

# ANNUAL REPORT 2024



**BETHEL**  
LUTHERAN CHURCH  
CUPERTINO

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# BETHEL at a Glance ~ 2024

## First Bible Class

Sarah Jochner

## First Communion Class

Victoria Beatrix Aist  
Margaret Anne Edstrom

Timothy Kenyon Boniface  
Phineas Morgan Vieta



## Confirmations

Bryson Riedell

Jocelyn Keish

Drew Brown

## New Members

The Hanson Family - Ryan, Sarah, Lucas & Louisa

## Award Recipients

Dorothy Meyer Award ~ Anna Hoegel

Eric Hanson Award ~ Patrice Sera

## In Memoriam

*We had to say goodbye to our beloved members who passed away in 2024.*

*We thank God for their faithful service.*

Carol Eliason

Lou Koehn

Donna Cole

Carolyn Jow

David Sahlit

Martin Suorsa

## Siblings in Christ,

Grace and peace to you! It continues to be an honor to serve Bethel as your pastor and I give thanks to you for our ongoing partnership in ministry and mission. As I write you, I am reminded of Paul's words to the church:

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 1 Corinthians 12:4-7

For the church to live out its calling, it must recognize and cultivate the collective gifts of its members. We have all been given gifts from God and when we work together and use our gifts to bless others it makes a world of good. At Bethel, we need everyone, and we are all in this together!

This past year, our strategic focus has been to continue to turn outward toward our community. This starts with the necessary heart work to see everyone in our community as our neighbor. In 2024 we conducted a community listening project where a team from Bethel went out into the community to interview area residents to learn more about the gifts, struggles, and potential opportunities in the community. We met with over 75 people and developed new and nuanced perspectives. Moving forward, our Community Engagement Task Force has identified a few key points of emphasis for the coming year that you will hear more about. We also have recently posted a new staff position entirely focused on this important work. The Director of Community Engagement will help Bethel make new connections in the community, lead efforts for Bethel to be present at community events, and help coordinate opportunities to serve our community. This is an exciting time, and I know God will bless us along the way.

As we Do Life Together, I offer my humble and heartfelt gratitude to the many people who contribute their time, talent, and treasure to our ministry and mission. I am grateful to the supportive members and the relationships between them that make Bethel feel like a family to many. I am grateful for those who volunteer in all forms of ministry. I am also grateful for the elected and appointed leaders of Bethel who do all they can to keep things running smoothly and effectively. Bethel is also blessed to have a wonderful and talented church staff. We all work well together and find ourselves having some fun along the way! Thank you all!

God's Peace,



Pastor Ben Sandin



## ADULT MINISTRY- MARY DEUTSCHER, DIRECTOR

**Highlights of 2024** - It's always fun to kick off our year with the Chili Cookoff. On January 21, we had our 8<sup>th</sup> Annual event in Torvend Hall at 12pm. We had 13 chili competitors and many wonderful desserts, breads and salads shared. Congrats to Steve Emmert (1<sup>st</sup>), Rachel Sudarsanam (2<sup>nd</sup>), and Paul Baldwin (3<sup>rd</sup>) for their excellent chilis! We had over 80 friends gathered and it was a fun afternoon. Thanks to those who brought chili and side dishes, and to those who stayed to help clean up. 😊 Andrew Templeman, the new director of Mt. Cross also joined us for the event. We had a western theme and "Fill the Boot" fund raiser for Mt Cross - I'm happy to report that we raised over \$2000 for Mt. Cross in January of 2024!



I was blown away by the outcome of our Lenten "Bethel Farm" project. The total giving to ELCA Good Gifts was \$9,895! Amazing! Our "order" included 20 chickens, 8 roosters, 8 goats, 8 piglets, 2 cows, 3 fish farms, 13 honeybees, 2 safe water wells, 6 water filters, 4 irrigation projects, 2 latrines, 5 microloans for women's businesses, 12 fruit tree seedlings, 1 community vegetable garden, and 2 sets of gardening tools and seeds. Thank you so much! We are supporting long-term, sustainable solutions and ensure these gifts last for years and years- instead of just days or weeks- for people in Mexico, Uganda, and Cambodia. 2025 will bring a new challenge – stay tuned!

September 8 was Rally Day 2024 and included very special guest Bishop Jeff Johnson, a Kid Connection carnival for ages 3 to 5<sup>th</sup> grade, and a Ministry Celebration BBQ. Bethel has 62 ministries and therefore a large number of volunteers, so we wanted to recognize and thank YOU all for your time and talents. New Bethel Ministry Guides were also available on the Welcome Center in the Narthex, with descriptions and contact names for ministry leaders. Road Dogs food truck grilled yummy burgers and dogs and we enjoyed a fabulous lunch together on the front lawn, complete with several Bethel ministry tables. We had approximately 125 people attend- It was a great day! Special thanks to Robyn for all of her help.

For Reformation Sunday, October 27 we also celebrated Tom Hoegel's 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Ministry at Bethel, as well as the 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the pipe organ! We had a wonderful Oktoberfest lunch -I'm not sure how many were there- but the place was overflowing with friends old and new, coming to celebrate with us (and see Tom.) 😊

I must admit, one of my favorite parts of my job is beautifying our Sanctuary for different holidays and welcoming others to worship with us. Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter, Pentecost, All Saints Day, Christmas, and I'm sure I'm forgetting some... Special thanks to all who dedicate Easter lilies and poinsettias, light candles and share photos of a loved one, and all the volunteers who help decorate: Tom Hoegel, Susan Leavitt, Robyn Winegardner, Marion and Greg Abney, Robin and Darrell Kettner, Jim and Veronica Lentfer, Doreen and Paul Baldwin, and Bryson Riedell for their help!



## CONGREGATIONAL LIFE – TOM HOEGEL, DIRECTOR

Dear Bethel Friends!

I start this 41st year of ministry with youth, as your AV/transportation/facilities director and Director of Congregational Life, I'm so grateful. The 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration last October was so fun and a great reminder of the partnership we have. I am blown away by the journey I get to be a part of. Bethel is not just getting by- it is thriving!

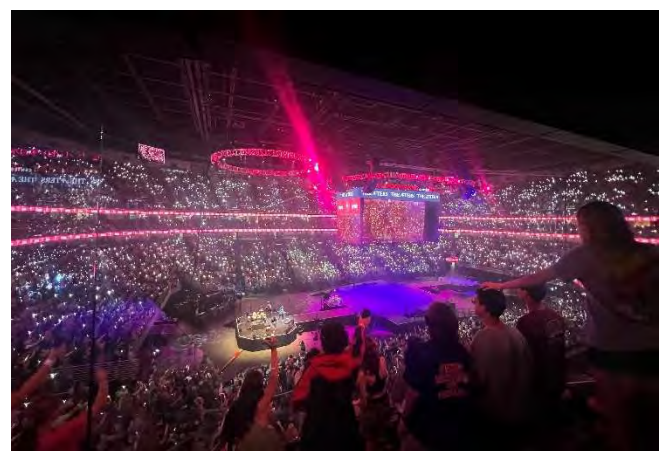
This year we actively worked to “Do Life Together”. We had a great mix of Out and About events (see Molly's report): The Labor Day Retreat (Everyone Has a Story) was a blast, and the Mexico trips strengthened the relationships of over 40 people with our friends to the south. Our worship services are vibrant and meaningful, and it is always a treat to be able to worship on our front lawn. Our conversations in Bible studies, the 1<sup>st</sup> 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 2024 ELCA Youth Gathering and our BOOCT III trip. We travelled with 12 youth, 3 adults, and 5 young adults registered for the Gathering and Young Adult Gathering. I also brought Tyler, Molly and Brian to help run the Gathering. We joined with 16,000 youth in New Orleans, and then went on to visit some powerful civil rights venues including the Martin Luther King Memorial in Memphis, TN and the Civil Rights Museum in Birmingham, AL. We are so grateful for the prayer and financial support. The Gathering theme was “Created to Be...” Lives were changed forever.

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.

I'm super excited that Harumy Miura is our Assistant Youth Director as well as working to gather our College young people. Harumy is a graduate of our program and is doing her studies at Santa Clara University. We are super blessed to have her working with our youth.

As we enter the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of our Capital Campaign, 2024 we ran into some delays that while annoying will actually prove to make us safer and more accessible to those with physical limitations. We found out that we need to install fire sprinklers in Torvend Hall and the preschool building. We also



need to do some ADA modifications and upgrades. Be patient my friends, we are on this and hopefully can get moving again soon.

We also partnered with three Eagle Scout candidates which was a win/win/win/win for all of us. Jacob Reidell updated our “Bethel” sign and planter, Nick Boniface landscaped the area in front of the sign plus installed pavers in the median strip between the entrance and exit of the parking lot, and Amy (part of our Bethel troop) landscaped the planter to the right of our entrance. So fun working with these young people! Our world is in good hands ☺



So, here’s to moving into 2025! May great healing and peace come to all - physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Love and grace need to be shared more than ever with the world around us. Thank you for the continued partnership. Helping lead the Bethel community is a blessing beyond words ☺

Peace & Love, Tom



## 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.

This year's retreat theme was "Everybody Has a Story" with speakers Andrew Trembly and Bethel's own Tyler Freckmann. Andrew is a SF City Church member and small group leader as well as the Orchestra Personnel Manager at San Francisco Symphony and Tyler, is well... Tyler ☺. Our speakers guided us in discovering how to truly listen to the stories of others with open hearts, how to share our own stories with authenticity, and why this practice matters as we walk together in faith and community.

Retreat participants had the option of our main one-day program on Sunday, or a longer relaxing weekend starting Saturday afternoon through Monday morning. Participants who came on Saturday could participate in swimming, Mt. Cross led archery and climbing wall, enjoy a nature hike in the Santa Cruz Mountains, as well as enjoy dinner and a campfire with songs led by Katlynn Rhyne. We would like to thank the following LDR members: Patrice Sera, Chris Freckmann, Bailey Freckmann, Susan Leavitt, Kara Hermann, Robyn Winegardner, Adam Klopfenstein, Katlynn Rhyne, Daniel Rhyne, Amanda Laughlin, Jamie Jacobson, Melissa Janssen, Ben Sandin, Tyler Freckmann, Molly Schrey, 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 focuses on enjoying meaningful activities, learning together and inviting others into fellowship as we experience the wonders of the world around us.

In the 13 years of this ministry, there have been a total of 126 events with over 2700 participants!

### 2024 Out and About Activities

**January** – Año Nuevo – Elephant Seals

**March** – Annual St. Patty’s Day Brewery Tour

**April** – Bethel Pizza and Game Night

**May** – Chardonnay Sailing Charter Santa Cruz

**July** – San Francisco Tikki Tour

**August** – San Francisco Giants Game

**September** – Ludwigs Oktoberfest

**October** – SF MOMA: Museum of Modern Art

**November** – SF Symphony: Dia de Los Muertos

**December** - Winter Lodge Skating/Caroling

Thank you to the Out & About Team members: Marianne Nadell, Paul Baldwin, Doreen Baldwin, Adam Klopfenstein, Jill Burkhart, Ellen Aist, Molly Schrey, and Tom Hoegel.

We invite first-time participants to join us for an event in 2025! We are always looking for fresh ideas and new members. If you are interested in being part of the planning committee for this ministry, please contact Tom Hoegel.





## **“BRUNCHIES” – Robyn Winegardner**

BRUNCHIES is a mid-week event, open to all, including friends. It’s an outing where we meet with Tom at 10am at Bethel and he takes us on the church bus to a city in the area where we can stroll down a street or two. Window shop, visit art stores, chat a bit with each other and then stop for a late morning, early afternoon meal, BRUNCH, returning to Bethel before 2pm. Our first adventure was to Willow Glen with lunch at Crepevine, where Pastor Ben joined us for a very nice brunch. Watch for more Wednesday and Thursday BRUNCHIES to come in 2025.



## **SUNDAY MORNING FOOD TRUCKS - Robyn Winegardner**

Food Trucks continued to bring monthly Sunday Feasts in March through September. We welcomed **Waffles Amore, Thai Thai, Road Dogs, Nuevo’s Generaciones Taqueria, Lemongrass Lane** and **Twister**. Look forward to more feasts and fun times together in 2025.



## **“FUN FOODIE FRIDAYS” Robyn Winegardner**

We introduced Fun Foodie Fridays three Friday nights this summer. We invited multiple Food Trucks each month to the front corner of our property for “family friendly” time of food, games, laughter and conversations. In June, we welcomed Himalayan Momo Land, I Love Cheesesteak, Tacos el Rufles, Thai Thai and Kona Ice. In July, Rico’s Tacos, Twister Food Truck and Kona Ice. And in August, Pupusa Time, Tacos el Rufles, Thai Thai and Kona Ice.

It takes a while to grow a Community Outreach activity. In 2024 this new outreach had its challenges and first-try learning curves in addition to some fine food, friends gathering, and kids having fun together. It was nice when folks from the neighborhood stopped by. We also reached out to the preschool, summer camps, and our neighbors with fliers. We are moving ahead in the summer of 2025 to go again and looking at possibly adding music one month and a movie one month. Keep your eyes out and get ready to mark your calendars as we get closer to the summer months.



## CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES – AMANDA LAUGHLIN, DIRECTOR

**Kid Connection** Sunday School meets weekly on Sundays in classrooms 1, 2 & 9.

**Kid Connection Teachers** – Patrice Sera, Doreen Baldwin, Ohana Miura, Lourdes Miura, Lauren Kettner, Cathy Stahl and Amanda Laughlin

**Parent's Room** – We made room 2 into a hang out room for our parents as they wait for the children while they are in Kid Connection or Confirmation. They have comfy chairs, a kuerig, hot water kettle, fridge filled with cold drinks and snacks.

**3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> grade Valentines Party** – Held on Sunday, February 18th after the second service. Led by Amanda Laughlin. We had pizza, played games and had treats.

**KCHO - Kid Connection Hang-Out** is a once a month gathering for Kid Connection Kids after the Second Service. We have lunch, make crafts and play games. This gives parents a chance to do what they need to do while their kids are taken care of.

**Children's Choir** – meets every other month after the second service. Lunch is provided (each children's choir family pays an annual amount for lunch). We begin in room 1 for lunch and then sing in the Music and Ed Room or the sanctuary. The children's choir sings during worship, four to six times a year. This is led by Barb Larsen, Amanda Boniface and Amanda Laughlin.

**First Communion Class** – we had four children participate in our First Communion class with Pastor Ben in March, during Kid Connection time. Our participants were Phineas Vieta, Maggie Edstrom, Timmy Boniface & Trixie Aist. They, along with Holly Boniface, made bread with Amanda Laughlin on Maundy Thursday and that bread was used for communion. They received their First Communion for the Maundy Thursday worship service.

**Easter Egg Hunt** – Sunday, March 31st, on Easter in between services all children who were here for worship were invited to join us. We also included the preschool and community and had over 100 participants.

**Take Out Church ~ Summer 2024** – “The Fruit of the Spirit” Galatians 5:22-23. All items came in a compostable fruit basket with grocery bag. The items we took pictures with on our vacations and staycations, were fuzzy fruits (they were quite the hit!) Also in our bag, we received strawberry seeds to plant, patient bubbles, fruit of the spirit activity sheets and coloring pages, bendy fruits, fruit scented stickers, fruit gem candies, fruit of the spirit bookmarks, pencils and coloring pencils. Everyone who took pictures with their fuzzy fruit sent it back to me at the end of the summer and put them together in a movie and showed it to the congregation. This has become a favorite tradition.



**VBS 2024– SCUBA**– Was held on Monday, July 8 - Friday July 12. We had 50 participants and 35 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 over 900 pounds of food. We had a VBS Sunday on July 14<sup>th</sup>. We had a food truck (Lemon Grass), Kona Ice and water slide. All of Bethel and VBS participants were invited and it was a SCUBA Community Event. We implemented a new program this year. For an added cost, we had 10 children participate in an afternoon program. It was also SCUBA themed but not as structured. Children brought a bag lunch and made crafts, played outside and had quiet time by watching a short movie. Kayla Burkhart, Jenna Neal, Jody Volk and I ran this portion. This gave families extra time if they found that helpful. We found it successful and will be doing it again.



All those who volunteered and made SCUBA VBS possible:

Robyn Winegardner, Amanda Boniface, Kathy Arnold, Patrice Sera, Tyler Freckman, Devynn Deutscher, Cassidy Deutscher, Jessica Burkhart, Kayla Burkhart, Claire Boniface, Holly Boniface, Nick Boniface, Bryson Riedell, Karina Lui, Jenell Laughlin, Jenny Edstrom, Ellie Edstrom, William Edstrom, Grant Edstrom, Doreen Baldwin, Kit Leong, Claire Leong, Ellen Aist, Piper Aist, AJ Aist, Ashish Das, Lourdes Miura, Minnie Sudarsanam, Dianne Stauffer, Cathy Stahl, Sarah Hanson, Jody Volk, Mary Deutscher, Pastor Ben, Fara Brock, Dan Volk, Ricardo Miura, Ohana Miura, Harumy Miura, Marion Abney, Pam Kenyon, and Luann Wang.



**First Bible Class** – Sarah Jochner (our one 3<sup>rd</sup> grader this year) received her first Bible on Reformation Sunday. For two Sundays in October, I (along with Cathy Stahl’s support) led the 2<sup>nd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> grade class in a Bible class. We continue to learn about the Bible and how we can use it in our everyday life.

**Annual Trunk or Treat** – Community event with Angels on Stage. We had about 23 cars which were decorated and handed out treats. Youth from Angels on Stage, Bethel children, Villa Montessori families and families from the community participated. We had over 100 participants. There was a food truck, crafts and dancing.

**Secret Angels** – Bethel Members prayed for a child during the season of Advent, wrote them a note and this along with a little gift was given to our Kid Connection Children on Sunday, December 22<sup>nd</sup>.

**Kid Connection Christmas Program** – “Christ was Born in Bethlehem” Children acted out the Nativity Story while I narrated it. Our Children’s Choir sang during the program as well. This was shared at the second service on December 22<sup>nd</sup> during the Children’s Message time.



# CONFIRMATION (6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade)

ROBYN WINEGARDNER AND SUSAN LEAVITT

A picture is worth 1,000 words.

Our theme for 2024 was “FISH OUTTA WATER” in the Spring, while we were studying the Old Testament, and “EVERYBODY HAS a STORY” in the Fall, while we were studying the New Testament.



## Confirmands (Top: Left to Right)

Ellie Edstrom, Ella Burkhart, (Susan Leavitt), Cassidy Deutscher, Ellis Hermann, Tristan Janssen, Holly Boniface, Luke Barto, Olivia Greene, Piper Aist and Moose. We love when Moose comes to visit.



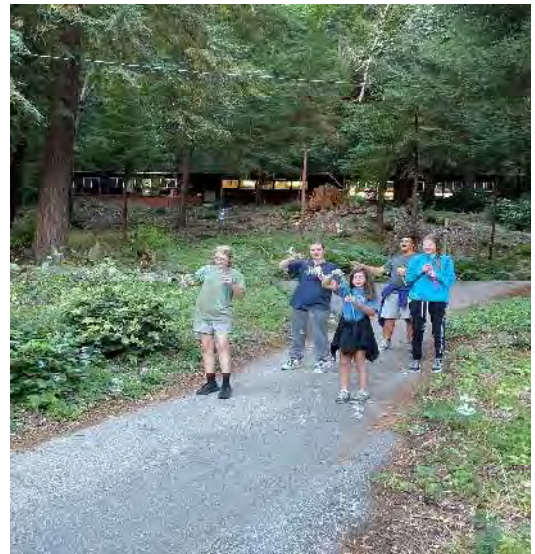
**Confirmation Sunday** for Bryson Riedell, Jocelyn Keish and Drew Brown pictured with a few fellow Confirmands: Cassidy Deutscher, Claire Boniface, Luke Barto, Karina Lui and Ella Burkhart.

**2024 CONFIRMATION HIGHLIGHTS** We finished our Old Testament study and the year’s theme, “Fish Outta Water,” in Spring. We kicked off our New Testament study and year’s theme, “Everybody Has a Story” 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 each other, special time 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 chaperone Rob Lingscheit).**

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 love, 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

2024 - The Worship and Music Ministry team works behind the scenes to prepare Sunday service plans. The team meets as needed. In 2024, 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.

### A JOYFUL NOISE Handbell Choir – Chris Hogan, Director

After 26 years, A Joyful Noise Handbell Choir is still going strong, and 2024 saw several positive developments.

Emily Lee joined us in February. Emily comes with previous experience in youth and adult bell choir, and has been a flexible player, including playing the 8-pound C3 bell. Sylvia Halloran joined us again after a brief hiatus, helping out with a challenging performance on June 9 before rejoining full time in the fall. With the additional players, A Joyful Noise ended the year with nine regular players, which has made a significant difference in our ability to perform more interesting pieces. We continued to welcome the occasional contributions of Alyssa and Nathaniel Hogan, which has allowed us to even tackle very challenging pieces that make full use of our five octaves of handbells.

The handbell choir had the opportunity in 2024 to collaborate with other musicians, including [brass and organ at Easter](#), [organ and choir at Reformation](#), and [Barb Larsen on flute on December 15](#). The choir also had the opportunity to exercise many different handbell techniques, including [chimes](#), [singing bell](#), and [wood block \(also mixed meter\)](#).

Please consider joining handbell choir. Our optimal size is 14 players, which would allow us to play all the music in our repertoire.

## BETHEL CHOIR – Melody Wright Bast, Director of Liturgical Worship

The Bethel Choir music program is going strong! We currently have 12 full time members, rehearsing weekly on Thursdays in the sanctuary, 7:30pm to 9pm and performing typically three Sundays per month. Call time is 8:15 AM.

Sopranos: Margit Schmitt, Barb Larsen, Janice Martinson, Anna Chinn

Altos: Yvonne Loo, Hella Bluhm-Stieber, Margaret Emmert, Susan Lampkin

Tenors/Basses: Mark Evashank, William Weberg, Dave Tribby, Brad Martinson, and Vadim Rivkin served again this season faithfully as our piano accompanist.

Many thanks to guest appearances from Jocelyn Keish, Mary Deutscher, Adam Klopfenstein, Tom Hoegel, Hella Bluhm-Stieber, and Barb Larsen volunteering above and beyond to support our program with their musical gifts. We currently have a guest baritone from a neighboring church, Ernie Lyons, who will be joining us from time to time on Sundays to sing, as his church choir sings only quarterly. If you play an instrument, or wish to sing occasionally with the choir, or want to prepare a solo or be a part of a small ensemble, do reach out to me.

We sing a wide range of styles each season to reflect the large, rich spectrum of sacred music in our denomination and within our Bethel community.

On Reformation Sunday, we celebrated the 35th anniversary of the installation of the Schantz Organ. LaVinnia Pierson provided a wonderful history of that chapter, and our technicians, Roger Inkpen and Rick Gray created videos of the organ chest, giving the congregation a virtual organ crawl. The choir and congregation sang 3 hymn concertati, with brass quartet and organ accompaniment. The service began and ended with J. S. Bach's iconic Prelude and Fugue known as the "St. Anne".

The Christmas Eve celebration once again featured a string quartet from the Palo Alto Children's Orchestra and a small (but elite!) subset of the choir.

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. Once again, this Easter we 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.

Coming up Saturday, March 1, Bethel Choir members and folks from our pews are encouraged to participate in a hymn festival with St. Mark's Lutheran Church San Francisco. The phenomenal, renowned David Cherwien will be guest organist. Look for more details to be posted soon in our Out and About news. 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 8:45-10:30 in the Music and Ed Room.

**THANK YOU** to the 2024 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 – Janice Martinson and Marion Abney**

The Altar Guild Team takes on the important work of communion set-up and clean-up. Other responsibilities also include parament changes, candle oil maintenance, and altar area cleaning. We recently welcomed Janice Martinson’s leadership in working with Marion to coordinate efforts. Special thanks to our team of Anita Tysseland, Debby Coleman, Janice Martinson, Sharon Parady, and Erna Trogisch. We appreciate help from Marilyn Garten and Lynne Stasi in assisting with clean-up. Thank you to Susan Leavitt for baking communion bread to be served the second Sunday of the month. Please consider joining the Altar Guild! Contact Marion Abney at [abney4@pacbell.net](mailto:abney4@pacbell.net) or 408-334-9598 for more information.



## **OFFERING COUNTERS – Liz Tribby**

This year we have had 6 teams (2 people each) who count first service offerings, and 4 teams that count second service. That's enough that most of the time nobody counts more than once a month, but we could use a few more counters for second service to make scheduling a bit easier.



## SUNDAY MORNING COFFEE HOST MINISTRY- Marion Abney

Our dedicated hosts include Ichiro Fujishiro, Sam Sudarsanam, Melissa Janssen, Tori and Mark Evashenk, Ellen and Trixie Aist, Steve Emmert, Vera and Roger Edstrom, Bill and Joann Weberg, Sharon Parady, Carlos Rosa, Judy and Lars Johnson, Ordetta Hovland, and Marion Abney. They devote several hours each hosting and often donate treats. Our preparation area has shifted from the kitchen to Room 5 due to Bethel's kitchen remodeling plans. 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 and engage in conversation as we grow together in community. Contact Marion Abney at [abney4@pacbell.net](mailto:abney4@pacbell.net) or 408-334-9598 if you would like to join our coffee team!



## 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 currently have a stable group of ushers helping at the two Sunday Services. Doris and I appreciate all they do when ushering. They are always ready to help our members when needed.

A big thanks to the team: Rod Brunngraber, Pat Starrett, Mike & Debby Coleman, Roger & Vera Edstrom, Mica Burch, Darrell Kettner, Larry Polyak, Chris Freckmann, 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 Lloyd Darknell.



## MISSION OUTREACH – MARK EVASHENK, MINISTRY LEAD

Serving breakfast at the **San Jose Family Shelter** continued throughout 2024. Bethel serves the 2nd Sunday mornings of February, April, June, August, and October and the 1st Sunday in December. Please contact Chris Ford to get involved as new hands and faces of Jesus are also welcome to help. Chris Ford shares “A mother and her teenage son came through the line for food. The mother asked, "If I skip this meal, can my son have two servings? He's a big eater."

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 hand-made bags and beanies are a special bonus. We'll continue this ministry this April.

A big thank you to the Bethel Community for supporting **Help One Child's** Signs of Hope summer sleepover camp. Eleven pajama sets and 9 swimsuits were donated and delivered to Help One Child. Financial donations totaled \$1750. God's blessings to the Bethel community have flowed through to these foster kids and their families.

Bethel Lutheran Church supported **West Valley Community Services** by donating 36 turkeys to their food bank and \$100. This will help families in our Cupertino community have a nice Thanksgiving meal. A big thanks to all who participated.

We had a wonderful response to the Help One Child's **Giving Tree** program. A total of 46 gifts for foster kids from 1 to 21 years of age were donated by the Bethel Lutheran family and delivered to a Christmas Shop location where foster parents will come to select gifts for their foster children. In addition, \$1100 in gift cards was donated. This has been an amazing display of love and "doing life together".

In 2025 Mission Outreach will continue to invite mission partner ministries to come to Bethel on Sunday morning to briefly preview their mission and services.

Throughout the year I will be collecting one-time use plastic cutlery (must be in its plastic wrapper) for donation to St. Thomas Episcopal Church Sunnyvale and new or gently used suitcases / rollie bags for KAFFA (Kinship, Adoptive & Foster Parent Association).

If you have any ideas for other mission outreach opportunities please contact me. And I look forward to helping to plan and organize our events.

## BETHEL QUILTERS - Joann Weberg

2024 was a very productive year for the Bethel Quilters. Our main purpose is to make quilts and various kits that we send to Lutheran World Relief (LWR). They, in turn, send them to needy people around the world. This year, we had some new ideas on how Bethel youth and adults could help with this charity. One Sunday we held a quilting demonstration between church services. This gave our congregation a glimpse of what we quilters do every Monday morning. Some Bethel Youth participated and also had a lot of fun designing some lap quilts. This activity with the youth gave us the idea of having them help with the Personal Care Kit project for LWR. They were successful in collecting kit items and assembling them into 84 kits for the October LWR Ingathering. Also, 200 school kits were assembled one Saturday afternoon by 13 young Cub Scouts. In 2024, our Quilters made 160 Quilts, along with 7 Fabric Kits.

The Northern California Ingathering for LWR was sponsored by Bethel and was supported by quilts and kits from 27 other churches.

This year LWR sent us a wonderful Multimedia-design young lady that spent our first Ingathering day with us. She was here to learn more about our October Ingathering. Many pictures were taken and she interviewed Ordetta Hovland, a founding member of the Quilters. I was also interviewed as the Key Leader for LWR's Northern California Ingathering.

Total donations from Northern California were 1521 Quilts, 1072 School kits, 787 Personal Care kits, 157 Baby Care kits and 65 Fabric Kits. Those were all packaged in 484 boxes. This was eventually trucked to Seattle, placed in shipping containers and sent by rail to LWR's warehouse in Maryland. We thank our Bethel's Endowment committee for the support money to help cover our shipping expenses for all we produced.

We would like to invite any and all to join us on Monday mornings from 9:15am to 12noon. Coffee and goodies are available at 10:30am.



## CREEK CLEANUP – Hella Bluhm-Stieber

In 2024, I organized two creek cleanups. On April 14, we cleaned up Calabazas Creek between Bollinger and Blaney. 6 adults collected 124 pounds of trash including glass, 2 pounds of recycling, and 80 pounds of metal scrap (a shopping cart, wheel, etc.). We were a small but mighty crew!



On November 23, 2024 we cleaned up Calabazas Creek between Vallco Parkway and Tantau. This is the part of the creek that Bethel Lutheran Church adopted. The rain stopped just in time for us to do the cleanup. 6 volunteers collected a total of 84 pounds of trash, 1.3 pounds of recycling, 4.85 pounds of glass, 6.83 pounds of metal, and 2.64 pounds of plastic. In addition, we hauled up several water-clogged blankets, bed sheets, and some wire mesh.



## ROTATING SAFE CAR PARK (RSCP) – Hella Bluhm-Stieber, Robyn Winegardner and Paul Baldwin

**Success:** We continued to do our part to make a small contribution to help with the homelessness problem. This was our 2<sup>nd</sup> year offering our parking lot for those needing a safe place to sleep. After clearing administrative and facility hurdles, Bethel was able to provide safe parking for 6 weeks for 14-18 people who could not otherwise afford the cost of housing.

**Team:** We continued our partnership with the LDS Church in Saratoga who had extensive experience in hosting the safe car park. In addition, we received guidance from the Rotating Safe Car Park Leadership at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church 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.

**PR:** One of our goals from last year was to have a speaker featuring the safe car parking program. That is why we invited Norman Puck from the RSCP leadership team to speak to us after church on September 29. After the presentation, there was time to ask questions. The other goal was to increase the number of volunteers from Bethel. In 2023, we provided ¼ of all volunteers, in 2024, we provided 2/3 of volunteers for the hospitality hours. That means we more than doubled our volunteer slots, which is mainly thanks to Robyn volunteering, every morning!!!



**Volunteers:** We started signups for volunteers and donations at the ministry fair, beginning of September. We had 36 volunteers from Bethel. Most (26) helped with hospitality hours. There were an additional 26 hospitality volunteers from other churches. There was one hospitality shift in the morning and one in the evening for about 1 hour per shift. In addition, Volunteers cooked hot meals once a week (Bethel provided 3 dinners). 17 Bethel volunteers plus the Bethel Youth group and WOW helped provide dinners, prepare hard-boiled eggs or frozen dinners for our guests. We were thankful to receive 10 quilts from the Bethel Quilters for our guests. – **A big thank you to all of our volunteers!!!**



**Challenges:** We had originally signed up to help for one month, and then found out that the host church for the following month was not available. So, we volunteered to extend our hosting for another 2 weeks. Thanks to all the volunteers who stepped up to help!

**Costs:** We defrayed much of our costs by asking for donations and grants. We had signups for donations at the ministry fair in September and included a list of items in a bulletin insert in October. We started accepting donations in October. We received many in kind food and supply donations, \$720 in monetary donations, and a \$2000 grant from the endowment committee. Some of these moneys were used to pay for unexpected facility-related expenses. In addition, some of our food and supply expenses and the two port-a-potties were paid through grants from the overall RSCP program.

**Planning for the Future:** We would like Bethel to lead the Rotating Safe Car park program for a month by ourselves, in 2025. Our goal is to increase our volunteer numbers by everybody recruiting another volunteer to help.

## 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 WNSS was revived in October 2023 and typically meets on the first Wednesday of the month October through May. Typically 30-40 people joined each session for great discussion and dessert in the Fireside Room each month. We hope you'll join us!

January- member Dave Denny shared his latest published poetry

February- Aaron Rao from the Northern California Innocence Project, a non-profit (located in Santa Clara) whose mission is to fight for the freedom of the wrongly incarcerated.

March- two members from NAMI shared what it is like to live with mental disorders such as bipolar disorder, anxiety and schizophrenia

April- CEO of West Valley Community Services who gives free groceries as well as other comprehensive assistance to those in need in Cupertino and surrounding areas.

May- Cupertino City Manager Pamela Wu updated us about the new Vallco site building project

October- The Bill Wilson Center, a local nonprofit with a focus on supporting homeless youth, young adults, and families

November- Liz Milner from CIC Ministries joined us, spreading the Gospel and counseling to the incarcerated all over our surrounding counties

December- Mission to Mexico. Tom Hoegel shared some history and statistics of the 69 trips he's taken with Bethel, and this time we had a delicious catered taco dinner!

### WOW (Women of Wednesday) – Kathryn Montano

The Bethel Women of Wednesday continue to meet in person in the Fireside Room from 10am- 12pm throughout 2024 (we take the summer months off). WOW continues to volunteer to sort food at Second Harvest Food Bank, and we pray together and support each other. Contact Kathryn Montano for more information.

### MARTHA CIRCLE BIBLE STUDY – Vera Edstrom

In 2024 we had bible study from January through June. (No summer meetings) We use the *Gather* Magazine for our Bible study. We currently meet on the 3rd Mondays at 12pm in Fireside.

### READERS ANONYMOUS – Kathy Arnold

Readers Anonymous meets nearly every 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of each month to discuss a great book chosen the previous month. The book selection vary- Love reading and laughing? Join us!

### LIBRARY TEAM – Margaret Lund

The Library Committee continues to meet most Wednesdays.

## 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.

The team seeks to communicate with those in need via emails, texts, phone calls or in person. We added a new outreach opportunity under the Caring Connection umbrella last year and continued it this year. Each month different groups within Bethel send greetings (cards) to our College Age Young Adults. We started up again in October. **Thanks to Women of Wednesday, Caring Connection, Council, Choir, the Confirmands, Senior High Youth and Kid Connection** who sent out greetings in our initial year. Thanks in advance to **Bad Girls Village, Quilters and Men of Monday**.



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

We now have 83 Prayer Byte subscribers, aka, Prayer Warriors, that 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 daily. If you are interested in receiving daily Prayer Bytes via email, just contact Mary Deutscher or Liz Tribby or Robyn Winegardner.

## BETHEL COUNCIL

The Bethel Lutheran Church Council was blessed this year, 2024, with dedicated elected members who were faithful in their meeting attendance and discussion contributions. They were committed to their positions and carrying out their church-wide responsibilities.

Monthly, the Council was favored by reports from the large variety of ministries and activities, from Bible studies to Quilting, that favored our Bethel membership and made it easy to invite people to learn about and join our community. This includes the meeting of a number of small Bible Study discussion groups, as well as organized study groups led by Pr. Ben on Sunday mornings or Wednesday evenings. There are also opportunities for leaders outside our congregation to share perspectives and information on the first Wednesdays of the month. Caring Connection worked hard to reach out with caring to our members. Women of Wednesday met regularly to inform and enlighten participants, along with many other Bethel activities, both inspirational and adventurous.

Kid Connection, Confirmation and our Youth Group continue to inspire and meet the needs of our young ones. A special, informal discussion lounge was made available this year for parents to enjoy during youth activities. In May, 3 of our youth confirmed their baptismal promise. Notably, Amanda does an amazing job of organizing ideas, adults, kids, children's messages, fun and faith filled activities for so many of us. Robyn organized a college age greeting program for those who currently are in college, inviting many Bethel organizations to greet our young adults. Many thanks to all the leaders of our kids.

The biggest challenge of the year would be our rental property in Zoar Hall, Torvend Hall and the Pre-School building. We have become dependent on the lease income. Villa Montessori was our initial tenant, meeting the goals of the tax Welfare Exemption, serving charitable human service organizations. After much searching, led by the Finance Committee and Fara, we are hoping to see the remainder of the rooms soon filled. A congregational meeting was held in August to inform our members of the new fiscal year's budget, including our current donation and tithing goals. Many thanks to the Finance Committee, Fara, and Dave Tribby for their hard work keeping the books and finances working to our best advantage, as well as searching for a new tenant, updating our tax status, and finalizing the parsonage purchase.

In addition, we have begun to install an updated sprinkler system, initiated by our status as a landlord. Remodeling efforts have begun in Torvend Hall, including the kitchen. Repairs have been done to our plumbing system, as well as other things. Tom Hoegel has been the lead on these projects. We were excited to celebrate Tom's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary as Bethel's employee in August as part of the Ministry celebration BBQ.

We intend to pursue a part-time position in Community Outreach as part of our 2025 goals.

Bethel members continue to enjoy our community as well as the faith filled and inspiring learning opportunities and worship services. As we learn in Hebrew 10:24-25. *“And let us consider hot to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”*

- Doreen Baldwin



## FINANCE AND HUMAN RESOURCES – FARA BROCK, DIRECTOR

Thanks to the strong support of the congregation, Bethel finished its fiscal year with a total income 1.9% above forecast and total expenses 1.9% below budget. The net ordinary income was \$23,000 compared to -\$17,000 that was expected in the budget.

Throughout 2024 the church continued to address the needs of our community by donating to many local and international relief agencies. Bethel gave \$92,000 to the Synod and outside agencies with Benevolence and Outreach 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 Bootstrap Operation and the New Life Band.

Bethel experienced a major change in school tenants in 2024. After a 5-year presence at Bethel, Tulip Kids Academy moved to their newly built preschool building in Santa Clara. Villa Montessori School moved into Bethel's preschool buildings which allowed them to continue a 60-year presence in Cupertino. Bethel's campus is a popular camp location for children, mostly elementary school aged. We have short term rental agreements with 3 summer camps and 3 classes/camps that meet during the school year.

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 Fiscal Officer, on budgeting and financial reporting;
- Ann Marie Kenitzer who consults on Lease negotiations
- Bethel's Finance Committee: Dave Tribby, Doreen Baldwin, Tony Stieber, Joan Christensen, Ann Marie Kenitzer, Kristin Lui and Pastor Ben;
- Mark Evashenk on Benevolence and Special Designated giving;
- Darryl 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 and
- Dave Larsen who manages Bethel's Capital Assets.

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

## **NOMINATING COMMITTEE – Brett Deutscher, Dianne Stauffer, Ralph Miller 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 for 2025. This included the Youth Member-at-Large in the summer, and a few Council members in the Winter. Strong collaboration between these groups resulted in finding excellent candidates. Additional duties included securing nominations for Audit Committee, Endowment Committee and the next Nominating Committee. We thank Bethel members for being receptive to trying new committees and supporting Bethel and its ministries.

## **ENDOWMENT FUND COMMITTEE – Ralph Miller, Dave Larsen, Robin Kettner, Greg Aist, and Jim Lentfer**

The Endowment Fund is a financial account held 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. It is not meant to provide funding for ongoing activities that should be funded from the operating budget.

Endowment Funds are usually funded by a lump sum gift, perhaps a memorial for a lost loved one or a distribution from a person's 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 the Ministry Growth Fund 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; any undistributed gains remain in the Endowment Fund.

The fund value at the end of December 2024 was \$224K, representing a Ministry Growth Fund increase of about 8% during the year due to positive market conditions. This includes a gain on principal of about \$8,200.

This past year, the Endowment Committee made fund distributions totaling \$5,900 towards the following:

- First Wednesday Education forums - stipend and refreshments
- High School Youth – Travel to National Youth Gathering
- Calabazas Creek Cleanup - Replacement trash grabbers
- Rotating Safe Car Park – Food Supplies
- Lutheran World Relief – Quilt shipping expenses

The Endowment Committee sponsored a Planned Giving Seminar on September 22, it was attended by 18 members. Wayne Peterson from Thrivent reviewed the concepts surrounding planned giving and

presented a few different methods of doing so. Feedback from the event was very positive, and a lot of good questions were asked during the session. Hopefully we can repeat this in the future for those who were unable to attend.

Given that 2024 saw an increase in the balance of our Endowment fund, the committee took input from the congregation at the end of 2024, and is planning to make additional gifts in 2025. We plan to use about half of the 2024 gains towards the following: West Valley Community Services, an Onsite Educational Seminar for parents of young children, and seed money for a new Bethel Young Adult Ministry. More details to be announced soon.

We hope that additional ideas will be brought forth later in 2025, ideally, we will have the new Director of Community Engagement position filled, and can assist with projects identified by that person.

Thanks to Ralph Miller and Robin Kettner for their service over the past two years, as they will be rotating out, and replaced by two new members for 2025.

## **TECHNOLOGY & ADMINISTRATION**

### **PUBLICATIONS: eNewsletter and Sunday Worship Bulletins - Elise Holst**

The Weekly eNewsletter is published through Constant Contact. It is emailed to all subscribers on Thursdays at 10pm. It contains: a theme for upcoming Sunday (matching the title image in the Sunday Worship Bulletin Banner, and the title slide projected during the Sunday service), events at Bethel for the upcoming week, announcements of church events and requests, occasional ELCA information, a monthly staff meeting video, and associated relevant information. Many thanks to all ministries for providing information to publish in the eNewsletter. And many thanks to Liz Tribby for Constant Contact Tech Support. Bethel's weekly eNewsletters are also published at our website.

Sunday Worship Bulletins contain a Sunday's Order of Worship, upcoming events and announcements (a subset of what is published in the eNewsletter), and participants in the service. Many thanks to all those who provide information to the Sunday Worship Bulletins: Melody Wright (for 8:45am worship and music info), Clayton Johnson (10:45am music info), Pastor Ben, Mark Evashenk (Lectors and Deacons identification), Karen Ewers (flower dedications), and all other ministries that provide information to publish in the eNewsletter. Many thanks also to Mary Deutscher for creating bulletin inserts as needed, and printing and assembling the bulletins.

The Sunday Bulletins are also published on our website.

## 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 sermons podcast feed, the home page and the church calendar.

Each week, there were on average 121 user views of Bethel’s YouTube channel, <https://www.youtube.com/user/BethelCupertino>, in 2024. The highest views were for the Celebration of Life services for Donna Cole and for Carol Eliason. The most-watched worship services were Thanksgiving Eve Eve and 8:45 Easter.

178 new events were submitted to the Bethel calendar in 2024.

593 updates were applied to the web site in 2024, including web, pubs and council.

Google Analytics reports 183 page views per week to our home page. 52% of views are from mobile devices.

Google Search reports 33 clicks per day (for “organic searches”).

## TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT - Liz Tribby and Brad Martinson

Things have been quiet this year in office technology. The computers are all aging (8-10 years old) and still running Windows 10, but still functioning other than minor problems with keyboards and mice. We are planning on a major upgrade this coming year for the 4 office computers to move everyone to Windows 11, probably in the Fall.

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*Thank you to all the Ministry Leaders and staff that contributed to our 2024 Annual Report!*

