



The Beacon

Bethania Lutheran Church
1-805-688-4637
www.bethanialutheran.net

December 2020

621 Atterdag Rd, Solvang CA 93463
email: bethanialutheranch@gmail.com

Pastor Chris's Message

December might be my favorite month to write a Beacon article. I love reflecting on Advent, the darkening world outside and what it means to celebrate Christ who comes into that world. But this year is obviously different. I hope that as you are reading this you are finding a semblance of peace in our world right now. I hope this season still brings some comfort, the feelings of togetherness, and of finding hope in God who sees you and remains present in the mystery of this season – regardless of what's going on with our world.

When Christ was born, he was a promised hope for many people. However, for every single one of them, save maybe his mother Mary, he was not the expected hope. He failed at meeting the expectations of his people, who had been suffering under one oppressive regime after another, and had been crying out for a champion, a chosen one, someone that embodied God's power who would release them of their perpetual captivity. Instead, they got a poor carpenter from one of their smallest tribes; a man who preached love of enemies and praying for those who persecute you. Jesus was the promised hope, but he was not the expected hope.

We are living in a time where our hopes might not be what we expect them to be. Timelines for this pandemic have been continually pushed back, guidelines about navigating our world have changed from one month to the next, and lights at the end of the tunnel end up being more distant than they seem. It's difficult to come to terms with hope that does not meet our expectations. Frankly, I don't think we're well equipped to adjusting when hope doesn't meet our expectations because we've grown in a world where expectations are something we're told we can control. Of course, most of us know that's not true.

The Christmas story is special because it's a direct response to hope expected. The details of Jesus' humble birth and origin are intentional. They are meant to disrupt hope expected so that we might better see the hope that is promised. If the moment at which God chose to be humanly present in our world is through a persecuted tribe, and more specifically, through a humble and poor person in that tribe, than how much more certain can we be that God is with us in our moments of struggle, doubt, pain, suffering, and grief. That is the promised hope of Jesus and it's a hope that is present no matter what our expectations of the world are. However, our disappointment at our expectations not being met can blind us from seeing hope that is promised. We can become so focused on our real or perceived loss and miss how God is present with us in the midst of all things.

In a way we might get a chance to experience the Christmas story more authentically this year. We might be coming to the stable with expectations dashed so that our eyes can behold God's presence through the innocence, vulnerability, and beauty of a child, through the resilience of two parents unable to find a room to rent, through frightened shepherds still willing to follow God's word, and through wisemen pointing us to the celestial beauty of the cosmos.



This year we might be able to behold, more distinctly, God's presence in loved ones who continue to check in, through a community entering its 36th consecutive week of feeding folks in need, through sermons and sacraments presented in new ways, and through loves stubborn refusal to be silenced. I know this year has not been what we've expected and it has not been without pain and loss, but I do fall back on the hope that maybe in all this God's promises to us through Christ Jesus are being revealed in ways we've never seen or experienced before. And I hope we can find some rest in those moments.

**In Christ's Love,
Pastor Chris Brown**



Bethania
**Outdoor
Christmas Eve Services
Dec. 24, 2020
10:00 a.m. & 4:00 p.m.
RSVP Required to Attend
(805)688-4637**

- Bring your own chair.
- Masks must be worn at all times (no exceptions).
- Must have no symptoms.
- Temperatures will be checked upon arrival.
- Households must sit at least 6 feet from other households.
- Services may be cancelled either due to further county restriction or inclement weather.

Poinsettias

We have ordered 18 6-inch red poinsettias to help make the church festive. They will be in the church from Dec. 23-Dec. 28. You can pick them up on Dec. 28 from the church. If you live at Atterdag Village of Solvang you can make arrangements with Kristyl (bethanialutheranch@gmail.com or 805-688-4637) to have them delivered to you.

I/we would like # _____ of poinsettias at \$6.00 each. I/we would like the dedication (in the January Beacon) to read:

Given by _____

In Memory of/In Honor of _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Payment enclosed.



Youth and Family Ministry

Season Greetings,

Virtual Sunday School is available on our Bethania YouTube channel. Attachments and materials list are shown in the weekly service email.

Our large scheduled social events have pended due to our current pandemic. I am hopeful that we may organize the Rummage Sale, Youth Bake Sale, and other fundraisers in 2021.

ELCA Youth Gathering to Minneapolis was rescheduled for **July 2022**. High schoolers and parents are welcome, please contact me.

Vacation Bible School will be **June 2021**. Each year VBS grows in attendance as children excitedly return and bring more friends along. Our volunteers are an integral part of this event! There are so many ways to get involved; like supplies. If you have any items to lend or would like to donate, please see below:

Masking tape & Silver duct tape
X-Large cardboard boxes to build a bridge
White & Blue iridescent paper
Artificial Christmas trees

Stacks of white & blue & black paper
White & Blue fairy lights
Polyester fiberfill/ batting
2 pairs of rain boots (adult size)

Merry Christmas,

Livier Ghamari-Brown, Director of Youth & Family Ministry
livierghamari@yahoo.com (909) 962-9366

Bethania Preschool & After School

It is the time before Christmas and all through the school
Being good for Santa is the new Golden Rule.

The classrooms are decked out in Christmas décor
The glitter is flying all over the floor.

A tree in each classroom instead of just one in the Hall
We all have to follow the new protocol.

Christmas music is playing for all to hear
The children join in so loud and so clear.

The Elf on the Shelf brings his own Christmas fun
His hide and seek game have the kids on the run.

The spirit of giving each child will learn,
Each brings a gift to share and gets one in return.

No program this year and for that we are sad
So join us next year a great time will be had.

And let's not forget that away in a manger no crib for a bed
The little Lord Jesus lay down his sweet head.

So from Bethania Preschool and After School too,
The children and staff wish a Merry Christmas to you!!

**- Eileen Knotts,
Director Bethania Preschool and After School**



Image from Pixabay

Faith in Action

Christmas Angels & Preschool Presents

Would you like to be an “angel” to a needy child? Dust off your angel wings if you would be interested in helping to make Christmas special for a child this year. Because of COVID-19 and the stress on families at Iglesia this year, we have agreed to “adopt” 75 children. So, we need everyone’s help to make this happen! Any way you can help, large or small, is appreciated...

The names of the children will be available for “Adoption” on Dec. 2nd. Please contact Linda Marzullo at vikingpressprint@verizon.net or 805-688-5219 for more info – think about the age and sex of the child you would like to shop for before you contact me. Or, of course, you can donate funds and have us do your shopping for you!

The **CHRISTMAS ANGEL** project helps the members of Iglesia Luterana Santa Cruz by providing Christmas gifts for needy children. Iglesia is a mission start up church based at Bethel in Santa Maria, which serves the very poorest of the farm workers who often live in difficult circumstances. Oftentimes families share one bed or live in someone else’s garage without heat or running water. Many of the children may not have shoes, warm clothing or enough to eat. Agricultural conditions, weather and the economy directly affect these hard-working families, especially during the winter months. With the COVID crisis, many of these people have been infected and house bound for weeks. As we enter into the slow growing season, these families are even further behind in their ability to have enough food to eat, let alone provide Christmas gifts for their children.

Even closer to home, the **PRESCHOOL PRESENTS** project helps to support local families who attend Bethania Preschool and After School program. These local families are chosen by Preschool Director Eileen Knotts. Your donations will assist us in purchasing gifts and other necessary items for local children, to help these families who require some assistance to make their child’s Christmas special. Preschool children remain anonymous – we do not share which children benefit from this program. *(Note: This is a different donation from the Preschool Scholarship Fund.)*

Because of COVID, we are asking those of you who shop for a child to do all the wrapping at home and bring a finished single package (ONE box or Bag) to the drop off day Dec. 20th. If you need help with wrapping, be sure to let me know – we will have a mini wrapping party on Dec. 20th – socially distanced, of course.

We would be happy to have your Angelic assistance for any of these children. If you are interested in sponsoring a child through either the Christmas Angel or the Preschool Presents Projects, donations of any amount are welcome. We try to fulfill as many of the children’s specific needs or requests as possible, so all donations help.

For more information, contact me.

– Linda Marzullo

Emergency Food Distribution Site Continues at Bethania

Drive up and Walk up - Tuesdays, 5:15-6:45 pm

Bethania continues operating as an Emergency USDA Food Distribution site. Distribution is through drive up or walk up line each Tuesday. There are no restrictions on income or family size at this time. We serve people from all walks of life, and in all types of circumstances.

For Thanksgiving, we created a special little bag with some holiday-type items to give out to families. We are able to do this through donations from individuals and other groups. Every donation goes 100% to the Food Distribution. If you would like to donate, you can do so on the church website or by sending a check earmarked "Tuesday Food" to the church office.

As cases of COVID climb and local employment is once again affected, our numbers at the distribution continue to rise. Last week we helped 295 households, with 93 households coming for the first time in November. We have been blessed by donations from so many people, who have made this work possible. Thank you all. So many people coming through our Tuesday lines have expressed their appreciation and gratitude for this distribution, it is truly a life changing bag of food for so many.

We can always use donations of protein items and items such as macaroni and cheese, spaghetti, rice, and cereal. Donations can be left in the church or you can contact me to drop off items. We also distribute diapers and wipes, which are very needed. Donations are appreciated in this area also.

If you would like to help, please contact me. We continue to need your prayers and support for this mission.

-Linda Marzullo
Chairman, Social Ministry Committee
688-5219, 688-3059 or vikingpressprint@verizon.net

Blessing Box

If you are interested in helping to keep the box stocked, just drop off your items in the box itself or at the church office. You can also contact us for a day/time to sign up to help check the box – or just make a point of stopping by at a time good for you to see that it is filled. Thank you to all who already do this!

- Linda Marzullo

Food Needs at Iglesia Luterana Santa Cruz

Our friends at Iglesia Luterana Santa Cruz currently have 32 families who are currently in quarantine due to COVID-19. Pastor Esteban and his wife Angie are taking care of these families by bringing them meals and helping with their other needs, in addition to supplying weekly lunch which they take to field workers and distributing food to those in their congregation who are in need. The congregation members at Iglesia are among those who are truly struggling, along with many people here in the Santa Ynez Valley. The people who do the work to put food on the tables for all of us do not have enough to eat – something to think about.

Pastor Esteban and his wife Angie continue to ask for help for members of Iglesia as their pantry is out of basic food needs for their members. Iglesia could also use additional financial support at this time to help put gas in their van so they can travel, buy needed items (such as diapers, sanitary napkins and

formula) and help with emergencies. If you can help by donating some of the items below, please leave them in the box in the sanctuary or contact me for drop off. Your donations are making a difference in a life and in families of hard-working people. If you would like to make a financial donation, please be sure to earmark it for "Iglesia".

If you are able to make a run with a load of items, please let me know.

Urgently needed: Dry Beans – Rice – Maseca (corn flour) – All Purpose Flour – Small Pasta – Sugar – Salt – Coffee – Snacks (such as Cookies) – Bottled Juice – Feminine Products – Shampoo – Laundry Detergent – Dish Soap – Bleach and Cleaning Products – Baby Diapers (All sizes especially 5&6).

Thank you for your continued support and prayers for all our ministries at Bethania.

– Linda Marzullo

Grocery Bags

We currently need brown paper grocery bags and plastic bags for our emergency food distribution. You can drop them off in the narthex or at the Church Office. You may send also contact us at 805-688-4637 or bethanialutheranch@gmail.com and we will find a way to get the bags.

Noisy Offering: Making Change Count

The next "Noisy Sunday" is coming on Dec. 20th. Our donations from the offering will be used to help provide food items for members at Iglesia Luterana Santa Cruz, and fund any additional Angel Gifts purchases needed for the children attending there (*see related article*).

What will our donations be used towards?

Donations on Noisy Sunday will help us purchase food items for families. The majority of the families at Iglesia work in the fields, and this time of year is difficult financially for them. Many children have nothing to eat at home, and depend on outside sources for their meals, such as school lunches. Families often share small apartments and even live in garages, with the entire family sleeping on the floor. We hope to help these families with gifts of food, diapers, laundry soap and gift cards for fresh produce and dairy items. If we have any Angel Gift children that have not been adopted, some of these funds will help provide them with warm clothing and a toy. Pastor Esteban and his wife Angie provide the "wish lists" for the children's gift requests. Any amount donated, large or small, is much appreciated towards meeting these goals.

We all really "make change for the better" with the Noisy Sunday! So bring your coins and make some noise on December 20th. Together, we can CHANGE a child's world!

– Linda Marzullo

Next Brown Bag Senior Breakfast: January

Our next socially distanced packing day will be in January. Thank you to the 20 people who came on Nov. 22nd and helped pack almost 700 bags! Everyone worked well together and we packed enough bags to skip packing in December – thank you!

We continue to collect items for the bags. The church is open daily (usually from 9-5) and you can drop off items inside. Or, you can leave them at the church office during the week or drop them off on the packing day. You can also make a donation and earmark it "Brown Bag Breakfasts".

Even donating a few items helps us continue this project, so thank you all for your support.

- Protein Drinks (such as Ensure or Atkins)
- Soft Granola/Cereal Bars
- Protein Bars
- Oatmeal Packets (Protein type)
- Instant Cup of Soup/Lunch or Noodles
- Fruit Cups or Applesauce
- Pudding (non-refrigerated)
- Small Juice Boxes or Plastic Bottles of Fruit Juices (such as Apple, Cranberry, Orange)

Local seniors rely on our little brown bags for their breakfasts. The bags are intended to provide items which can be eaten while taking medications and to guarantee a morning meal before their Meals on Wheels delivery. Some SYV seniors are living in such difficult circumstances that they do not have enough food for their meals and medication-taking needs. We have made it a priority to help these seniors be more secure by providing our little brown bags, which the Buellton Senior Center currently distributes.

– **Linda Marzullo**
Chairman, Social Ministry Committee
688-5219, 688-3059 or vikingpressprint@verizon.net

Wanted: Thrivent Members

If you are a Thrivent Member, we need you! Every Thrivent member has the possibility of receiving seed money (\$250.00) for two projects a year. Please contact the church office to let us know if you are a Thrivent member and would be willing to help with a project. Some of our needs are listed below:

- New Food Pantry: Shelves, etc.
- Food items for the coming Food Pantry
- Diapers/Wipes Drive for Tuesday distribution
- Heavy duty small folding tables for Tuff Shed and Distribution

Doing a project is simple and fun. We can help with filling out the forms if you need help. Ask Kristyl for more info.

Events and Occasions

Advent

Advent begins, Nov. 29. The church will have our traditional Advent decorations in the church. The church is open for meditation and prayer from about 9 am - 5 pm daily.

REVERSE ADVENT CALENDAR

*Add an Item to a Box each day. After Christmas,
bring to the church for Bethania's Food Pantry.*

(Items are suggestions. You may donate any item you choose.)

- December 1 - box of cereal
- December 2 - peanut butter
- December 3 - stuffing mix
- December 4 - boxed potatoes
- December 5 - macaroni and cheese
- December 6 - canned fruit
- December 7 - canned tomatoes
- December 8 - canned tuna
- December 9 - dessert mix
- December 10 - jar of applesauce
- December 11 - canned sweet potatoes
- December 12 - cranberry sauce
- December 13 - canned beans
- December 14 - box of crackers
- December 15 - package of rice
- December 16 - package of oatmeal
- December 17 - package pasta
- December 18 - spaghetti sauce
- December 19 - chicken noodle soup
- December 20 - tomato soup
- December 21 - can corn
- December 22 - can mixed vegetables
- December 23 - can carrots
- December 24 - can green beans

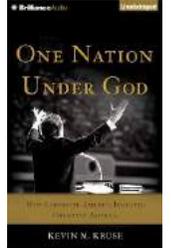


Virtual Theo Pub

Theology Pub will be gathering on Zoom on **Dec. 3rd this month** (instead of Dec. 10th) at 7 pm. An email will be sent out with the link to join on Zoom and we'll post the link on social media. See you then!

Book Club

Book Club will be continuing its discussion of One Nation Under God by Kevin Kruse. If you would like to join, an email will be sent out with the Zoom link. We'll be gathering virtually on **Dec. 17th** (**NOT** Dec. 24th) and discussing part I. You can get the book at The Book Loft or Amazon, but please consider supporting our local businesses.



Church Business

Council Meeting Report - November 2020

The monthly Council meeting was held at 7 pm on Nov. 19, 2020. Members present were Emily Abello, Wendy Bevier, Josh Bratt, Pastor Chris, Stewart Fries, Lynne Hemming, Carol Lake, Lori McConnell, and Carolyn Schuit. Anne Twigg and Jeanelle Needham were not present. The church business manager, Ron Walsh, was also present.

The Council meeting was again conducted via Zoom Conference technology.

The council discussed:

- Status and attendance at open air services
- Utilization of janitorial closet
- Reviewed and approved an Endowment Committee request for funding for Iglesia Luterana
- Potential lot line adjustments for church parcels
- Tasking the Nominating Committee
- Review of pastoral responsibilities during the ongoing global pandemic

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, Dec. 17, 2020.

The Peace of Christ be with you all,

Stewart Fries, Bethania Council President

805-245-0041

Nyheder fra Bethania Rådet

News from the Bethania Council

To be more informative and transparent, your Church Council is implementing a new process of communicating news and publishing decisions we have made via the Beacon. Our goal, each month, is to announce major decisions taken by the council to help everyone stay abreast of issues facing the church. Questions, if any, about these discussions, decisions, or messages should be addressed to a council member preferably in writing.

From the November Council Meeting, we would like to report on the following topics:

- Christmas Eve Services. Weather permitting, services for Christmas Eve, Dec. 24th, will be held outside at 10 am and 4 pm. To properly manage our social distancing, **reservations will be required for both services**. Space is limited and reservations will be accepted on a first come – first served basis. You may make reservations by phoning Kristyl at 805-688-4637.
- Outdoor Services. Notwithstanding the above, in the face of a resurgent Coronavirus infection rate coupled with low attendance, effective immediately the Council voted to suspend all other outdoor services until further notice. Sunday morning “live streaming” services will be resumed effective Sunday, Nov. 29, 2020.
- Services for Dec 27 and Jan 3. To allow staff time to renew after the holiday season, the Council approved “live streaming” services on Dec. 27 and Jan. 3 to be “Sermon Only” broadcasts.
- Nominating Committee. The Council has asked the Nominating Committee to advance the names of several members who would be willing to serve as interim council members (pending a congregational meeting) in the event any current members choose to step down from the council.
- Pastoral Responsibilities. The Council reviewed and reaffirmed the pastoral responsibilities as set forth in the Bethania constitution with a view to properly define council versus pastor responsibilities. This effort was undertaken to minimize pastoral efforts directed to management and administration functions.

If you have any questions or comments on any of these topics, please contact one of the council members below:

Emilly Abello	Stewart Fries	Lori McConnell
Wendy Bevier	Lynne Hemming	Carolyn Schuit
Josh Bratt	Carol Lake	Anne Twigg

Treasurer's Report - October Financial Report

Balance Sheet:

- The cash position remains strong with over \$43,000 in general checking.
- The money market fund has declined by \$4,000 due to movement of cash into other funds.
- All accounts are current, and there is no indebtedness at this time.
- The only outstanding liabilities are the pension fund, and the designated fund liabilities (they are listed under current liabilities).

Profit & Loss Budget Performance:

Income:

- Under other income, the contribution from the Endowment Fund was not recorded until after the close of the month (it will show up in November).
- Offerings are below budget by \$4,890. For the last two months offerings have been down by nearly \$11,000. For the first 10 months offerings are below budget by \$18,777.
- Total income for the month is below budget by nearly \$13,000. For the first 10 months total income is below budget by \$22,729.

Expenses:

- Salaries and benefits for the month are \$641 below budget. For the year to date, they are slightly over budget at 102%. Taking into account the PPP loan we received and paid for part of the preschool salaries (\$12,938), our salaries and benefits are below budget by \$9,536 for the first 10 months.
- Staff expenses are below budget for the month and at 76% of budget for the first 10 months.
- Office expenses are below budget for the month, and are at 98% of budget for the first 10 months.
- Property expenses are below budget for the month by \$1,866, and are at 67% for the first 10 months.
- Utilities for the month were up by \$662 (largest increase was for water and electricity) and for the first 10 months were at 94% of budget.
- All other expenses were at or below budget for the month and for the year.
- Overall expenses for the month were below budget by \$3,646 and for the year were below budget (excluding the PPP payments for preschool) by \$29,146.

Overall:

Thanks to the Endowment Fund, we have been able to maintain the services and ministries that our vital to Bethania and the communities we serve. Thanks Be To God!

Of major concern, however, is the drop in offerings, which is our core support for all our ministries. As noted above, our offerings are significantly below our budget, and with December rapidly approaching, we are concerned that our offerings will drop further below our budget.

Please prayerfully consider your response to the support of Bethania. God bless all our members for their continued support, and to our endowment fund for their support.

- Lori McConnell, Treasurer

Another Great Reason to make a Memorial or Honorarium Gift to your Endowment Fund...

Bethania Lutheran Church Endowment Fund has been able to contribute \$5,000 for several months in 2020 to help with the ongoing expenses of the church. These funds are created from the income on the principal in the Endowment Fund – which means, the principal keeps on working and is not depleted by the payout.

I would urge you to utilize gifting to the Endowment Fund as a memorial gift or to honor someone special, knowing that your gift is safely invested and will continue growing in the years ahead. I would also suggest that you consider contributing to the Endowment Fund knowing that in trying times like these, the Fund can help our church through financially rocky times.

Remember – the Endowment Fund only gifts from its earnings. Your gift to the Endowment Fund will continue to produce income for us to do incredible things such as support the local Hospital, provide Scholarships, help Circle V Ranch rebuild, support Pastor Esteban at Iglesia Luterana – in addition to helping out our own church in this pandemic situation.

Consider giving to the Endowment Fund and consider the possibilities.

Carolynn D. Petersen
Chairman, Endowment Fund

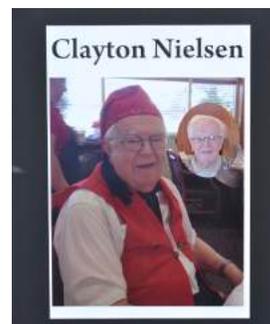
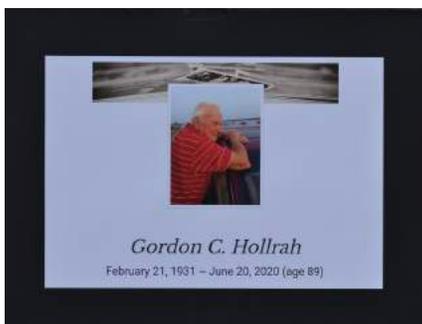
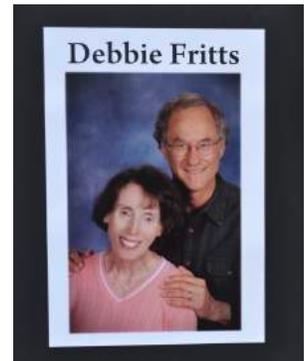
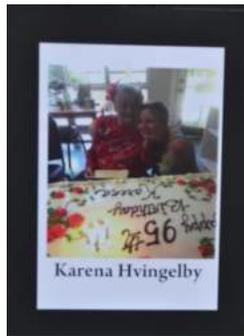
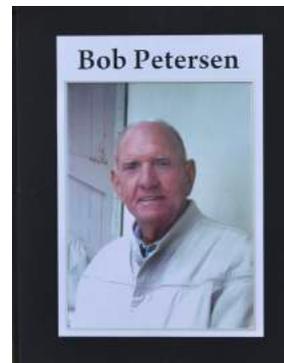
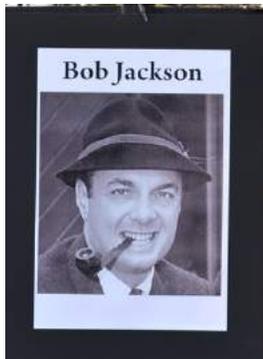
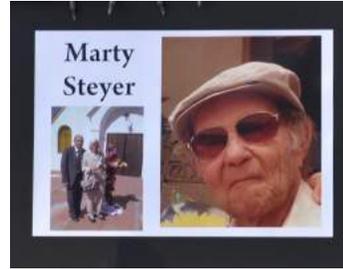
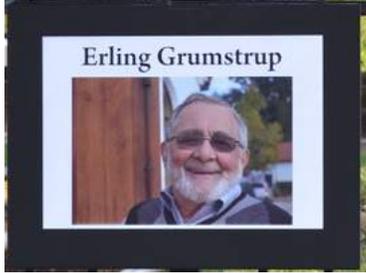
In Our Hearts, In Our Prayers

We uplift in prayer the following people in our congregation and community. May we minister to and bless all who need God's help.

Andy Blanton, Dennis Bornhoft, Annette Clausen, Kerstin Emerson, Chris Frederiksen, Sheldon & Pat Green, Shannon Hazard, Belle Hoger, Suzanne Hollrah, Jennifer Howell, Glen Jacobsen, Michael Jech, Robert & Gail Jennings, Gladys Jorgensen, Jeanne Labarge, Agnes Larsen, Betsy & Steve Logan, Ariana Macias, John Marzullo, Brian Merrick, Denise Morris, Robert & Shelly Myers, Roger Myers, Eric and Mallory Oftebro, Barbara & Charles Osborn, Marie Ostertag, Kate Pearsson, Chèle Ludwig Petersen, Doyle Phillips, Vince Pillow, Joyce Purvis, Tim Reed, Robin Schatan, Judy Stamat, Clay Tremblay-McGaw and those who serve our country both at home and abroad.

illuminating the Night for All Saints

We had a lovely time remembering our saints on Nov. 1 with photos and lights. It was a peaceful and beautiful tribute. Thanks to Rick & Linda Marzullo for photos and lights, helping set-up. Thanks to Denise Morris, Carolyn Schuit, Donna Hinsbeeck, Kristyl Downey and Debbie La Roche for their help as well.



Thanks to Santa Ynez Valley Rotary for Volunteer Appreciation honoring our volunteers for Tuesday Food Distribution. SYV Rotary provided each volunteer with a gift card to a local business.

Thanks to Paul Matthies for his great photos.



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Preschool/After School
1-(805) 688-7077
bethaniaps@verizon.net



Rejoice! Good News is here!