

THE VISITOR



Volume 67, No. 7

July 2017

**“Blessed to serve God
and share our faith with
all!”**

Join us for Church on Sunday:

Choir Practice	9:04 a.m.
Sunday School for all ages	9:15 a.m.
Sunday Worship	10:30 a.m.
Fellowship	11:30 a.m.

CHURCH CONTACT INFORMATION

1312 S. 45th Street; Omaha, NE 68106

Phone: 402-551-1063

Email: blchurch1@q.com

Bethel Home Page - <http://bethellutheranomaha.org/>

<https://www.facebook.com/BethelLutheranChurchOmaha>

~ Pastors Rich & Rebecca Sheridan ~

~ Pastor Rich Cell: 402-680-3901 ~

~Pastor Rebecca Cell: 402-658-7792 ~

~ Pastor Rebecca: pastor.rsheridan@gmail.com ~

~ Pastor Rich: rich@nebraskasynod.org ~

Church Council Executive Committee:

Jan Kammerer, Pres. (402-210-9870)

LeAnn Ryan, Vice Pres (402-639-7190)

Tom Haskell, Treas. (402-391-7966)

Erica Heiden, Secretary (308-991-7285)

Administrative Assistant: Laura Davis

Choir Director: Stephen Lawrence

Organist: Teri Davis

Custodian: Corey McDaniel

PASTOR'S MESSAGE

For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many. ~

Mark 10:45

Happy Independence Day! On the fourth of July, we hopefully take time to not only light a bunch of fireworks, grill some meat, and enjoy the day off, but also remember our American heritage – the courage and sacrifice of many so that we can enjoy freedom today. As American Christians, and, in particular, as Lutheran Christians, we can also reflect upon what it means to be “free” in Christ. Hopefully you’ve heard the news by now, but 2017 marks the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation, when Martin Luther posted the 95 Theses on the door of the Wittenburg Chapel. The printing press allowed for more freedom of information to spread than ever before across the globe. One of Luther’s most impactful writings was not the 95 Theses but his treatise “On the Freedom of a Christian.” If you have not read it, I recommend it to you. I have several copies you may borrow, you can find it online, or at your local library. One of Luther’s primary critiques of the Christian church at the time was that too many rules were placed upon Christians to get into heaven. This went against what was in Scripture as well as the basic traditional teachings and creeds of the church, Luther argued. The grace of God in Jesus Christ, Luther taught, was not something we could work to earn or deserve. Grace is a free gift from God for all people, regardless of what we do or don’t do. We are saved by Jesus, not by our own works.

Luther frequently preached, taught, and wrote about this freedom from obligation to anybody because of Jesus’ death and resurrection. In this particular treatise, Luther wrote, “A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.” This is classic Luther – to say two opposites at the same time are true of ourselves as Christians. Because Christ died for us, we are free and subject to no one. We may feel guilty or indebted to others – “I should call my mom more,” or “I should eat less sweets,” or “I need to spend

more time with my kids.” These are all false obligations we create that God does not hold against us or pressure us to do. God does not engage in guilt trips to earn God’s love. God loves us freely and unconditionally.

HOWEVER, God sends us Jesus to be a model of the godly life, so that we might serve as Jesus did. That means we are freed to serve – not because we have to, but because we want to. As we worship together, learn together, read the Scriptures and serve one another, we can’t help but want to serve God and the world God has made more. The faith God gives us through the Holy Spirit moves us to do so. This is what our American revolutionary forefathers and mothers fought and died for, too – not for an individualistic society so that anyone can do whatever he or she wants without consequences or regard for anyone else, but so that we might be free to serve. This Independence Day, may we celebrate the gift of God’s love for us that is FREE, and may we also strive to be God’s hands, feet, and voice in this world because of this freedom!

Pastor Rebecca

Pastors Out of the Office:

Pastors Rebecca and Rich will be on vacation with family in New Jersey July 3-July 12. Deacon Timothy Siburg, Director for Stewardship in the Nebraska Synod, will be preaching and leading worship on Sunday, July 9. Timothy will also be leading the adult Bible Study at 9:15 that morning and will be available to talk to us after worship as well. Pastor Jan Peterson is on call for any pastoral care emergencies during that time: (402)689-7201 (cell).

Grace to Us, Grace through Us Synod Assembly 2017:

Earlier this month, Jan Kammerer and I had the privilege to represent Bethel, along with Pastors Rich and Rebecca, at the 2017 Nebraska Synod Assembly in Kearney. We worshiped with Lutherans from across our state, learned more about what the ELCA is working on nationally and saw how the Nebraska Synod is saving and changing lives through its ministries. The theme for the weekend was Grace to Us, Grace through Us, which we prayed as a breath prayer, silently saying “Grace to Us” as we inhaled and “Grace through Us” as we exhaled. It was a way to stop

and remind ourselves of the gift of grace that God gave us through Jesus and our privilege and duty to share it with His kingdom.

With this year being the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, we heard from keynote speaker Anthony Bateza, a Luther specialist and professor at St. Olaf. He explored lessons from Luther that are still relevant today including being committed to – and challenging – justice and doing the job God has given us, with the gifts we have, in the place where we have been placed. I also enjoyed hearing from Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton and Bishop Brian Maas. In a time of political separation, it was refreshing to hear that the ELCA is committed to assisting refugees and building community with people who may not look like us or have the same beliefs as we do.

It was a great couple days and I left Kearney not only with a photo of Jan and myself with an inflatable Martin Luther, but more importantly feeling proud of the important work happening within our state, country and world through ELCA ministries. Thank you for the opportunity.

Melissa Carlberg

Crossroads Clothes Closet

Partners and Friends:

As you know, Crossroads maintains a men's and women's clothes closet for our worshipers and because of your generosity we are able to keep a supply of clothes. However, the need is great especially as the seasons change and is ongoing.

We are always in need of men's work clothes of all sizes. Jeans, long and short sleeved shirts, light weight sweat shirts and jackets (of course that changes in cooler and winter months) and the same for women. Men's work gloves, as many do outside work and if anyone has gently used work boots of any size, they are always needed. Men's white cotton socks, all sizes are always in demand. There is also a need of gently used clothes that could be used for interview purposes.

Underwood Hills Presbyterian is open from 9 to noon Tuesday through Friday to deliver the items.

Blessings, Diane

BETHEL NEWS

Worship/Education:

Starting June 25 through July 23 from 9:15 to 10:15am, we will be looking at **five gifts of**

discipleship. We will be trying to better answer the question, “what does it mean to follow Jesus?”

To wrap up the summer, we will be doing a Bible study on **hunger, economics, and our faith** using an ELCA World Hunger resource July 30 through August 27 from 9:15 to 10:15am. We will meet in Pilgrim Hall for every series. All of these studies require no materials – we will even give you a Bible if you don’t bring your own. Come to one session or all of them!

Women’s Circle Study on July 20:

Pastor Rich will be leading the Women’s Circle Study on July 20 from approximately 9:30 – 11:00 a.m. The study will focus on conversations happening within the ELCA toward a social statement on “Faith, Sexism, and Justice.” All are welcome to join us in Pilgrim Hall for the discussion.

Prayer Request:

At the Nebraska Synod Assembly, each congregation took a name of another congregation in our Synod to pray for throughout the year. We received First English Lutheran Church in Kimball, Nebraska. You might want to first look at where Kimball is on a map and google more information about the church. Do you know anyone who lives in Kimball or is from there? Let the pastors know! In your daily prayers, please remember to pray for First English, its pastor, members, and the whole community of Kimball.

Something new will be happening at Bethel:

A Gallery of Art

Bethel has many talented members and it’s time we highlight their talents. The idea is to create a “Gallery Wall” to display photos, paintings, glass work, or drawings, all done by members of Bethel. The gallery will be located on the north wall in Pilgrim Hall. Art will be rotated between artists; the goal is to show off our talented members and their works of art! The hope is that you will take part – contact me and we will work out just what would be needed.

Rich Ryan

Thank yous:

Dear Bethel Lutheran Church,

We appreciate your recent donation of 19 – 21 lbs. of food to Project Hope! Our clients are

blessed by the generous donations of people like you. We know there are many different places to donate your gently used items and we are thankful that you bring them to us.

May God continue to bless you. Thank you again for your generosity.

Blessings! Lori

Dear Bethel Lutheran Church,

Thank you for the use of your facility during the 2017 City of Omaha General Election held May 9th. Without your cooperation, the Election Commission would not be able to provide the quality polling places that the voters of Douglas County have come to expect. Your efforts helped to ensure the success we experienced administering this election.

Sincerely,

Brian W. Kruse

Douglas County Election Commissioner

Thank you to everyone who made cakes and helped serve the meal for Crossroads Prison Ministry on June 25 at Underwood Hills Presbyterian Church. Your dedication to this ministry is important to God’s work.

Laura Davis

OTHER NEWS

Tai Chi: There will be no Tai Chi classes on July 3. See you on July 10.

SERVING IN WORSHIP

SERVING AFTER CHURCH FELLOWSHIP

****Please sign up to host after-church fellowship. The calendar is in the kitchen. Thank you****

ALTAR FLOWER DONATIONS:

07/02	Zoe Smith & Mary Kay Boschee
07/09	Dan & Kathy Vacek
07/16	Erica Heiden
07/23	Tom & Gloria McDaniel
07/30	Mark & LeAnn Ryan

READERS/COMMUNION ASSISTANTS

07/02	Rosemary Huetter/Anjel Huetter
07/09	Mary Kay Boschee
07/16	Melissa Carlberg/Mike Harald
07/23	Bev Smith
07/30	John Schmidt

BIRTHDAYS

07/01 Robin Kammerer
07/03 Vickie Novak
07/04 Elliott Smith
07/06 Caroline Ruzicka
07/07 Jean Darling
07/07 Mathew Smith
07/08 Marcie Garnett
07/08 Ivan O'Brien

07/16 Judy Zimmerman
07/21 Patricia Santon
07/23 Nicole O'Brien
07/23 Jennifer Walden
07/24 Steve Kraft
07/24 Anastasia Petersen
07/29 Rich Ryan

ANNIVERSARIES

07/24 Pastors Rich & Rebecca Sheridan