

Bethlehem Star

The Newsletter of Bethlehem Lutheran Church
Los Alamitos, California



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*From the
Pastor*



Have you ever been in love? Do you have a love story you like to share with others? Have you ever thought about Christmas as the beginning of the greatest love story ever to be told? Over the history of humankind love story after love story has been lived and shared. But the greatest love story ever to be experienced began on that first Christmas day when the child Jesus was born in that stable in Bethlehem. What an unexpected beginning this love story had with a long donkey ride to an already over crowded town of Bethlehem, a stable as the only place to give birth, a manger as an infant's bed, a bright star in the sky, an angel's message to some shepherds in the field, and three wise men traveling to bow before this manger child. A love story that began in such an unexpected way that the people in that crowded little town never realized it was even taking place. But thanks be to God that we have the beginning of this great love story.

But thanks be to God that we also have the rest of this great love story for without the rest of this unexpected love story Christmas would not be the same. For as unexpected as this story began, it's ending was no different. The manger child became the man who would walk the steps of life, touch so many lives, be hailed as king, but was quickly crucified to suffer and die on the cross for those he loved. But, this love story didn't end on that tragic note for one more unexpected twist was yet to come. In the same unexpected way this story began so it would conclude when the angel had one more message to share, "He is not here. He is risen!"

And guess what? This love story is all about you and me. What we now prepare for is to celebrate the beginning of the greatest love story ever. A story of God loving us so much that He would send His Son, so that we might live with Him forever.

I invite you to join your worship family during the Advent season as we prepare to celebrate the coming of our Lord and as we gather on Christmas Eve to celebrate the Good News of God's great gift of love to us.

Peace to all this Christmas,
Pastor Mark Will



Come Join Us

Everyone is invited to join Pastor and Kathleen at the parsonage on Sunday, December 16th, for a Christmas/Advent open house. The open house will take place from 2 to 5 p.m.

Christmas Eve Worship Schedule

Join our worship family as we celebrate the birth of our Lord on Christmas eve.

7:00 p.m. - Candlelight worship

10:00 p.m. - Candlelight and Communion worship

Our early service will include special music from our choir and a harp solo. The late service will include special music from vocal and harp soloists. Both service will include the singing of many favorite Christmas hymns and conclude with the candle lighting.

Installation Service for Pastor Will

You are invited to join our worship family on December 9th at 10 a.m. for Pastor's installation service. Bishop Murray Finck will preside and preach at the service. The service will be followed by a luncheon reception. For more information about the luncheon please contact Marianne Sakowski. Come and take part in this special day for Pastor Will and our congregation.

Pastor's Special Needs Collection

Because we want to focus on the annual Angel Tree gift collection for WE CARE, we will not have a special item of the month in December. Thanks for your contributions to the needs collection each Month. In November we once again succeeded our goal for can vegetables and fruit. Each month together we have made a real difference in helping those in need of food. Watch for information about our next collection in the January newsletter.

Newsletter Deadline

Monday, Dec. 17th
(3rd Monday in the month)
Please submit your articles by email or disc

Church Council Meeting

Wednesday, December 9, 2007
7:00 pm
Fireside Room

Property Committee

Thank you to the 19 people who helped with the November 3rd workparty. A list of the participants is posted on the patio bulletin board. Many projects were worked on at the church and the parsonage. These accomplishments make the Bethlehem properties more attractive, safer and correct problems before they become major expenses. Thanks also to WELCA and PaperRollers for funding the trimming and lacing of two trees in the backyard of the parsonage. It's really bright back there now!!

Get A Grip

Are you one of the multitude who needs to *Get a Grip* in one or more areas of your life?

Perhaps you are someone who makes New Year's resolutions to lose those extra pounds, get your finances in order, or have your schedule run smoothly?

We have all had times in our life when we have felt totally OUT OF CONTROL!!

If this sounds like you, plan to join our Small Group six-week session. Using Bill Hybelos' book, *Finding Balance in your Daily Life--Getting A Grip* you will learn how to use biblical insights and practical steps to secure a Christ-centered life that will get you into control in five vital areas of your life - your time, your health, your finances, your spiritual life and your relationships. This group will begin Monday, January 14 at 7 p.m. at the home of Alice Roop

Looking forward to seeing you there!!!!

We Care Christmas Gift Program

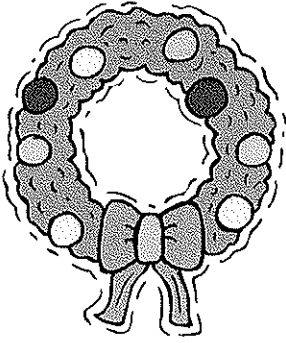
Christmas season is upon us again!! WE CARE is again providing Holiday gifts and foods for our community's needy and are asking again for our help.

In past years WE CARE has provided us with names and gift ideas for our Giving Tree. However, this year WE CARE is selecting families slightly differently and instead of shopping, wrapping and getting back to church on time we are being asked to purchase **gift cards only** - any denomination is welcomed!

Suggested stores include (but not limited to) Target, Walmart, Payless Shoes, K-Mart, Albertsen's, Food-4-Less, Stater Bros, or Von's.

There will be a gift box in the narthex, in lieu of the tree, to place your gift cards.

Thank you again for all your assistance in the past and for your help with gift cards this year.



PARISH LIFE COMMITTEE

INVITES

YOU AND FAMILY TO BETHLEHEM'S

**ANNUAL
CHRISTMAS TREE TRIMMING**

**AND
CHILI LUNCH**

**WHEN: SAT. DEC. 1, 2007
TIME: 10:00 A.M.**



Pacifica Women of the ELCA 20th Annual Convention
November 2,3,4 2007 Clarion Hotel, Anaheim
“Chocolate Buffet-Connecting Women in Christ”

Theme Verse: *“Taste and see that the Lord is good.” Psalms 34:8*

There was a total of 111 people present at convention: 36 Delegates, 4 executive officers, 4 SWO (Synodical Women Organization) board members, 1 church wide member, 9 honored guests and 57 visitors.

The convention goals were to conduct the business of the Synodical Women’s Organization so that the purposes of the Women of the ELCA are accomplished to the glory of God, to help women understand that only as we live in the spirit can we fulfill the will of God in our lives and to encourage the women to use their gifts of the spirit and branch out to others in love. The Women of the E.L.C.A.’s mission is to mobilize women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ.

Three members of Bethlehem Lutheran attended this convention. Christina Watson, our WELCA President, served on the Committee on Minutes and was our convention delegate. Andrea Campbell, who is on the Synodical Board as the treasurer and Dianna Reynolds, convention visitor.

Registration began at 3:00pm on Friday. Dianna & I were roommates and we used time before and after dinner to plan our own Bethlehem’s W.E.L.C.A.’s 2008 year. The Opening Worship, led by Pastor Maria, at 6:30 followed dinner and Charon Schalge led Bible Study. Charon led an excellent study based on Ephesians 4:13 “until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” The women discussed S.H.A.P.E. What is it? How does it affect me? S=Spiritual Gifts, H=Heart, A=Abilities, P=Personality, E=Experiences. The women enjoyed round table discussion along with a fill-in-the-blank worksheet. No convention business was conducted on Friday.

There was a mix up with the hotel so the most of the convention was held in a big tent that was erected on the parking lot. The food was excellent considering it had to be hauled and set up in a tent. Unfortunately, many of the women were uncomfortable - no heaters were available and the traffic noise from Harbor Blvd. made it difficult to hear.

Saturday morning after breakfast Bishop Murray Finck updated us with his report:

- Lutheran Disaster Relief is working as a second response team for the Calif. Wildfires and is still working with the Katrina victims
- The State of the Church – 17 different languages are spoken in the Lutheran Church in the Pacifica Synod.
- A new building is almost finished in Santa Ana “Center for Mission and Learning” includes a storage room for ELCA., meeting rooms, labyrinth in the courtyard and an Augsburg Bookstore.
- Synod Statistics: 52-specialized ministry, 302-rostered leaders, 119-rostered retired clergy, 18-rostered associates in ministry, 6-rostered diaconal ministers, 118-rostered clergy called by congregation, 1-ordination in 2007 (2 more next month), 1-consecration & 1-commissioning
- Slides of his trip to Africa – Ethiopia is our companion Synod with 77 pastors and 775 congregations. Ethiopia is the 3rd poorest country in the world.

Bishop Finck closed with his own CHOCOLATE interpretation: C is for Christ Community H is for Holocaust O is for Overwhelming C is for Care O is for opportunities L is for Labors of Love A is for Africa T is for Tanzania E is for Ethiopia.

A liturgical dance was performed to “Amazing Grace”. The dancer offered a glimpse of what is meant by the word *grace* in both music and dance.

Elections were held and the results are: Eunice Hansen remains the President for another two years, and Andrea Campbell remains Treasurer. The rest of the board members are Viola Angebrandt, Juli Patten, Sue Bodenschatz, Lynda McClennan, Theresa Moore, Karen Ronchetti, Inga Sanders and Violet Quist.

Pastor Don Haven from Lutheran World Relief gave his report:

- LWR serves 35 countries
- \$10 Million dollars was distributed to 17 countries this year.
- Thirteen hundred tons of goods were given worldwide
- Thank you to the women for all their support
- No more toothpaste due to possible toxins.

Pastor Judith Miller spoke about a new ministry “Cherish the Children” which address the sexual exploitation of children in California and Hawaii.

Our Church wide Representative, Geneva Wallace, from Maryland updated us on what was happening at the Church wide level and informed us that the Lutheran Church is the co-sponsor of the Healthy Heart Bill that is now before Congress.

I was called upon to lead the devotion while the praise offering was collected. Margaret Hangartner gave me a beautiful devotion to read based on a prayer of Maya Angelou.

The Love Gifts were presented to the “Village of Hope” which started 45 years ago. This organization has 9 facilities which are transitional shelters. They serve approximately 35,000 from Orange County per year, 75% are families with children. 80% of the \$18 Million raised each year comes from individuals.

Four workshops were offered this year: Immigration, But All May Worship, Card-making for the Military and Care-giving. Andrea attended the Care-giving workshop given by Wanda Bledsoe: she shared her own personal experience and said that prayer, friends and taking time for yourself were the most important things for effective care giving. Dianna and I attended the Card-making for the military that are serving overseas and also the But All May Worship. Pastor Dawn Anderson is a mother of 4 children, 3 of which are autistic. She gave a heart wrenching talk about being a mother of 3 autistic children and how she is working to make Church Services more “handicapped” friendly. We did not attend the immigration workshop but we heard it was well received.

A silent auction was held Saturday with proceeds going to the Scholarship Fund. \$2112.00 was raised from the auction. Thank you to Cheri Dobberteen, Charlotte Driskill and Marianne Sakowski who donated gift items to Bethlehem’s Coffee, Tea and Chocolate and Christmas Baskets. Our Christmas basket went for over \$100.00; the Coffee, Tea and Chocolate for \$75.00.

The Saturday evening banquet opened with wishing Pastor Maria “Happy Birthday”. The tent was decorated with festive party decorations. After dinner Lin Baesler “Ladystoryteller” entertained all the ladies present.

Sunday morning, after breakfast, Charon Schalge continued the bible study, S.H.A.P.E Summarizing that “we are all remarkable creations made up of Passions, Talents, Experiences, Temperaments and Spiritual Gifts.”

Andrea Campbell presented the 2008 budget and the report of the Treasurer. Eunice Hanson gave her presidential report. We finished up the rest of our business with the installation of officers and the discussion of the resolutions.

Two resolutions were passed:

- “Resolved that each year a portion (25%) of our convention offerings would be sent to Ethiopia Makanea Jesus Synod... and that we would encourage them to use it to further women’s education in seminary”
- “Resolved that the Pacifica Synodical Women of the E.L.C.A. will adopt the Cherish Our Children Initiative...and that we have a workshop on this topic at the 2008 convention.”

Details of these resolutions will be published in the next Pacific Partners.

The closing of the 20th Annual Gathering included prayer and worship. The date for next year’s convention was discussed. Halloween falls on the Friday when the convention would usually begin, so the board will have to decide which weekend in November 2008 would be best. The location will be somewhere in the San Diego area. We were sent off “In His Service”.

Thank you for allowing me to attend this gathering as your delegate. I’ll close with these ABC’s:

Accept differences Be kind Count your blessing Dream Express thanks Forgive Give freely Harm no one Imagine more Jettison anger Keep confidences Love truly Master something Nurture hope Open your mind Pack lightly Quell rumors Reciprocate Seek wisdom Touch hearts Understand Value truth Win graciously Xeriscape Yearn for peace Zealously support a worthy cause.

Blessings,

Christina Watson
Convention Delegate



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Bethlehem Lutheran Church
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December, 2007

PLEASE RETURN BY 12/8/07

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