

December 2020

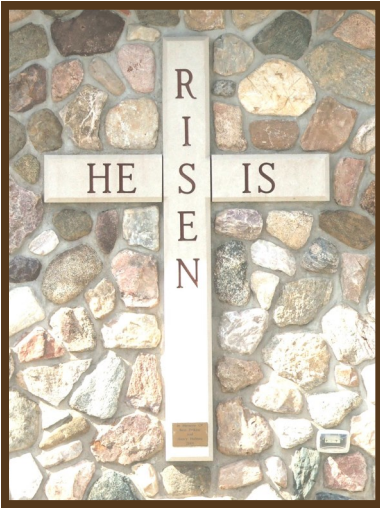
# The Bethany Messenger

*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.”

---

*Stir up our hearts, O God, to prepare the way for the coming of your Son. Give us courage and faith to proclaim, in word and deed, the good news of your love and grace. May we, with Mary, sing your praises and magnify your name. Renew our vision that we may do your will Amen.*

**Bethany Lutheran Church will offer online worship services  
during Advent at 6:30 p.m. on December 9 and 16  
and  
at 2:00 p.m. on Christmas Eve, December 24.**

Worship will be live streamed on Bethany's Facebook Page, where it will be posted for viewing at any time afterwards. Link to the worship services from Bethany's website or go directly to Facebook: <https://www.norwaybethany.org> or <https://www.facebook.com/BethanyLutheranChurchElca>.



**Northern Great Lakes Synod Worship to be Broadcast on Channel 6**

**Christmas Eve: WLUC at 4 p.m. and FOX-UP at 7 p.m.**

**Christmas Day: FOX-UP at 9 a.m. ET and WLUC at 12 noon ET**

This professionally produced program, taped at the television station, will feature pastors and lay leaders from across the synod and will be available on DVD. What a generous gift from Channel 6!

**Mark Your Calendars!**

**The Annual Meeting of Bethany Lutheran Church will be held online  
on Saturday, January 30 , 2021 at 4:00 p.m.**

**Committee reports are due in the church office by January 8.**

**This important meeting will be held online via Zoom this year.  
All members with e-mail addresses will receive the link to the meeting.**

## PASTOR'S PROFOUND PONDERINGS

*Romans 5:3-5 – <sup>3</sup> Not only this, but we also rejoice in sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, <sup>4</sup> and endurance, character, and character, hope. <sup>5</sup> And hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.*

This has been quite a year, hasn't it? From wildfires to a record year hurricane season, to a global pandemic with its stay at home orders and encouragements not to travel and to avoid get-togethers for family traditions. The list of normalcies stripped away goes well beyond these, of course. If there is anything that can be said about the year of 2020, it is that, for most people, this has been a year of trials and suffering.

Now don't think that this is going to be one of those pastoral letters that says we should see this year of suffering as a blessing and that we should see all suffering as a blessing. No, to be blunt, suffering sucks. Now we can find blessings while we are undergoing suffering and/or trials, but I have a hard time calling much of this tragedy in 2020 a blessing. I cannot bring myself to minimize the suffering we have witnessed. So as the year wraps up, I want to take a moment and call 2020 out for what it is and talk about why I still hold out for hope.

Let's not beat around the bush, this has been an awful year. More specifically the battle with Covid-19 and how it has forced us to shut down and isolate. Sure, maybe many of us were able to spend more time with immediate family, however, the threat of the virus made it so that we were unable to see loved ones who were most vulnerable. Gatherings were dangerous and hugs could be hazardous. Contact was made at a distance or via electronic communications, hospitals have been full of patients with no family able to visit, people breathing their last with no family to hold their hand, and nursing homes had residents visit with family looking in only from the outside. This virus brought suffering to so many in so many different ways.

So where is this hope that does not disappoint? Isn't that what Paul says, suffering produces hope? Sure there's perseverance, endurance, and character in between, but isn't Paul saying that in suffering there is hope? When I talk about hope, I'm not simply talking about the hope we have that a vaccine will be widely available come spring, I'm talking about a hope that goes much deeper that helps us endure the trials and sufferings that we all face in this life.

Isn't this the message of Christmas; that hope has come down to us all? The reality is that we all will face hardship in this life, and at times we will endure suffering. The hope for you is that God does not leave you alone. God does not abandon you in your time of need. In fact, He fully embraces your life so much that He is born into your world to set you free. The Jesus that was born in a stable and placed in a manger is the same Jesus that bears your life with you and takes the worst of it and nails it into Himself on the cross.

The hope that comes in the midst of suffering is the hope that came down that first Christmas. God has indeed seeing your trials, your tribulations, and your sufferings, and He has come down to rescue you. The path to the cross is a path that leads to the death of death itself. It is a path that leads to the death of the things that crush you and try to destroy you in this world. It is a path that leads you to new life and hope. 2020 has been an awful year, but we have a hope; a hope that does not disappoint us. Why? We have a God who entered into the worst of our lives to carry us — to carry **you** — through safely to the other side.

In God's Peace,



Pr. Dave

## Christmas Giving Update

**Please make your donation to our annual Christmas by next week.  
You can mail to your contribution to Bethany at 120 O'Dill Drive, 49870;  
put it in offering plate on Sunday; or  
drop off with Pastor Dave in the parking lot on Saturday between 1 and 2 p.m.  
during the distribution of communion kits.**

In light of the current COVID health and safety concerns, we have partnered with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services to provide gift cards to Walmart and Econo Foods for Christmas giving this year. The staff of MDHHS will then use the Walmart gift cards to do shopping as needed for their clientele. The Econo Foods gift cards will be provided to families in need. While this isn't quite the same as shopping for families, we and the MDHHS determined this would be the best use of our donations and would honor their current contact restrictions for clients and volunteers.

Thank you all for your continued support of this mission. MDHHS indicated that the need is great this year due to current circumstances. They are grateful for our continued support. Wishing you all a happy and healthy Christmas season!

— Norada Peruco and Amber Schlitz



### **Fellowship, Learning, and Growing in Faith: Bethany's Women's Bible Study**

Women of Bethany Lutheran Church are invited to join a weekly Bible Study which meets online every Wednesday at 10:00 a.m. Barb Rice is leading our study, which is based on the the ELCA series created to celebrate its 50th anniversary of women in ordained ministry. Women of the Bible who are featured in the materials are Ruth and Naomi, Mary Magdalene, Old Testament prophet Huldah, Miriam, Elizabeth, and Mary, mother of our Lord, among others. E-mail the church office if you want to receive a copy of the study guide in the mail. Contact Barb for more information at 906-396-3742, cell phone, or [barb.strong.rice@gmail.com](mailto:barb.strong.rice@gmail.com).

### **Women of the ELCA hosts Blue Christmas Service on Dec. 21, at 7:00 p.m.**

Advance registration is needed. for this special worship which addresses the sadness many feel during the holidays, while promoting healing For more information, visit <https://www.womenoftheelca.org> or watch for an e-mail from the church office with the link to registration.

## Member Assistance and Participation Needed on Congregational Council

Dear Bethany Congregation,

The Congregation Council is in need of your assistance and participation. At present, the Council consists of five members (Erv Sparapani, President, Ray Anderson, Vice President, Vicki Underhill, Sally Borga, Mike Randall), and Pastor Dave. Two members resigned over the summer, and the Council has not been able to replace them. Erv Sparapani and Vicki Underhill will be going off the Council this January, 2021, which means we need at least four members (for the annual meeting in January) to volunteer to serve on the Council. Further, Sally Borga and Mike Randall have one more year on the Council. Sally and Mike will be off the Council in January, 2022, a year from now, which means, if no one steps forward, the only person left on the Council, with Pastor Dave, will be Ray.

The hard truth of the matter is, if no one comes forward to serve on the Council, in two years, or less, Bethany will, effectively, not have a Council.

These have been difficult times for all of us. We are constantly trying to determine how to navigate this new territory, and maintain a viable, functioning Bethany church family.

In order to make appropriate decisions for the Congregation, a Council is probably necessary. But, unless enough people come forward to serve on the Council, decisions are difficult to make.

If you are willing to serve on the Council, please contact Pastor Dave, or any member of the current Council.

**Bethany needs you! The Congregation Council NEEDS YOU!**

Please consider serving.

In God's peace,

Erv Sparapani

## Bethany Congregation Council

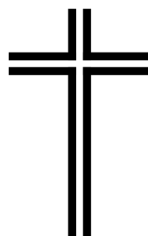
*The next council meeting is Thursday, December 10 at 6:30 p.m. via Zoom*

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:vplunderhill118@gmail.com)

## The ELCA Parish of Bethany and Calvary Seeks Treasurer

The ELCA Parish, which serves the shared ventures of Bethany and Calvary, is seeking a new treasurer. Thank you for your prayerful consideration of taking on this important ministry. As Bill Rice has shared with us for many months, he is resigning from the position. We give thanks and praise to God for Bill's lengthy, faithful service to the parish and express appreciation to him for his outstanding work. He has offered to work closely with the new treasurer on a smooth transition. Talk to Pastor Dave if you are willing to serve the church as Parish Treasurer.



**Turning to God, our Savior and Redeemer, we lift up prayers for the Family of Donna Anderson, Ruby Burrus, Arlene, Pam Nelson, Joy, Montee, Tim, Barbara, Ava Johnson Mitchell, and all who are having difficulties with being shut in for months because of Covid -19.**

If you have an update to our prayer list, please contact the church office.



### HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Don and Pat Losey, December 30

### HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Archer Koprowski, December 01

Holly Mattia, December 05

Mason Trudeau, December 05

Lisa Anderson, December 11

Myah Anderson, December 11

Katherine Hart, December 12

Don Gattra, December 21

Kainsley Mollick, December 24

### *Join the conversation and fellowship*

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

**Women's Online Bible Study** via Zoom every Wednesday at 10 a.m. Contact church office for link.  
(Not meeting on December 23 and 30)

**Men's Breakfast and Bible Study**, every Thursday at 7 a.m. at Bethany  
(Not meeting on December 24 and 31)

**Social Night** returns January 5, meeting biweekly online on Wednesdays at 5:30 p.m. Details coming soon.



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

## **Return Service Requested**



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

**Link to the worship services from Bethany's website or go directly to Facebook:**

**<https://www.norwaybethany.org> or**

**<https://www.facebook.com/BethanyLutheranChurchElca>.**

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 know by calling or texting 651-769-3365 or e-mailing ftp565@yahoo.com.