

BETHEL LUTHERAN CHURCH

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



BETHEL
LUTHERAN CHURCH
CUPERTINO

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BETHEL at a Glance ~ 2023

Baptisms

Kai Maverick Washington (Grandson of Josie Johnson)
Natalie Marion Wilker (Granddaughter of Marion and Greg Abney)

First Communion Class

Holly Kenyon Boniface
Olivia Diane Burch
Claire Jochner

First Bible Class

Victoria Beatrix Aist	Timothy Kenyon Boniface
Margaret Anne Edstrom	Phineas Morgan Vieta

Confirmations

Claire Boniface Karina Lui

New Members

The Aist family (Greg, Ellen, AJ, Piper and Trixie)
The Goolsbee family (Christopher, Brooke Reaser, and Georgiana)
The Jochner family (Mike, Suzie, Claire and Sarah)
Mica Burch
The Pakerla/Tadiparti family (Sohini Pakerla, Samuel, Rini, and Benhur Tadiparti)
The Miura family (Ricardo, Lourdes, Harumy, and Ohana)

Award Recipients

Dorothy Meyer Award ~ Loretta Callahan
Eric Hanson Award ~ Holly Lofgren

In Memoriam

*We had to say goodbye to our beloved members who passed in 2023.
We thank God for their faithful service.*

John Stahl	Betty Dombrowsky	Betty Pohl	Anna Hoegel
Vernon Bollesen	LaVonne Leimer	Sonja Messner	

2023 was another great year for our *Life Together* at Bethel.

Last year, we launched our “Come See, Go Be” capital campaign to great success. This year, we implemented the first steps of the campaign with exciting results. The purchase of the parsonage in the Spring was a milestone moment for Bethel, which addressed a long-time struggle with housing stability for Bethel’s pastors. The parsonage renovation, led by Tom Hoegel and Mike Coleman, was extremely well done (on time and on budget!) and in August, Kelly and I moved in. Additionally, the new screens in the sanctuary have been well received. This year we will begin to see Torvend Hall undergo a transformation long overdue. The campaign is about more than money and projects, it reflects our shared commitment to and investment in our ministry and mission. Our future is bright!



Doing Life Together is about walking with each other and growing as a community of faith. We also want to expand our community by inviting others to join us. Our community engagement strategy includes attending community events, serving our community’s needs, and getting the word out. For example, Bethel participated in Cupertino’s Earth and Arbor Day, hosted the Safe Car Park, supported local mission work, and invited neighbors to Christmas with new yard signs. This year, a Bethel Listening Team will go into the community to conduct one-on-one interviews with residents to learn more about the needs and opportunities and how Bethel can grow in our connection to the community. We also hope to fill a new staff position for a part-time Director of Community Engagement.

I continue to be blessed to serve as your pastor and look forward our shared journey and partnership. I am especially thankful for the wonderful and talented staff at Bethel, the elected and volunteer leaders, and a supportive and generous congregation. Thank you!

God’s Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Pastor Ben Sandin'.

Pastor Ben Sandin

ADULT MINISTRY- MARY DEUTSCHER, DIRECTOR

2023 started off HOT with the long awaited revival of the Bethel Chili Cookoff. We had 13 competitors for the chili master crown and some great corn breads and salads too. About 70 attended our fun western theme. Congrats to Loretta Callahan, Rachel Sudarsanam, and Erik Edstrom for taking 1st, 2nd and 3rd place. We “filled the boot” for Mt. Cross and raised \$935 for our favorite Lutheran camp and Labor Day Retreat host in the Santa Cruz mountains.



Pastor Ben and the program staff met with 6 families for lunch and a new member orientation in January. It was a great time to get to know each other, hear more about Bethel, and answer any questions about the Lutheran faith. We were happy to welcome them all officially during worship on February 12.

In the Spring it came to my attention that many of our Sunday ministry teams were in need of more helpers. Thanks to the organization of Lisa Laxson and our team leaders, we heard from a different ministry each week and signups were collected via bulletin insert, resulting in over 20 new volunteers!

This year I created an Easter postcard that was delivered to the majority of households in Cupertino, inviting them to worship with us on Easter (or any Sunday). Typically we have also run digital newspaper ads at Easter and Christmas. Also new this year was a targeted digital campaign from December 2 – 24 that advertised our Christmas Eve services. The ads focused on mobile devices and apps and on the weekends when people tend to use them most. The apps included major news, sports, health, music and fitness categories and resulted in over 50K digital impressions and 331 clicks (meaning they clicked the ad and were taken to our website.) In addition, I designed a generic *Bethel Christmas Eve* lawn sign for people to take home and invite others to Bethel. There is no year on the signs so we hope you will display it in your yard every December.

For Lent 2023 we took a “Living on a Prayer” journey with Pastor Ben. A group of about a dozen joined together each Wednesday of Lent and took turns providing dessert. In October we brought back the Wednesday Night Speaker Series on the first Wednesday of the month. It was also great to have several members lead Sunday morning adult ed sessions this fall as well.

One of my favorite things about Holy Week and Advent is being part of the decorating of the sanctuary. Everyone is welcome to join in the fun – just contact me or Tom Hoegel if you’re interested. Thank you to all who help decorate and also all who donated toward the seasonal flowers etc with a dedication in honor/memory of a loved one.



CONGREGATIONAL LIFE – TOM HOEGEL, DIRECTOR

Dear Bethel Friends!

As I near my 40th year as your youth, AV/transportation/facilities director and now as your Director of Congregational Life, I am blown away by the journey I get to be a part of. Bethel is not just getting by- it is thriving!

As we are living into a new reality with Covid in the background, and still very present, Bethel is thriving as a community willing to engage in being authentic. We had a great mix of Out and About events: The Labor Day Retreat was a blast, our time with the Watsonville farmworkers was insightful, hosting the Safe Car Park was really fruitful, and the Mexico trips strengthened the

relationships of over 40 people with our friends to the south. Our worship services are vibrant and meaningful. Our conversations in Bible studies, the 1st Wednesday conversations, and small groups continue to make us smarter and hopefully kinder.



A highlight for the youth department this past year was attending the 2023 **Mission to Mexico** Western States Youth Gathering. Not only was it a faith formative, and super fun experience for our youth group, but it opened the door for us to register our largest group ever to attend the 2024 ELCA Youth Gathering in New Orleans this coming summer. We have 12 youth, 3 adults, and 5 young adults registered to attend. Not only will we join 20,000 youth in New Orleans, but we will also spend time after visiting some powerful civil rights venues including the Martin Luther King Memorial in Memphis, TN and the Civil

Rights Museum in Birmingham, AL. We most definitely need your financial support so please attend the Easter Breakfast and help us complete the “1 to 99” challenge.

A big thanks also goes out to our Sunday Morning AV staff that make in-person and online worship so effective. Adam and Brian are at the helm and our volunteers are amazing. Along those lines, we are so grateful for the leadership Rachel has given to our youth department. We are so blessed!!

As we enter the 2nd year of our Capital Campaign 2023 also saw the completion of the purchase and renovation of our parsonage. We also completed the beam retrofit in Torvend Hall and are now preparing to purchase appliances, remodel the kitchen, two bathrooms and Youth room. We will also be updating the main sign, with Jacob Reidell taking the lead for his Eagle Scout Project. Then prep happens to address the main hall. Oh yeah, how about those LED screens in the sanctuary – finally! ☺ So much fun this coming year.

So here’s to moving into 2024! May great healing come to all - physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Thank you for the continued partnership. Helping lead the Bethel community is a blessing beyond words. ☺

Peace & Love, Tom



New Parsonage – beautifully remodeled

LABOR DAY RETREAT – Molly Schrey

The Bethel LDR ministry allows Bethel families and friends to enjoy worship and fellowship at Mt. Cross camp in Felton, CA over the Labor Day Weekend. Participants have a chance to attend speaker-led sessions and worship and enjoy a variety of fun activities, socialize, or just relax amidst their beautiful surroundings. Our slightly shortened retreat weekend with the option to stay overnight seems to be a winning format. Participants could come early on Saturday afternoon to participate in

swimming and other Mt. Cross activities as well as enjoy dinner and a campfire with songs led by Katlynn Rhyne.

Bethel's own Pr. Ben Sandin led worship at the retreat and Catherine Slabaugh, Communications Director of St. John's Lutheran Church in Sacramento led our 3 speaker sessions and unpacked the



theme *Can I get a Witness?*.

Participants enjoyed the tried and true events such as: Bethel Olympics, variety show acts (interspersed throughout Sunday's events), carnival, polar bear swim, and campfire.

We would like to thank the following LDR members: Patrice Sera, Chris Freckmann, Susan Leavitt, Kara Hermann, Tyler Freckmann, Rachel Sudarsanam, Robyn Winegardner, Adam

Klopfenstein, Katlynn Rhyne, Daniel Rhyne, Amanda Laughlin, Brian Schuette, Jamie Jacobson, Lisa Onishi, Melissa Janssen, Molly Schrey, Ben Sandin, and Tom Hoegel.

We would love to have more Bethel friends and family enjoy this yearly event! In addition, the committee welcomes new members.

OUT & ABOUT- Molly Schrey

The Out and About Ministry is all about finding exciting activities, inviting people to join in fellowship together and enjoying this wonderful world.

In the 13 years of this ministry, there have been a total of 117 events with over 2500 participants!

2023 – 10 Activities:

February – Bethel Game Night

March – Annual St. Patty's Day Brewery Tour

April – Water Purification Center & Murphy St.

June – Kelly Park

July – Nike Missile Site & Sausalito

September – SLAC & Gott's Roadside

October – Watsonville Farm Reality Tour

November – Bethel Game Night

December – Bethlehem, First Baptist Church

December - Winter Lodge Skating/Caroling



Stanford Linear Accelerator Center (SLAC)

Thank you to the following Out & About Team members: Marianne Nadell, Molly Schrey, Paul Baldwin, Doreen Baldwin, Adam Klopfenstein, Jill Burkhart, Andrea Teed, Ellen Aist and Tom Hoegel, It is our hopes and prayers that we may continue to find inspiration and blessings to continue to steward this exciting ministry for growth, inclusion, and fellowship.



Water Purification Center

FOOD TRUCKS -Robyn Winegardner

Food Trucks returned as we continued to stretch from the COVID restrictions. We welcomed Waffles Amore, Pupusa Time, Tacos Azteca, Old Greenwood BBQ, Lemongrass Lane and Thai Thai. Look forward to more feasts and fun time together in 2024.



CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES – AMANDA LAUGHLIN, DIRECTOR

Kid Connection Sunday School met weekly on Sundays in classrooms 1, 2 & 9 from September through May. Amanda Boniface lead the Music Opening for the preschool - 1st grade class.

Kid Connection Teachers – Patrice Sera, Doreen Baldwin (fall), Harumy Miura, Lourdes Miura, Lauren Kettner (spring), Minnie Sudarsanam (fall), Sam Sudarsanam (spring), Cathy Stahl, Holly Boniface (fall helper in the preschool – 1st grade class) and Amanda Laughlin.

3rd – 5th grade Valentines Party –Held on Sunday, February 12th after the second service. Led by Amanda Boniface and Amanda Laughlin. We had pizza, played games and had treats.

KCHO - Kid Connection HangOut is a once a month gathering for Kid Connection Kids after the second service.

Children's Choir met every other week after the second service. Lunch is provided (each children's choir family pays an annual amount for lunch). We begin in room 2 for lunch and then sing in the Music and Ed Room or the sanctuary. Led by Barb Larsen, Amanda Boniface and Amanda Laughlin.

First Communion Class – We had two children participate in our First Communion class with Pastor Ben in March during Kid Connection time. Our participants were Claire Jochner and Olivia Burch. On Maundy Thursday they made bread with Amanda Laughlin which was then used for their First Communion at the Maundy Thursday service that evening.

Easter Egg Hunt and Craft Fun was on Easter Sunday April 9th in between services. All children who were here for worship were invited to join us. We also invited Tulip Kids families.

Take Out Church - Summer 2023– “God Made Us with Emotions and Feelings” based on Ecclesiastes 3:4. A blue gable box was filled with colorful feeling monster finger puppets, feeling monster activities and coloring sheets, journals, stress toys, bubbles, monster lollipops, colored pencils and resources of books that help with coping with feelings.

VBS 2023– Stellar – Was held on Monday, July 10- Friday July 14. We had 27 participants and 24 volunteers. As our Service Project, Robyn Winegardner organized a VBS Store. The kids shopped at this store during the week of VBS and all the food went to West Valley Community Services. The kids

collected 800 pounds of food. We had VBS Sunday on July 16th. Robyn Winegardner helped organize the event. We had a food truck (Lemon Grass), Kona Ice and a water slide. All of Bethel and VBS participants were invited and it was a Stellar Community Event.

Pumpkin Carving – 3rd-5th grade youth group on Sunday, October 29th. We ate hot dogs, carved pumpkins, and decorated cookies.

First Bible Class – In October four 3rd graders took this class with me: Timmy Boniface, Maggie Edstrom, Trixie Aist and Phineas Vieta. Timmy, Trixie and Phineas received their Bibles during the Children’s Message on Reformation Sunday. Maggie received her Bible at Kid Connection Opening the following Sunday.

Trunk or Treat – Community event with Angels on Stage. We had about 20 cars which were decorated and handed out treats. Youth from Angels on Stage, Bethel children, Tulip families, and families from the community participated. There was a food truck, crafts and dancing too.

Kid Connection Halloween Fun was held on Sunday October 30th, during Kid Connection. Children wore their Halloween costumes, played games, decorated pumpkins, and had a Halloween costume contest that was led by our very own Kayla Burkhart.

Secret Angels – Bethel members prayed for a Kid Connection child during the season of Advent and wrote them a note, which was given to them along with a little gift at our “Happy Birthday Jesus” party.

Kid Connection Christmas Program – A Christmas Jubilee - Our Gifts we Give to Baby Jesus- Children shared their gifts by singing, acting out the Nativity Story, and with art that was shown on the screens. This was shared at the second service on December 17th.

Happy Birthday Jesus Party - December 17th – was held during Kid Connection time in our classrooms. We celebrated Jesus’ birthday by watching a movie, arts and crafts, playtime and eating cupcakes.

Special People who help and contribute to Bethel Lutheran Children’s Ministry – Kathy Arnold (VBS), Amanda Boniface (VBS), Patrice Sera (VBS), Robyn Winegardner (VBS), Leah Vieta (VBS), Jody Volk(Classroom organizer), Joanne Weberg and the quilters (Personalized Pencil cases for Activity Bags and Sitting cubes for Kid Connection)



CONFIRMATION (6th – 8th Grade)

ROBYN WINEGARDNER AND SUSAN LEAVITT

A picture is worth 1,000 words.

Our theme for 2023 was FISH OUTTA WATER while we were studying the New Testament. Susan and I continue to be blessed by spending time with these amazing kids.



Confirmands (Left to Right): Drew Brown, Xander Greene, Claire Boniface, Bryson Riedel, Jocelyn Keish, Cassidy Deutscher, Ella Burkhardt, Piper Aist (not pictured: Kayde Hermann, Karina Lui, and 6th graders Luke Barto, Ellie Edstrom and Olivia Greene, who joined us in September.)



Left: Pastor Ben and Susan Leavitt with Confirmands Karina Lui and Claire Boniface



Right: Confirmation Sunday for Claire and Karina - with fellow Confirmands Xander, William, Nick, Kayde, Jocelyn, Bryson, and Jacob.

2023 Confirmation Highlights ... we finished our Catechism study and the year's theme, "Fish Outta Water," in Spring. We kicked off our Old Testament study and year's theme, "Can I Get a Witness?" at the Labor Day Retreat at Mt Cross. Donuts continue to be an early draw on Sunday mornings. Monthly on-site mini-Retreats (which include reading the lessons during Worship, spending extended time with Pastor Ben, and sharing a meal together) continue to be keys in building community. Spending a week at Rock 'n Water Christian Camp on the American River is always an awesome week in the Summer. **(Thank You, adult chaperones ... Ellen Aist, Amanda Boniface, Rob Lingscheit and Frank Riedell)**. Helping Kid Connection with a Passover experience during Lent and helping with VBS in the summer continue to be opportunities to serve and discover talents, gifts and passions. **Thank you, Susan Leavitt** for your continued care and commitment for all Confirmands, especially the 8th graders when they prepare for their personal Affirmation of Baptism, aka, Confirmation.

WORSHIP & MUSIC – BRIAN SCHUETTE, MINISTRY LEAD

2023 - The Worship and Music Ministry team works behind the scenes to prepare Sunday service plans. The team meets as-needed. In 2023, Bethel extended the season of outdoor worship for our contemporary service as weather permitted. Bethel continues to offer in-person and live streaming of both the traditional and contemporary services on YouTube.



Our behind the scenes Bethel techs support worship and the new video LED screens bring brighter, clearer, vivid imagery to our worship time together.

A JOYFUL NOISE Handbell Choir – Chris Hogan, Director



Handbells is still going strong. We closed out the 2023 year by performing at the Christmas Eve service after a hiatus of several years ([video](#)). During the year, we successfully incorporated extra players for several performances: Alyssa Hogan, Nathaniel Hogan, and Laura McGlothin joined for the Christmas Eve service; Kathy Arnold and Alyssa Hogan increased the choir to nine players for "When the Saints go Marching In" on All Saints Day ([video](#)); and Melody Bast joined on Good Friday ([video](#)). It has been difficult to find new permanent members, so I am planning to incorporate extra players for performances where we require more ringers. In addition, we had one personnel change this year with Sylvia Halloran not returning and Yao Ford joining in September, leaving the permanent

membership at seven players. We are always looking for more players.

In addition to playing at Bethel once per month, we were once again able to join the Bay Area Spring Ring hosted by Valley Church (pictured). Spring Ring is a local mass ring event incorporating handbell players from across the Bay Area. This gave us an opportunity to play larger pieces that we cannot accomplish alone, and to meet other handbell players.

ALL BETHEL CHOIR - Melody Wright Bast, Director of Liturgical Worship

I deeply enjoy my work at Bethel. It is a privilege to serve such a beautiful faith community and to be a part of empowering others to do the same through music, prayer and worship.

The Bethel choir is 14 members strong, counting our youngest guest soprano, 8th grader Jocelyn, daughter of Byron and Rachael Keish. Jocelyn began with us singing the solo part in Howard Goodall's Psalm 23 last fall, and has continued to join us on a regular basis. We look forward to hearing more of her with the choir and in solo works this year.

Adam Klopfenstein, guest percussionist for the choir, and A/V expert, is busy creating a promotional video for us to encourage new choir members. We had great fun preparing for this video and look forward to sharing it with the congregation. Being a part of the choir is a great way to deepen our faith, build friendships and feel the joy of doing meaningful work that serves and leads others. The choir meets during the academic year on Thursdays, 7:30- 9pm, but there are also other musical possibilities. If you play an instrument or wish to sing a solo or be a part of a small ensemble, do reach out to me. I appreciate the volunteer hours of Hella Bluhm-Stieber preparing four hand piano music with me, and of Barb Larsen, our flautist. Barb recently acquired a bass flute, a dream of hers for many years now. Her bass flute is stunningly beautiful. Also, this Easter we again extend an open invitation to join Handel's Hallelujah chorus at the end of the service. The score and rehearsal tracks will be posted soon, or you can always join us a few times on Thursday nights before Easter.

Our new choir accompanist, Vadim Rivkin, joined us in September. In addition to being a sensitive and musical pianist, he is an accomplished composer. His opera "Samson" was published a few months ago with Petersburg Publishing House. His spouse, Natalia Bondar, also a musical talent, joins us on occasion to turn pages or help create four hand piano versions of the choir accompaniment.

September will mark the 35th anniversary of the installation of our Schantz pipe organ. Our former organist, Lynda Alexander, who was a vital part of the entire process 35 years ago and I are meeting next week to start preparing for a huge celebration. We are envisioning it as part organ recital, part congregational hymn sing, part choir and part party. Details coming soon!

Soli Deo Gloria!

BETHEL WORSHIP TEAM- Clayton Johnson, Director of Contemporary Music

This year the Bethel Worship Team had eight members who participated on a rotating basis. In addition to leading the 10:45 contemporary service, we also had the privilege of leading all the outdoor worship services during the summer. Bethel has a long history of innovative contemporary worship. We are grateful to be able to continue that tradition



every Sunday and look forward to another year of worshipping together. We are ALWAYS recruiting new members. If you sing or play an instrument, please think about joining us. We rehearse before church on Sunday mornings from 8:30-10:30am in the Music and Ed Room.

THANK YOU to the 2023 Bethel Worship Team for their dedication and talent: Liz Barton, Mary Deutscher, Kara Hermann, Katlynn Rhyne, Tom Hoegel, Adam Klopfenstein, Brian Schuette, and Clayton Johnson.

ALTAR GUILD - Marion Abney

Our Altar Guild has the responsibility and privilege of tending to the elements of Holy Communion, candles, and paraments. We work to maintain the order, beauty, peace and tranquility of our sanctuary. It is quiet, prayerful work following in the tradition of those who cared for the needs of Jesus and the early church.

Special thanks to our awesome Altar Guild team of Anita Tysseland, Debby Coleman, Janice Martinson, Sharon Parady, and Erna Trogisch. Our appreciation to Lois Eid, Judy Johnson, Hope Jow, and Lorene Westmore who have concluded their work with the guild after many years of dedicated leadership and service. Thanks also to Susan Leavitt for baking communion bread to be served the second Sunday of the month.

The Altar Guild is hoping to expand to include additional women and men who would like to assist an experienced guild member on the Saturday prior to holy communion scheduled for the 2nd Sundays and then Sunday clean-up (4 times a year.) Also, a partner is needed to help me in changing the paraments in accordance with our liturgical church year schedule. This is a 20 minute commitment following 2nd service or another time at your convenience as needed. Contact Marion Abney at abney4@pacbell.net or 408-334-9598.

OFFERING COUNTERS - Liz Tribby

This has been an exciting year for the offering counters. We added 9 new counters to our group and got them all trained – so we are fully staffed for both services for the first time in many years! Thank you to all the new volunteers, and to all those who have been faithfully serving for many years.

SUNDAY MORNING COFFEE HOST MINISTRY- Marion Abney

Our Coffee Host Ministry provides a focal point of hospitality for guests and church members. Some of the most impactful conversations that people have can often take place over a warm cup of coffee or tea. Our dedicated hosts include Ichiro Fujishiro, Sam Sudarsanam, Tori and Mark Evashenk, Ellen Aist, Steve Emmert, Vera and Roger Edstrom, Bill and Joann Weberg, Sharon Parady, Judy and Lars Johnson, Ordetta Hovland, Melissa Janssen, and Carlos Rosa. We continue to serve organic coffee provided by Equal Exchange, a fair trade company to support small farmers.

All are invited to enjoy a hot beverage between services every Sunday and engage in conversation as we grow together in community. New hosts are welcome to join our team! Contact Marion Abney at abney4@pacbell.net or 408-334-9598 for more information.

USHERS – Lloyd Darknell

Our team of volunteers greet people on Sundays with a bulletin and a smile, helping with offering and communion during worship. We added several new ushers to the team, thanks to the sharing of worship ministry needs in the spring. A big thanks to the team: Rod Brunngraber, Pat Starrett, Mike & Debby Coleman, Jack & Diane Stauffer, Roger & Vera Edstrom, Mica Burch, Darrell Kettner, Larry Polyak, David Nadell, Chris Freckmann, Paul Baldwin, Greg Abney, John Boniface, Jamie Laughlin, Nick Boniface, Kristine Lui, and especially Lloyd & Doris Darknell for heading up our ushering team. If you're interested in joining the team please contact Mary Deutscher or Lloyd Darknell.

MISSION OUTREACH – MARK EVASHENK, MINISTRY LEAD

Awesome news- serving breakfast at the San Jose Family Shelter, has resumed. Please contact Chris Ford to get involved. Bethel serves Sunday morning the 2nd Sunday in February, April, June, August, and October and the 1st Sunday in December.

The [baby layette](#) program to support Sacred Heart Community Services was again well received and supported. A big thank you to all who donated items. And special thanks to Joann Weberg and the Bethel Quilters for making the layette bags, and Sandy Siron and the Cupertino Senior Center knitting group for knitting beanie caps that were placed in each bag. The handmade bags and beanies are a special bonus.

A big thank you to the Bethel Community for supporting [Help One Child's](#) Signs of Hope summer sleepover camp. Eleven pajama sets, 9 swimsuits, plus a few more items were collected and delivered to Help One Child. Financial donations resulted in 4 full \$500 scholarships and an additional \$175.00. God's blessings to the Bethel community have flowed through to these foster kids and their families. A big thank you to Maggie Emmert and Dianne Stauffer for volunteering to oversee this Mission Outreach activity.

45 turkeys were gratefully received at the [Lord's Pantry](#) on Sunday November 19.

The [Giving Tree](#) sponsored by Help One Child was again popular with the Bethel congregation. A total of 51 gifts were donated by Bethel along with \$500 in gift cards.

In 2024 Mission Outreach will be inviting some of our partner ministries to come to Bethel on Sunday morning to briefly preview their mission and services.

The Bethel congregation showed its love and generosity throughout the year.

BETHEL QUILTERS - Joann Weberg

Bethel's Quilting Mission supports [Lutheran World Relief](#). For the past 27 years the Quilters have been meeting Monday mornings at Bethel to spread quilts and love around the world. LWR was able to send out 551,700 Quilts and Kits to 14 countries in the world that need disaster relief assistance. Bethel quilters donated 121 quilts and 189 School kits in 2023. We were again the meeting place for the LWR Northern California Ingathering in which 24 churches participated. The Ingathering collected 1450 Quilts along with 124 Fabric kits, 402 Personal Care kits, 154 Baby kits and 922 School kits. We had 402 boxes that were sent up to Seattle, then, along with their boxes, they were packed into 2 shipping containers and sent by railroad to the LWR warehouse in Maryland. Check out the LWR YouTube videos on what goes on in the warehouse when the boxes get there.

In front of the LWR headquarters in Baltimore is their Good Samaritan Quilt Plaza. This year, with our support to the shipping fund, our brick was dedicated to Karen Hanson, one of the founding members of our Quilting group. We have several bricks in the walk. Bill and I have been able to walk the walk and find our dedication bricks.

The Quilters wish to thank the Men of Monday for all their help. They are the ones who help hang the quilts in the Sanctuary, among many other tasks.

Our biggest need is for new or nearly new sheets that are used for the back of each quilt. We are blessed with many donations of cloth for the quilt tops. This material is sorted, washed, if needed, and then cut into various square sizes. Each unique quilt is then designed and sewn. Batting for the quilts is purchased in bulk and is an ongoing expense. Some of our quilts are available for you to own for a donation to the Quilting fund.

SAN JOSE FAMILY SHELTER BREAKFAST- Chris Ford

After a long hiatus, the San Jose Family Shelter breakfast ministry resumed in late 2023! Bethel volunteers cooked and served breakfast on two mornings. We have signed up to serve six more times in 2024 - the 2nd Sunday mornings in February, April, June, August, and October and the 1st Sunday in December.

Please contact Chris Ford to volunteer.



CREEK CLEANUP – Hella Bluhm-Stieber



In 2023, I organized two creek cleanups. On April 19, we cleaned up Calabazas Creek between Bollinger and Blaney. Four adults participated. We collected 14 lbs of glass, 1.27 lbs of recyclables, and 58.5 lbs of trash. This is quite a lot for such a small group!

On November 5, 2023 we cleaned up Calabazas Creek between Vallco Parkway and Tantau. This is the part of the creek that Bethel Lutheran Church adopted. We had 5 adults and 3 teenagers who collected a total of .7 lbs of recycling, 18 lbs glass, and 53 lbs of trash and approx. 17.6 lbs of additional materials (foam, blankets, wood, pipe.)

ROTATING SAFE CAR PARK (RSCP) – Hella Bluhm-Stieber and Paul Baldwin

Success: It seems like homelessness is spiraling out of control, but God put Bethel in the right place at the right time, and as a church we decided to help by offering up our parking lot for those in need of a safe place to sleep. With very little time to spare, somehow together we managed to jump through the administrative and facility “hoops” thanks to Fara Brock and Tom Hoegel. The outcome was that Bethel was able to provide safe overnight parking for 13 individuals who could not otherwise afford housing. Thankfully, God gave us this opportunity to be the caring people that we aspire to be.

Teaming: It is not easy to just start a new endeavor, with no experience. Luckily, Bethel was paired with the LDS Church in Saratoga who had extensive experience in hosting Safe Car Park. In addition, we received guidance from the Rotating Safe Car Park Leadership who manages the RSCP relationships. Amigos de Guadalupe provided screening and authorization of our Guests. Our government partners included the City of Cupertino and the County Sheriff’s Office. The purpose of this teaming partnership is for our Safe Park Guests to be supported in their goal to transition into permanent housing. Churches are one of the faith-based entities that are being employed to make this

goal a reality. It makes absolute sense for people of faith to lead the way in responding to those who find themselves in the perils of homelessness.

Volunteers: There were 46 Volunteers who supported Safe Park at the Bethel Facility. A majority of the volunteers were from the LDS Church in Saratoga. However, for first time supporters of RSCP, Bethel responded with a respectable number of 13 volunteers. Volunteers supported two person shifts twice a day for the month of November. There was one shift in the morning and one in the evening for about 1 hour per shift. Guests were provided food provisions, a hot meal and access to the Bethel facilities. In addition, volunteers cooked hot meals once a week. We were thankful to receive quilts from the Bethel Quilters.

Costs: Bethel did not incur any direct cost for food stocks or warm weather gear. LDS maintained the foods, sleeping bags, blankets, and other weather gear through their Church contributions. Bethel RSCP has requested \$500 from the Council for our RSCP budget for 2024. The RSCP Organization has received some grants that are expected to cover some of the expenses next year. Bethel Members can support by purchasing quality warm weather gear or food provisions. Please talk with Hella Bluhm-Stieber or Paul Baldwin before purchasing any items.

Planning for the Future: We would like to see Bethel take a greater role in volunteering for Rotating Safe Car Park. Our Goal is to increase our volunteer number up to 25 individuals. An additional goal is to increase the number of hot meals to twice a week. In order to better inform Bethel members about Rotating Safe Car Park, Bethel RSCP plans to either have an RSCP Coordinator present at a Speaker Series Night or have a Sheriff's Deputy question and answer session. Hella Bluhm-Stieber and Paul Baldwin are your Bethel RSCP team leads. Stay tuned for announcements for how you can volunteer later in 2024.

EDUCATION & DISCIPLESHIP

Discipleship focuses on spiritual growth which can take on many different forms. In the past year, Bethel has offered a variety of ways people could engage. Bible studies, Sunday forums and small groups were all mostly held in person.

WEDNESDAY NIGHT SPEAKER SERIES (WNSS) – Pastor Ben

The Wednesday Night Speaker Series (WNSS) was revived in October 2023 to be the first Wednesday of the month. Speakers so far have included the head of the Farmworker Families organization, a friend who explained the facets of the Sikh tradition, member Ellen Aist with some great discussion about what AI is and how it effects us, and member Dave Denny sharing his latest published poetry. Approximately 40 people joined for great discussion and dessert in the Fireside Room each time. WNSS is planned to continue through May 2024. Contact Pastor Ben bsandin@bethelcupertino.org to learn more or get involved.

WOW (Women of Wednesday) – Kathryn Montano

The Bethel Women of Wednesday continued to meet in person at Bethel throughout 2023 (taking the summer months off). WOW continues to volunteer to sort food at Second Harvest Food Bank, and we pray together and support each other. Please consider joining us on Wednesday mornings in the Fireside Room from 10am to noon. Contact Kathryn Montano for more information.

MARTHA CIRCLE BIBLE STUDY – Vera Edstrom

In 2023 we had bible study from January through June. We broke for the summer but started again in September through December. We use the *Gather* Magazine for our bible study. Each of the members are leaders for one month. We currently meet on the third Monday of each month at 12pm. We have ten to twelve active members.

READERS ANONYMOUS – Kathy Arnold

Readers Anonymous met nearly every 3rd Sunday of each month to discuss a great book chosen the previous month. The books included mysteries, non-fiction, and fiction. Love reading and laughing? Join us!

MEN'S NIGHT OUT – David Nadell

Men's Night Out has started meeting in person again in the church library on the 3rd Monday of the month from 7:30pm-9pm for great discussion and light Bible Study. Contact David Nadell for more info.

LIBRARY TEAM – Margaret Lund

The Library Committee continues to meet most Wednesdays. Additionally, this year we brought books and DVDs to share with Kid Connection every few weeks. Thank you to Debby Coleman and Natalie Rogerson for their support in this ministry.

CARE MINISTRY – JOANNE STENSAAS, MINISTRY LEAD

CARING CONNECTIONS - Joanne Stensaas

Caring Connections is a prayer ministry that seeks to be action-oriented to do God's work. We meet monthly, in-person, or on Zoom, depending on the weather and health concerns, sharing information about needs in the congregation and other loved ones. This information is gleaned from prayer lists, Pastor Ben, and Caring Connections team members. Care is demonstrated in a variety of ways, including birthday cards, sympathy cards, get well notes, congratulations, phone calls, and home visits.

Moving forward, our members seek to communicate with those in need via emails, texts, phone calls or in person. We have started a new outreach opportunity under the Caring Connection umbrella. Different groups within Bethel will be sending greetings monthly to our college age young adults in the form of cards and small gifts. We started in October 2023 and thank the Confirmands, Senior High Youth, and Kid Connection for taking care of the first several months. Thanks in advance to WOW, Caring Connection, Council, and Choir, who will be keeping the year going.

We revived the Flower Delivery ministry in 2023, however it remains a challenge, as more volunteers are needed. Each week the altar flowers are divided into bouquets to deliver to our friends on our prayer list, etc. Please sign up on the chart in the Narthex if you can help. Contact Joanne Stensaas with questions.

New members to the Caring Connection Team are also always welcome.



PRAYER BYTES - Robyn Winegardner

Prayer Warriors continue to pray for the Bethel Community and loved ones who are in need, mourning loss, facing health struggles, and experiencing joy, healing and accomplishments. Thanks to Elise Holst, Dave Arnold and Liz Tribby who continue to work behind the scenes to keep Prayer Bytes current and sent out.

FINANCE AND HUMAN RESOURCES – FARA BROCK, DIRECTOR

Thanks to the strong support of the congregation, Bethel finished its fiscal year with total receipts only 2.6% below forecast. Total expenses were 5.3% below budget. The net ordinary income was only -\$4,000 compared to -\$24,600 that was budgeted.

Throughout 2023 the church continued to address the needs of our community by donating to many local and international relief agencies. Bethel gave \$68,000 to the Synod and outside agencies with benevolence and special designated dollars. Top recipients are Lutheran World Relief, Lutheran Disaster Response, Esperanza, Mt. Cross, West Valley Community Services, Habitat for Humanity, Second Harvest Food Bank, and the Synod for churchwide mission support. Bethel also continued to support scholarships for 2 students at MaaSAE Girls school in Tanzania through Operation Bootstrap.

2023 was a unique year for Bethel with an unprecedented capital campaign and purchase of a parsonage. It was a privilege to work with such a dedicated and knowledgeable team. Many thanks

to the Parsonage Committee, the Executive Committee, Tom Hoegel and Mike Coleman for their work to make this longtime dream become a reality in such a short time.

I am blessed to work with volunteers who “behind the scenes” keep Bethel’s infrastructure running smoothly:

- Liz Tribby who manages office IT and membership records
- Dave Tribby, Bethel’s Treasurer
- Bethel’s Finance Committee: Dave Tribby, Tony Stieber, Joan Christensen, Ann Marie Kenitzer, Doreen Baldwin and Pastor Ben
- Mark Evashenk on benevolence and special designated giving
- Darrell Kettner and the Audit Committee
- Brad Martinson who oversees Bethel computers and the internet and telephone network
- Brian Schuette who optimizes Bethel’s campus wireless network
- Dave Larsen who manages Bethel’s Capital Assets

I look forward to another productive and inspiring year with Bethel’s amazing staff and volunteers!

FINANCE & STEWARDSHIP

STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE - Tony Stieber and Pastor Ben Sandin

In 2023, we focused our messages to the congregation in June, and collected Faith Promise cards on June 18th. Stewardship announcements were made at worship services, highlighting generosity, and building our spiritual lives on *Luke 16:10, Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much.*

Planning for our Stewardship campaign started in the Spring, and Faith Promise card follow up with members continued into July, with a final report generated in August. The report showed a 10% increase in dollars pledged with a similar number of Faith Promises, close to 100 were received. It was amazing to see close to 25% of respondents increased their annual pledges. We are extremely blessed by the level of giving by our Bethel family, which assists Bethel leadership with responsible budget decisions each year.

Thank you for the generous giving of your resources, for both Faith Promises / General giving toward Bethel and its ministries as well as the ongoing 3 year Capital Campaign. We look forward to continuing our ministry with you in 2024!

NOMINATING COMMITTEE – Brett Deutscher, Dianne Stauffer and Robyn Winegardner

The Nominating Committee worked closely during the year with the Council President, President-Elect and Pastor Ben Sandin to recruit qualified candidates for open council positions in 2024. This included the Youth member at Large in the summer, and several Council members in the Winter. Strong collaboration between Nominating committee, Council leadership and Pastor Ben found excellent candidates. Additional duties included securing nominations for Audit Committee and the next Nominating Committee.

We thank Bethel members for being receptive to trying new committees to support Bethel and its ministries.

ENDOWMENT FUND COMMITTEE – Ralph Miller, Dave Larsen, Robin Kettner, Margit Schmitt, and Mariann Jones

The Endowment Fund is a financial account help separate from Bethel’s operating expense account. It is not related to the Capital Campaign fund or other dedicated accounts. It is meant to provide funding for specific opportunities in the areas of Outreach, Education, and Charitable Work.

Endowment Funds are usually funded by a lump sum gift, perhaps a memorial for a lost loved one or a distribution from a persons will or living trust. If someone has a desire to “leave money to the church”, but without a specific purpose, the Endowment Fund can be a good way to do that.

The money is invested in a combination of stock and fixed income securities managed by the ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church of America) for Bethel and other churches across the country. Our constitution specifies that only the gain on the principal balance can be distributed.

The current fund balance is \$206K, representing an increase of about 14% during 2023 due to increases in the stock market. This includes a gain on principle of about \$7,700.

The Endowment Committee has chosen to make a distribution of the gain realized in 2023, as there has not been a new contribution to the fund or a distribution to ministry in a few years. We are proposing a distribution in February and again in September, given approval by the congregation at the semi-annual meetings.

For February we are proposing two distributions:

- A) \$1,100 towards the First Wednesday education sessions, for a stipend for non-Bethel presenters and refreshments for the remaining sessions this spring.
- B) \$1,400 towards travel for the Bethel youth attending the National Youth Gathering in New Orleans this July.

For September we are hoping that Bethel will have brought on board a new community engagement staff person, and the fund can help seed some projects specified by the person in that position.

We are also inviting the congregation to submit ideas for distributing monies that meets the purpose of this fund.

We are hoping by making a distribution in 2024, we can begin to raise awareness of the Endowment Fund's existence and help it grow.

TECHNOLOGY & ADMINISTRATION

TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT - Liz Tribby and Brad Martinson

Things have been quiet this year in office technology. The computers are all aging (7-9 years old), but still functioning other than minor problems with keyboards and mice. It might be time to think about doing some upgrading. Brian Schuette and Brad Martinson upgraded the last remaining old wifi access points to bring our system fully up-to-date.

WEB MINISTRY – Dave Arnold

We maintain the web site for Bethel Lutheran Church at <https://www.bethelcupertino.org/>. This provides a comprehensive and current view of the activities at Bethel for visitors and members alike. It is Bethel's virtual front door to the community. The most popular pages are the home page, the church calendar and the sermons page.

Each week, there were on average 132 user views of Bethel's YouTube channel, <https://www.youtube.com/user/BethelCupertino>, in 2023. These are mostly worship services, but also include staff videos.

- 127 new events were submitted to the Bethel calendar in 2023.
- 718 updates were applied to the web site in 2023.
- Google Analytics reports 230 page views per week to our home page. 48% of views are from mobile devices.
- Google Search reports 33 clicks per day (for "organic searches").

In September 2022, Tom Hoegel initiated a review of Bethel Communications, with consultant Catherine Slabaugh. This resulted in a refresh of our home page in February 2023. The principal goals were:

- simplify the top part of the home page to focus on welcoming visitors
- reduce the text content of the lower part of the page (using "collapsible content")
- improve the view on phones (using "responsive design")

Thank you to all the Ministry Leaders and staff that contributed to our Annual Report.