

BETHEL LUTHERAN CHURCH

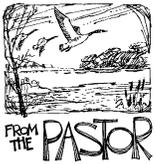
A congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
79 Brooklyn Street PO Box 606 Portville, NY 14770
(716)-933-6699

e-mail: bethelportville@gmail.com

Websites: (congregation) www.bethelportvilleny.org; (synod) www.upstatenysynod.org;
(ELCA) www.elca.org

Worship Service - Sundays at 9:00am; Sunday School at 10:30am
God's work. Our hands.

FEBRUARY 2015



Dear Brothers and Sisters of Bethel, I wish you peace, hope and joy in Jesus Christ as you enter this time of prayer, reflection and planning. I know that for many Christians, a time of pastoral vacancy is unsettling. Because of that, the initial reaction can be to simply find a new pastor—a *replacement*—as soon as possible. However, this temptation can lead to myriad unforeseen difficulties and disappointments down the road. It can also lead to a frustrated future, one that is hampered with limitations that could have been avoided if the vacancy had been treated as an “opportunity” of sorts.

Of course, any pastoral vacancy is the sort of “opportunity” one might wish to avoid altogether, but I urge you to view this period of time as an occasion:

- To reflect on your past (both the good *and* the bad);
- To fully embrace where you are in the present; and
- To plan realistically for your future as a congregation of Christ’s Church.

In the weeks and months ahead I will be privileged to serve your Council and (in time) your Call Committee as a Pastoral Leader in Transition, specifically I will be your “*Administrative Leader during Transition*”. That means I will be working primarily with your leaders to realize the goals mentioned above, so that you can position yourselves to call a pastor or pastoral team who will best lead you to use your specific strengths to build the Kingdom of God in Portville.

To get to that point we’ll have to do a lot of reflecting on what makes you strong, and on where your weaknesses are—while that may seem like a quick and easy

assessment, in reality it is not always as simple as it first appears. I will be asking them to devote themselves to prayer and reflection on the Word of God at this critical point in your congregation’s history. I will also be asking them to work through *Churchnext*, a book written a few years back by Eddie Gibbs. We will frame our thoughts around several key questions churches need to ask themselves at all times—and especially at times of pastoral transition. I will also urge them to carefully listen to all the members of Bethel, and to maturely lead you all in the direction they sense God leading.

They have a profound task before them. I urge every member of Bethel to pray for them as you share your anxieties and your hopes with them over the next several months. They must evaluate the thoughts and concerns of the whole of your congregation. This can cause frustration...please respect the heavy burden they bear for the sake of your entire congregation: Christ’s congregation.

Pastor Meeks will serve as Pastoral Care Leader during this time. She will likely be more visible during the coming months, and you can certainly share with her your thoughts and needs. We will be in close communication throughout your vacancy. You may reach me via email dr.d.cheek@gmail.com or by calling me at Immanuel (716) 372-0650.

I look forward to seeking God’s plan for Bethel alongside you in the coming days. You will be in my prayers daily. May his peace sooth your souls and send you into the world to build his Kingdom. May his Spirit lead you in ways that bless you now and for decades ahead!

Yours In Christ

Pastor Derek



Pray First!

- For all service men and women, and their families, especially *Juan Fraustro, Andrew Wright, Casey McCarthy, Mike Copponi, Lee Walden, Josh Canaan, Zachary Russell and Kendra Linn*. For Christ to be made known in our companion synods – *Zimbabwe and Zambia*, and our partner synod – *Central/Southern Illinois Synod*. For the Franciscan community at *Mt. Irenaeus* and the *Burkhart Retreat Center for Life* – retreats in our local area. For our Bishops, Bishop Elizabeth Eaton (ELCA) and John Macholz Upstate New York Synod), Assistants to the Bishop Dave Preisinger, Mary Johnson, and Dean Daniel Rumpfelt. For the mission congregations in our synod—*Organic Faith* in Amherst and *Todos los Hijos de Dios* in Amsterdam. For the pastors and congregations in our Southwestern Conference and for our congregation council leaders – President *Gary Murray*, Secretary *Jo Kile*, Treasurer *Doug Ploetz*, and members *Ruth Brewer, Rick Giberson, Linda Scott, Jerry Maerten and Bryan Hatch*. For our sister congregation, *Peace Lutheran* and their ministry in Slidell, LA for the ministry of *ELCMA* – Evangelical Lutheran Coalition for Mission in Appalachia. For area ministries: *Genesis House, Portville Community Food Pantry, and Interfaith Caregivers*.

No matter how small our income, the task before us is how to divide our money proportionately between our own needs and the needs of our church community. Surely that is true for a great many of us ... and if it isn't, shouldn't it be?

Each of us should take time to consider how seriously we want to take our stewardship as members of God's Church. It is a given that we take seriously the needs of our family. We are compelled to do that as the bills we may owe remind us regularly. When it comes to dividing our money between our family's needs and the needs of our church, we should be very serious in our decision making.

There is a true story found in Philip Yancey's devotional book called *Grace Notes* that is quite interesting. It is about a pastor in Washington, D.C. who was told about a widow in his church whose income was barely enough to feed her family. A deacon who knew about the situation suggested the pastor go to her and suggest that the woman cut back on her gifts to the church in order to meet her family's needs. The pastor did and it turned out to be a suggestion he learned he should not have made. The widow said with sadness in her voice the following: "You are trying to take away the last thing that gives me dignity and meaning."



PLEASE SEE BULLETIN BOARD outside the sanctuary for a COMPLETE SECRETARY'S REPORT.

Prayer: Dear Lord, please help us to live to please you. We know that it is in living for you and serving you that will make our lives the most meaningful and joyous. In Christ's name. Amen

Council Member

- Gary Murray
- Ruth Brewer
- Ruth Brewer
- Jo Kile
- Doug Ploetz
- Jerry Maerten
- Linda Scott
- Bryan Hatch
- Rick Giberson
- Gary Murray

Committee Assignment

- Council President
- Vice President
- Worship and Music
- Stewardship
- Treasurer
- Outreach/Evangelism
- Advertising
- Education
- Property
- Fellowship



Choir practice is held Sunday mornings at 7:45am. All are welcome to join. **No audition necessary.**



Bible Study Resumes

Bible study on Wednesday evenings at 6 and Sunday mornings at 11. We are participating in a study called "Table and Font: Who is Welcome." It is a study regarding the sacraments, especially Holy Communion. Copies of the study guide and one of the resources, *The Use of the Means of Grace* are on the small table by the kitchen in the fellowship hall.

We NEED people to sign up as worship servants. We are in need of Lectors, Prayer Leaders, Ushers, Communion assistants and Altar Guild. There are sign-up sheets on the table in Fellowship Hall. Please sign up for one or more of these positions as you feel led. Thank you.



FOR YOUR UPDATE AND INFORMATION

Fundraiser Funds are divided as follows:
10% Charity of our choice
10% Benevolence
Rest in general fund



Our fifth pancake breakfast on Saturday, Jan 10th was another success and took in about \$325.00. Thanks to everyone who helped us with this by either working, eating, or both.



The February breakfast is scheduled for the first Saturday of the month, Feb. 7th from 8:00am to 11:00am. Please come and join us and bring your friends and neighbors. We need your help in making this fundraiser a success. Thank you.



We have received our clothing drop box to collect clothes for people in need. Box is located in the parking lot of the church next to the utility shed. If you have clothing you wish to drop off, please place them in plastic bags and tie them up. Donations are greatly appreciated. Thank you.

Notice: Deadline for newsletter articles is the third Sunday of each month. Please send them to me at my home e-mail at Junebug44@frontiernet.net or you can leave written ones in the top basket on the secretary's desk in the office. If you have questions you can call me at 814-698-2648

June



A thank you note was received from Pastor David and Linda Hoffman of St. Philip the Deacon Lutheran church, which reads: "A belated thank you for so graciously giving us the Bethel tour last October. Our three years in Portville and Olean (1973-76) were the best of times. We continue to hold Bethel in our prayers".

Pastor David and Linda Hoffman.

Please accept our warmest thanks for your support of Gift Tree. You helped to make this holiday season joyous for many families in the community.

Interfaith Caregivers & the Olean Time Herald



MEMORIAL FUND – JANUARY 2015

IN MEMORY OF LINDA KILBOURN

Bob and Ruth Brewer
Kurt and Caroline Miller
The Rick Giberson family (Choir Fund)
Jean Morgan
Bill and Judy Graves
Nancy Renner (Choir Fund)
Skip and Bev Robinson (Choir Fund)

NOTICE

Women of the ELCA Southwestern Conference will hold its Spring Assembly on February 28th at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Falconer from 10-2.

Lunch and snacks will be provided.

The program is A LENTEN Retreat "Journey to the Cross" led by Gloria Anderson and Jann Ball. A day to get closer to your inner faith and your relationship with Jesus Christ.

An informal get together for the day to help grow your spiritual self.

We invite you to join our community of Christian women who have supported one another for more than 25 years. We hope you will share your gifts and talents as you connect with other women of faith.

To help plan for the event please RSVP to Stephanie Buccola, Conference Coordinator Southwestern Conference Women of the ELCA @ jbuccola@stny.rr.com or [716-665-4221](tel:716-665-4221)
Hope to see you there, bring your friends, all are welcome.

February 2015



Worship Assistants

Acolyte *Scott Wolsky*

Communion Assistants...*Caroline Miller*
.....*Nannette Giberson*

Lectors:

Feb. 1st *Ariel Kile*
Feb. 8th *Connie Smith-Matteson*
Feb 15th *Bev. Robinson*
Feb. 22nd *Linda Scott*

Prayer Leaders

Feb 1st *Jo Ann Kile*
Feb 8th *Bev. Robinson*
Feb.15th *Caroline Miller*
Feb. 22nd *Doug Ploetz*

Ushers*Rick Giberson*
.....*Haeydon Brewer*

Altar Guild..... *Trinette Brewer*

Bread Bakers *Ron Kile*

Mail Greeter.....*Caroline Miller*

2—Marilyn Ploetz
—Troy Giberson

3—Annie Blicharz

5—Robert Baughman

12—Robert MacPherson

14—Kay Anderson

19—Irelynn MacPherson

20—Kevin Hepfer

20—Warner Johnson

21—Skip Robinson

26—Linda Scott



20—Bill & Karen Snow

BETHEL LUTHERAN CHURCH CALENDAR - FEBRUARY 2015

Sunday, Feb. 1st

SECOND SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS

7:45am-Choir rehearsal
9:00am- Worship with Fellowship following
11:00am - Adult Bible Study and Sunday School

Sunday, Feb. 8th

BAPTISM OF OUR LORD

7:45am- Choir rehearsal
9:00am - Worship with Fellowship following
11:00am - Adult Bible Study and Sunday School
11:00am - Evangelism meeting

Sunday, Feb. 15th

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

7:45am-Choir rehearsal
9:00am- Worship with Fellowship following
10:30am - ***Confirmation class***
11:00am - Adult Bible Study and Sunday School

Thurs. Feb. 19th

7:00pm - Council Meeting

Sunday, Feb. 22nd

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

7:45am-Choir rehearsal
9:00am- Worship with fellowship following
11:00am - Adult Bible Study and Sunday School

HYMN HISTORY

GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN

1907

Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them. Luke 2:20 (NKJV)

During the bitter days of slavery, black workers on American plantations, solaced themselves with song and created a unique form of American hymnology----the Negro spiritual. It was the Jubilee Singers of Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, that took the plantation songs of the Negro slaves to the entire world. One of the last “spirituals” to be uncovered and published was this unique Christmas carol, “Go, Tell It on the Mountain.”

How did it come about?

John Wesley Work Jr. was born in Nashville, on or about August 6, 1871. His father was choir director for a Nashville church who often wrote his own arrangements. John grew up singing in his dad’s choirs, and when he enrolled in Fisk University, he became active in its music program, though his primary subjects were history and Latin. Returning to Fisk to work on his master’s degree, John eventually hired as professor of Latin and Greek. But his greatest love was the preservation and performance of the Negro spiritual.

Many of the spirituals had been published, but “Go, Tell it on the Mountain” was largely unknown, though it had been performed by the Jubilee Singers since 1879. Some of the original stanzas were obscure, for spirituals, by definition, were unwritten songs passed from plantation to plantation and from generation to generation. The chorus, however, was crystal clear and highlighted the theme for the whole: “Go tell it on the mountain/Jesus Christ is born.”

Intrigued by the chorus and melody, John wrote two new stanzas for this song, and it became his custom before sunrise on Christmas morning to take students caroling from building to building, singing, “Go, Tell It on the Mountain.” It was first published in 1907 in ***Work’s Folk Songs of the Negro as Sung on the Plantations.***

John Work has been called the first black collector of Negro folk songs, a pursuit continued by his two sons, John Wesley Work II and Frederick J. Work. Both young men served on the faculty of Fisk University, working with the Jubilee Singers and collecting and publishing African-American spirituals and folk music.

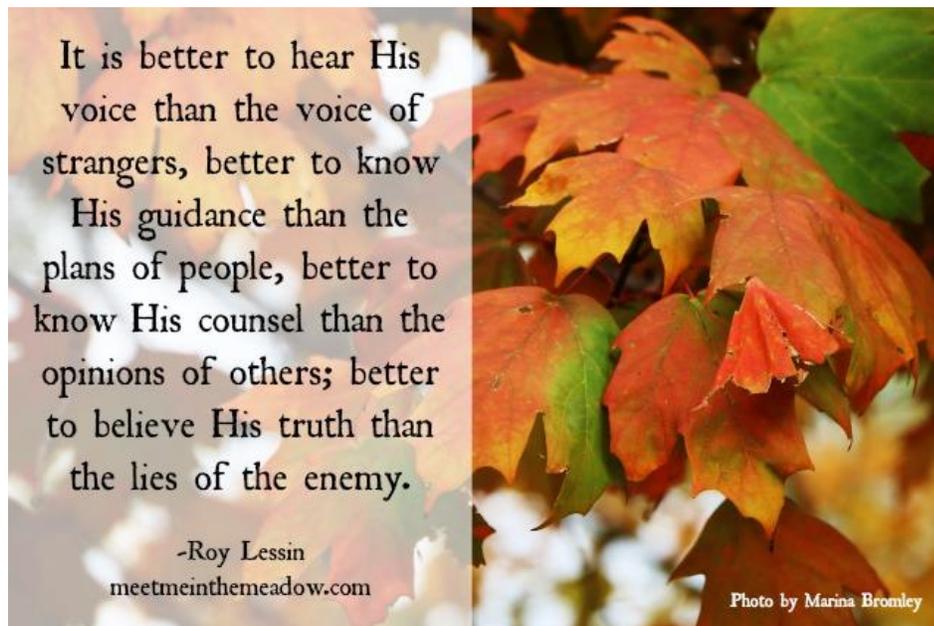
“Go Tell It on the Mountain” is classic in that genre. To black slaves in antebellum American, the birth of a liberating Savior was a message to be heralded from the highest mountains.

It still is, for us all.

Taken from “Then Sings my Soul, Book 2” Robert J. Morgan copyright 2004



HIS VOICE



Jesus' voice brings the sweetest sound, the deepest love, the wisest words, the surest way, the greatest comfort, and the fullest life.

Jesus said that His sheep hear His voice. If we hear a voice we do not recognize, we should not respond. Wrong voices take us to wrong places. It is through Jesus' words that we will know His will, His ways, and His heart.

It is better to hear His voice than the voice of strangers, better to know His guidance than the plans of people, better to know His counsel than the opinions of others; better to believe His truth than the lies of the enemy.

Here are a few ways to recognize His voice from the voice of a stranger:

Jesus' voice is one of peace, not turmoil; one of clarity, not confusion, one of righteousness, not godlessness; one of truth, not deception, one of edification, not frustration; one of consolation, not harassment; one of courage, not fear; one of hope, not despair.

Jesus' words free, release, renew, restore, reassure, encourage, comfort, correct, train, uphold, affirm, unify, sanctify, and give life.



HOLY HUMOR

**A father was approached by his small son who told him proudly, "I know what the Bible means!"

His father smiled and replied, "What do you mean, you 'know' what the Bible means?"

The son replied, "I do know!"

"Okay," said his father. "What does the Bible mean?"

"That's easy, Daddy..." the young boy replied excitedly, "It stands for 'Basic Information Before Leaving Earth..'"

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There was a very gracious lady who was mailing an old family Bible to her brother in another part of the country.

"Is there anything breakable in here?" asked the postal clerk.

"Only the Ten Commandments." answered the lady.

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A minister parked his car in a no-parking zone in a large city because he was short of time and couldn't find a space with a meter.

Then he put a note under the windshield wiper that read: "I have circled the block 10 times. If I don't park here, I'll miss my appointment. Forgive us our trespasses."

When he returned, he found a citation from a police officer along with this note "I've circled this block for 10 years. If I don't give you a ticket I'll lose my job. Lead us not into temptation."

There is the story of a pastor who got up one Sunday and announced to his congregation: "I have good news and bad news. The good news is we have enough money to pay for our new building program. The bad news is, it's still out there in your pockets."

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While driving in Pennsylvania, a family caught up to an Amish carriage. The owner of the carriage obviously had a sense of humor, because attached to the back of the carriage was a hand printed sign... "Energy efficient vehicle: Runs on oats and grass. Caution: Do not step in exhaust."

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A Sunday School teacher began her lesson with a question, "Boys and girls, what do we know about God?"

A hand shot up in the air. "He is an artist!" said the kindergarten boy.

"Really? How do you know?" the teacher asked.

"You know - Our Father, who does art in Heaven... "

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A minister waited in line to have his car filled with gas just before a long holiday weekend. The attendant worked quickly, but there were many cars ahead of him. Finally, the attendant motioned him toward a vacant pump.

"Reverend," said the young man, "I'm so sorry about the delay. It seems as if everyone waits until the last minute to get ready for a long trip."

The minister chuckled, "I know what you mean. It's the same in my business."

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People want the front of the bus, the back of the church, and the center of attention.

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Sunday after church, a Mom asked her very young daughter what the lesson was about. The daughter answered, "Don't be scared, you'll get your quilt." Needless to say, the Mom was perplexed. Later in the day, the pastor stopped by for tea and the Mom asked him what that morning's Sunday school lesson was about. He said "Be not afraid, thy comforter is coming."

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The minister was preoccupied with thoughts of how he was going to ask the congregation to come up with more money than they were expecting for repairs to the church building. Therefore, he was annoyed to find that the regular organist was sick and a substitute had been brought in at the last minute. The substitute wanted to know what to play. "Here's a copy of the service," he said impatiently. "But, you'll have to think of something to play after I make the announcement about the finances." During the service, the minister paused and said, "Brothers and Sisters, we are in great difficulty; the roof repairs cost twice as much as we expected and we need \$4,000 more. Any of you who can pledge \$100 or more, please stand up." At that moment, the substitute organist played "The NATIONAL ANTHEM." And that is how the substitute became the regular organist!

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New Years Resolutions

Here are six resolutions to help you be a better steward in 2015!

1. I'll improve my stewardship of prayer by an unhurried talk with God each day.
2. I'll improve my stewardship of faith by reading good religious literature.
3. I'll improve my stewardship of life by practicing the presence of God and living the teachings of Christ wherever I may be...whatever I may be doing...always remembering my final accountability.
4. I'll improve my stewardship of time by eliminating the trivial and concentrating on the important.
5. I'll improve my stewardship of activities by using them more effectively for God and my fellow human beings.
6. I'll improve my stewardship of possessions by setting aside a meaningful percentage of my income and prayerfully dedicating it to the work of God's Kingdom on earth.

Reprinted from January Stewardship insert.

FINDING JOY IN DARK TIMES

And they mourned over him, saying, "Alas, my brother!" 1 Kings 13:30 (ESV)

Another thing about joy is that you never stop being surprised by the deeper levels of joy and how joy is like an elevator that keeps going down another floor farther than you knew there were floors and how what you thought were the pinnacles of joy were only mountains beyond which there are many more mountains, some of them shrouded in darkness.

For example, this odd, painful, strange, subtle, awful, sweet joy last year: my oldest brother was dying of cancer. He had cancer everywhere. He lost a hundred pounds. He lost his hair. He lost his balance. But he never lost his sidelong grin—never.

Right near the end he and I went driving through his favorite forest, and even though he could hardly speak and his death was sitting companionably in the backseat, we were both filled with joy. We were brothers for 55 years, and about ten years before he died we got to be the same age finally, as sometimes happens with brothers if they are lucky, and we were happy together watching birds and playing chess and trading silly postcards.

He died on the first day of summer. There is a hole in the world the size of the man he used to be before cancer ate him. There will always be that big grinning hole in me and in his family and in his thousand friends. But here is a joy persistent and insistent, a joy that death cannot steal: I was graced to be that man's brother, and he loved me and I loved him.

What used to be his body is now ash in the dense soil of Illinois. But who he is, who he always is, is in me and those he loved, and every time I think of this lovely terrible truth, I grin... as he would, side longingly.

By Brian Doyle



