus  
for October, November, and December is  
Adopt A Family**

The **Adopt A Family** program brings hope and joy to children, senior citizens, and families during the holiday season. Sponsors (individuals, families, teams, organizations, businesses) adopt families, providing at least one new toy and one new outfit for each child in the family, as well as a special holiday meal. Many sponsors provide much more!

Your donations are appreciated. Designated gifts received by Bethany will be forwarded to Adopt A Family.



## PASTOR'S PROFOUND PONDERINGS

**“The LORD is merciful and compassionate; he is patient and demonstrates great loyal love.” – Psalm 145:8**

What do you see and how do you see it? These questions are commonly asked in one way or another when you get your vision checked. In my experience, there are a bunch of letters on the wall, and I need to read the letters out loud as far as I possibly can one eye at a time. This is the, “What do you see,” question. Can I see all the letters? Can I see them for what they are? Is there a point in which I can no longer see and/or make out the letters? Then comes the second question, “Which one is better, one or two.” This is the, “How do you see it,” question. Which one is blurrier or which one can you see better? How you answer these questions determine how good your vision is.

For the past several weeks I have been doing a Bible Study video series on Facebook that talks about our perception of God and who God is. The reason for this is because how we see God and what we believe about God influences how we ourselves, our neighbors, and how God works and moves in this world that we live in. For me, the common perception of God that I had growing up was that God was a good, loving God that could not stand the stench of sin. He loved us, but he couldn't be near us because our sinfulness was so repulsive to Him. When God saw humanity, He saw our sin, and it angered Him so.

Within this frame of thinking, we were hell bound creatures because of our wrongdoing; because of this filth that stuck to us like tar. God, even though He loved us, needed us to be perfect before we could enter into His presence. Or in another way, even though I was loved by God, when He looked at me, all he could do is writhe in anger because how horrible and sinful I was. It was only out of love that He didn't put an end to me right then and there. My only hope was Jesus who bore the brunt of God's wrath for my sin for me. He stepped in nailed my sin into Himself so that God wouldn't destroy me with is anger and wrath but destroy Jesus instead.

The reason I bring up this perception is because this is what I grew up with, and many of you may have had this perception taught to you as well. However, I think that this viewpoint blinds us from seeing all of the letters that are projected on the wall. We need new glasses to see God for who He really is; “a God that is merciful and compassionate; patient and demonstrates great loyal love.” We need a new set of lenses to see this God. We need the lens of the cross.

In the cross we see a different God then the one that I was taught about growing up. This God isn't the one that has a problem with humanity. It's humanity that has had a problem with God from the very beginning. Our sinfulness isn't simply a mistake that we as humans made in the Garden of Eden or a “fall” as if someone slipped up. Our sinfulness is an outright rebellion against God. We have distrusted God from the start, and the biblical witness is a story about God trying to show humanity time and again that He can be trusted.

And so the cross becomes the ultimate symbol of love where we can get this lens to see God as He truly is. The things that hurt us, harm us, and kill us in this world are at the hands of our own doing. Our rebellion has left us in a mindset where we look out for number one and where we hurt ourselves, each other, and the world that we live in through the things we say and do, and through the things we don't do. On the cross Jesus enters into your world and mine taking the pain, hurt, suffering, and death that our sin brings into Himself in order that you may see the light and life that God had intended for you from the very beginning of time. Jesus on the cross bears the brunt of a consequence of human rebellion to open your eyes to see who you're really supposed to be, a Child of God. Through the cross, may you see who you are, whose you are, and who this God is that loves you enough to die for you.

In God's Peace,



Pr. Dave

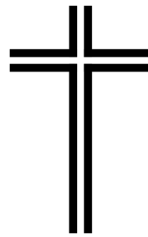
**Bethany Council Members**

Ervin Sparapani—President  
W8347 N Spring Lake Lane  
Iron Mountain, MI 49801  
Phone: 906-774-5013  
[efs@svsu.edu](mailto:efs@svsu.edu)

Sally Borga  
N1611 S. Circle Dr.  
Norway, MI 49870  
Cell Phone: 906-458-7108  
[bborga@norwaymi.com](mailto:bborga@norwaymi.com)

Mike Randall  
N1455 Ball Rd.  
Vulcan, MI 49892  
Phone: 906-282-5759  
[uprandall.mike@gmail.com](mailto:uprandall.mike@gmail.com)

Ray Anderson  
Vice President & Treasurer  
603 Maple Street  
Norway, MI 49870  
Home Phone: (906) 563-7107  
Cell Phone: (906) 282-3503  
[Email: randerson@norwaymi.com](mailto:randerson@norwaymi.com)



Vicki Underhill  
726 Brown Street  
Norway, MI 49870  
Phone: 563-5937  
[vplunderhill118@gmail.com](mailto:vpunderhill118@gmail.com)

**A message from the Congregational Council**

We know that you many of you are unable to be physically present in worship, but your support to continue the mission and ministry of Bethany Lutheran Church is needed and appreciated ! We rely on you and your offerings to continue to have the ability to carry out the mission and ministry of this church. There is still work to be done as God continues to move and act in this world. We are invited to participate in that work! We want to encourage you to either continue putting your weekly offering in your offering envelopes and bring them to church during “communion pick up” on Saturday afternoon or Sunday morning or to mail your offering, and we will keep it stored in the safe until it can be counted and deposited. Thank you for your support.

**Highlights from Council Meeting on September 8, 2020**

The council discussed in-person, indoor worship at great length, including review of regulations set by the Dickinson County Health Department and the guidelines passed by the Crossroads board on use of the building during the pandemic.

Recognizing that within our congregation there are many conflicting opinions on how to meet safely and also attempting to conform to the DCHD directions, we decided to adhere to the social distancing of 6 feet or greater, with the exception of people from the same household, and wearing masks until/unless people are seated. Singing during the worship service is allowed with all participants wearing their masks. (A detailed overview of the protocols was e-mailed to the congregation in early September and is available during communion kit distribution and at the entrance to the Great Room for worship.)

In establishing the protocols, we have attempted to meet the needs of congregation while recognizing the need for safety. We also recognized the reality that members of our congregation are of many different opinions on the various aspects of these decisions. We ask that everyone understand that our goal is to meet in-person safely and to do that we need to consider all viewpoints in our protocols. Compromise without sacrificing safety was foremost in our decisions. As the situation changes, so can our protocols. We want to take a step forward safely and will continue to monitor our compliance and options.

Bethany and Parish budgets for 2021 are under development.

A total of four new members of the congregational council will be needed for 2021, due to the resignations of Kathy Hart and Steve Perucco and the conclusion of the terms of Erv Sparapani and Vicki Underhill.



## Uncertain Times

by Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton

Between 1527 and 1529, Martin Luther wrote and composed his famous hymn “A Mighty fortress Is Our God.” He based the text of this hymn on Psalm 46: “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (verse 1).

Luther knew about trouble. He had been excommunicated by the church and declared an outlaw by the emperor. The bubonic plague had returned to Wittenberg, Germany. His 7-month-old daughter, Elisabeth, had died. Western Europe was under attack by the Ottoman Empire. Civil unrest resulted in the Peasants War, which was brutally crushed by the nobility.

Luther lived in uncertain times.

It’s unlikely that Luther could see with certainty in 1527 how his work would turn out. The Reformation wasn’t a glorious march of unbroken progress. It was messy. The “Reformers” argued with each other. It was violent. It had its share of hateful and divisive rhetoric. Anathemas were levied by all sides against each other. Even at the end of his life, Luther wondered if he had been right, if he had been faithful to the word.

If it wasn’t apparent to Luther and others what was happening, it was clear that something *was* happening. The world was changing. Political and religious turmoil wasn’t going on in a vacuum. This was a time of new technology—the printing press—and scientific discovery—Copernicus kicking Earth out of the center of the solar system (Luther wasn’t impressed). What new world was emerging? What new thing was God calling into being? How was the Spirit calling and shaping the church to be a clear witness?

Five hundred years later we find ourselves in uncertain times. We are in the middle of a pandemic. We have been sheltering in place for months. Thousands have been newly awakened to racial inequity in our society and are marching for change. Education has been disrupted. Worship has taken on new forms. Our homes have become our offices and classrooms. The world is changing and the rate of change in the past five months is unprecedented.

Ours is also a time of new technology and scientific discovery. We are wired and plugged in. Communication is instantaneous. Our cellphones can be used to keep us connected and informed. They can also be used to divide and deceive.

Something new is emerging. The world is changing. We will not be able to return to the world of the pre-COVID days. Change brings loss. Loss brings grief. Yes, we believe in the Resurrection, that God brings life out of death, something new out of the old. But it can be painful, especially when we’re in the middle of it and can’t see clearly how it will all turn out.

Psalm 46 captures the turmoil of Luther’s day and of ours: “The nations are in uproar, the kingdoms totter” (6). It describes a changing earth, shaking mountains and roaring waters.

But Psalm 46 is also a song of faith—God’s and ours. God is faithful to God’s promises and to God’s people. God is a mighty fortress who fights by our side with weapons of the Spirit. Luther ends the hymn by declaring “Were they to take our house, goods, honor, child, or spouse, though life be wrenched away, they cannot win the day. The kingdom’s ours forever!” (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, 504).

I believe we are on the brink of this new thing that God is bringing about. We don’t need to see how it will all unfold. We just need to be ready and willing to answer God’s call and be shaped by the Spirit. Secure in God who is our refuge and strength, we can be bold in our witness. God is activating each of us to invite more people into the way of Jesus—the way of grace and mercy, the way of justice and peace, the way of life.



*Arlene and Rod Walter, Tim, Barbara, Mike Day; and  
Ava Johnson Mitchell (Pastor Dave's Aunt).*

If you have an update or addition to our prayer list,  
please call or e-mail the Bethany office.

Thank you!

Tune in to Pastor Dave's weekly 10-minute devotion, posted every Wednesday on the Bethany Facebook Page.

The Daily Devotion Booklets "Christ in Our Home" are available at Bethany. Pick one up on Saturday afternoon or Sunday morning or call the church office at 906-563-8472 to have one mailed to you.



## HAPPY BIRTHDAY

10/01 Ada VanHolla

10/05 Amber Schiltz

10/11 Angela Koprowski

10/12/77 Dawn Heigl

10/22 Ray Anderson

## *Join the conversation and fellowship*

**Members and friends of Bethany are invited to**

**Community Coffee**, every Tuesday at 9 a.m. at Bethany

**Men's Breakfast and Bible Study**, every Thursday at 7 a.m. at Bethany

**Pub Theology**, every Thursday at 6:30 p.m. at Calvary Lutheran Church



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

## **Return Service Requested**

### ***Let Us Pray. The ELCA Prayer Ventures for October 2020 include these suggestions and many more:***

As we remember Francis of Assisi, renewer of the church (1181-1226) , let us pray that we will greet each day with a sense of awe, gratitude and respect for creation, for the organisms and creatures that inhabit the earth and for humanity in all its diversity and complexity — the handiwork of God.



Ask God to strengthen our faith and deepen our roots in the good news of Jesus Christ. Pray that we will draw on God's strength through our faith, especially when we grow weary or doubtful in the face of the world's challenges, criticism and ridicule.

Remember in prayer those who have lost jobs or are furloughed from work, that they will have the resources and support to meet their daily needs as they seek employment. Pray that our congregations will be welcoming, supportive and ready to help, concerned for their dignity and their spiritual, physical and emotional needs.

Praise God for the gift of grace that sets us free to change and be changed, to form and reform as the body of Christ for the sake of humanity, serving our neighbor and doing God's work in the world.

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