



The Beacon

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

December 2023

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

Bethania's Mission Statement

We are a community of Christ-centered, welcoming, inclusive and multi-generational people rooted in God's faith, hope and love, called to advocate for justice, give to those in need, and share God's affirming love with the world.

Pastor Chris's Message...

The Christmas Story in the Bible is only included in two of the four gospels: Matthew and Luke. And each of them had their own motive in telling the story they wrote. Matthew was writing his gospel for a Jewish audience, and for Matthew it was important to highlight Jesus, not just as a new Moses, but an even better one. Only his gospel includes the part where Herod finds out about Jesus and sends soldiers to Bethlehem to kill all newborn males under the age of 2 (just like in the Exodus story). Luke on the other had is writing his gospel for Gentiles who have experienced oppression under Rome, and for Luke, it was important that Jesus be an antithesis to Caesar Augustus (also who had a virgin birth story circulating during the same time).

Context is always crucial to understanding a story. It doesn't make the story untrue, but rather highlights truths that may have been lost over time. I think a lot of us grew up with the Christmas Story outside of this context and understood it more as a biography; the story was simply telling us the events of Jesus' birth. However, when we treat stories as only biographical, we tend to miss important context.

A big part of the context in Matthew and Luke's story was not simply to share the events surrounding Jesus' birth, but to share the tremendous hope this gave to a particular people in a particular time. Jesus' birth had real-life implications for what people were experiencing 2,000 ago, and those implications were always meant to traverse time and space and resonate with us today. I feel it is so important for me to say this as a pastor during the Christmas season: if the hope we think the Christmas Story brings is that we get to go to heaven after we die, then we are missing massive parts of the Christmas Story.

There are parts of the context we may never understand. We probably won't understand the hope Christ's birth brings when living under Roman oppression, or abject poverty, or of having few to no governmental rights. And it's helpful for us know these parts of the context of the Christmas story because we may find that we're able to be God's hands and feet for those who do experience these contexts today. And while we may not experience these particular contexts, the Christmas Story still

bears meaning for us in other ways each year. So, I want to focus on these questions and I want you to take some time to think about it. **What meaning does the Christmas Story have in your life, in this particular time and place? What hope does the story about God becoming incarnate through a poor, Jewish, man, who ministered to poor, Jewish people give you? What connections does this story create for your life today in this particular season?**

For me this year, the Christmas Story reminds me that Jesus didn't come to be present, in particular, with the powerful and elite, as was expected of gods in that time. He intentionally came into this world in the form of the everyday person in his time and place. He preached among, witnessed to, healed, and loved everyday people that he might draw them to one another. The Christmas Story reminds me that ultimately Jesus draws us to the divine presence that exists within each other and the experience of that joy when we are with one another, when we love one another, when we care for others. The Christmas Story reminds me that I don't have to wait for heaven after I die, nor do I have to wait for heaven under extraordinary circumstances, but heaven is available to me in all these wonderfully ordinary moments that poke their heads up each day—and they're usually accompanied by other wonderfully ordinary people like me.

I've always felt that if the original context a story happened in no longer speaks to me, or to others, perhaps it's a story we shouldn't gather around each year. I give thanks to God that the Christmas Story is one that speaks in so many different ways each and every year. I'm grateful that it's not only a story of Jesus coming into this world, but because it points me to all of you and to others, it helps me see Jesus coming into this world every day. Thank you for being Christ's presence, everyone, and may you encounter an incarnate God this season in so many wonderfully ordinary spaces, and some extraordinary ones too!

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

Christmas Services

Dec. 23, 2023

Little Christmas Eve Danish Service - 6:00 pm

Dec. 24, 2023

There will not be a 9:30 am service.

Christmas Eve Service - 4 pm

Candlelight Service - 10 pm

Poinsettias

We have ordered 20 poinsettias and they are \$10/each. Please fill out this form and return by mail, in the Sunday offering or drop it off in the church office.



I/we would like # ____ poinsettia(s) at \$10/each. Payment enclosed.

From : _____

Dedication: _____

Phone#: _____ Email: _____

Faith in Action



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 at Iglesia in Santa Maria or the Preschool this year.

Angel Wish lists will be available on Dec. 3rd following the 9:30 worship service in the Parish Hall or by contacting Linda Marzullo (see *info below*).

Any way you can help, large or small, is appreciated...We have committed to adopting 90 little Angels from Iglesia Luterana Santa Cruz and children at the Preschool. With your help, we can make sure these children receive a Christmas gift and make their holiday happier.

The **CHRISTMAS ANGEL** project helps the members of Iglesia in Santa Maria by providing Christmas gifts for needy children who attend the church. 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. 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. 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. If you would like to shop for a Preschool child or make a donation to this project, you can earmark it "Preschool Presents". (*This is a different donation from the Preschool Scholarship Fund.*)

We would be happy to have your Angelic assistance for any of these children. If you are interested in sponsoring a child through the Christmas Angel or the Preschool Presents Projects, donations of any amount are welcome. If you would prefer to do the shopping on your own, or make a contribution of an item on a child's wish list, please let Linda Marzullo know. All of the children/families have specific needs and/or requests we are going to try to fulfill, based on their "wish lists". Contact Linda Marzullo if you would like to be an Angel and adopt a child through fulfilling their wish list.

Email questions to Linda at vikingpressprint@verizon.net, call her work 688-5219 or contact the church office.

Christmas Angel Wrap - Fun & Gift Wrapping for Iglesia Children
Sunday, Dec. 17th
Beginning at 10:30 a.m. in the Parish Hall

We will be enjoying Christmas music, coffee and fellowship as we wrap gifts for impoverished children from Iglesia in Santa Maria. The gifts will be going to the children who have been sponsored through the Christmas Angel Project. All wrapped gifts will be delivered to Iglesia that afternoon. We invite people of all ages to come and help WRAP up this project by wrapping some gifts for children. Help us spread the Christmas Spirit to our neighbors! For more information about this project or to help with delivery or Angel gift purchases, contact the church office or Linda Marzullo at work 688-5219, or email: vikingpressprint@verizon.net.

Brown Bag Breakfast Packing: TBD

Our next Brown Bag Breakfast packing day will be scheduled sometime in December. With it being so busy, we are not sure yet what date it will happen! Watch for an email blast for the date. The brown bags we make have been flying out the door at the Buellton Senior Center, due to more seniors needing food assistance and requiring breakfast bags. The high cost of food is really hurting a lot of our neighbors who are elderly and on fixed incomes. These bags provide food items to seniors who need to take medication with food. Many of them cannot afford this additional cost.

If you are able to donate any items below, please drop it by the office or deliver on packing day. You can also make a donation and earmark it “Brown Bag Breakfasts” so we can go do the shopping. Any amount of help is much appreciated!

Items we need:

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

Plan to come and make a difference for a local senior who is struggling with food insecurity. Every contribution to this project helps make life a little better for a local senior. Thank you!

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

Noisy Sunday: Celebrating the Birth of Jesus

The next “Noisy Sunday” is coming on Dec. 17th. Noisy Offering donations received that day will be used to purchase diapers, diaper rash cream, powdered formula and baby food. Consider this offering another way to recognize the birth of baby Jesus!

What will our donations be used towards?

Donations on Noisy Sunday will be used to purchase items to help struggling families keep their babies healthy, clean, fed and nurtured. For many of these families, finding funds to purchase diapers and formula is a struggle. Depending on which style of diaper, a good range to estimate for a monthly disposable diaper budget is between \$150-275 per month. The average monthly cost for powdered formula for babies is \$400 to \$800. Specialty formulas, such as those that contain hydrolyzed proteins, may cost even more.

We all really “make change for the better” with the Noisy Sunday! So bring your coins and make some noise to help celebrate the birth of Baby Jesus – and the birth of little miracles everywhere on Dec. 17th. Together, we can CHANGE a child’s world!

– **Linda Marzullo**

Food Distribution at Bethania – Making A Difference Locally

Bethania continues operating as a Food Distribution site every Tuesday from 5:15-6:45 pm. We had a huge number of households come for food right before Thanksgiving (286 Households, serving 1203 Individuals) and anticipate a high demand through the month of December. If you would like to contribute, you can find “Food Distribution” on the church’s website. Click the “DONATE” button and use the drop down menu to make sure it goes to “FOOD DISTRIBUTION” (under General Fund).

This past Tuesday one of our clients told us that she hadn't been having to come in months, but "just couldn't make it through this month without food from Bethania." She hopes to not have to come back in December, but does not know if she will have enough money this coming month for food with the utilities increasing. I told her, "We will be here if you need us." She was very grateful. She is in her late 70s and struggling to make ends meet.

We have had many people ask us for prayers for their loved ones, children, and friends. We are not allowed to talk about religion, but if the people bring it up, we are able to try to meet their requests. This has been a huge outreach ministry, and we have had many of our clients tell us how grateful they are for our prayers and support.

Distribution is through drive-up or walk-up line each Tuesday. Our clients range in age from teenagers through people in their 90s. We serve people from all walks of life, and in all types of circumstances. We distribute USDA food items once a month, along with Food Bank items, and donations received from supporters such as Veggie Rescue, El Rancho, Bob's Well Bread, and Baker's Table, among others. Bethania's program also purchases additional food items for the bags each week with donated funds. All of our purchases are made with donations given to the food distribution program and through grants we have received.

We can use donations for the Blessing Box or for Tuesday's Distribution. Donations can be left in the church or you can contact me to drop off items. Donations of diapers and wipes, along with incontinence and feminine hygiene items, protein drinks and baby food, are needed.

If you would like to help on a Tuesday, please contact me. We appreciate and value every volunteer who assists us with this monumental task and cannot thank them enough. Our Tuesdays are split into shifts, with the unloading crew and bag packers coming in at 9:00 to help move items and get ready for packing. Unloading the Food Bank truck is around 1:30. After the truck is unloaded, produce we receive is also packed in the afternoon. Distribution helpers come around 4:45 for the evening distribution. Clean up helpers are always welcome at the end of the night, after 6:45 pm.

We continue to need your prayers and support for this mission, which is making a difference in so many lives here in our area.

– Linda Marzullo

Chairman, Social Ministry Committee

688-5219 (Work), 688-3059 (Home) or vikingpressprint@verizon.net

Events and Occasions

The Danish Sisterhood invites you to celebrate Christmas with us!

Sunday, December 10

Bethania Parish Hall

Doors open at 5:30 pm

Dinner is at 6:00 pm

General Admission: \$15

Children 8 and under: \$5



- * Traditional ham dinner
- * Reading of the Christmas story
- * Christmas boutique
- * Santa Claus!

RSVP to Jan: (559)740-3676 c/t OR janzigler@hotmail.com



Let's dance around the Christmas tree together.



OH WHAT FUN!

THE BLCW CHRISTMAS PARTY

* * * 7 to 9 pm on Tuesday, December 12 * * *

At Emmy Abello's house

3245 Samantha Drive, Santa Ynez

Please bring a dessert and a white elephant to share—but no shopping!

RSVP to Emmy: (805) 350-3072 call/text

Theo Pub

Theo Pub gathers Thursday, Dec. 14 at 7 pm at Solvang Brew, around the fire pit and all are welcome to join. We gather the 2nd Thursday of every month to discuss a new topic with questions of faith, theology, the Bible, etc. for us to consider and talk about. No one needs an extensive knowledge of the Bible or faith, just your thoughts. Arrive early to order delicious food and a drink and meet us at the fire pit!

Book Group is Making a Change

Bethania's Book Group is doing something a little new to try and re-enliven the group. As our new book we've chosen a novel to read (instead of something informational), that has nothing to do with Christianity, but evokes something within our faith filled values. We're reading a book by Richard Powers called *Bewilderment*. It's the story of love between a father and his eccentric, 9-year-old son, after the death of their mother/wife. It's a story about life and trying to find hope in humanity. I've read it already and can't recommend it enough and I'm excited the Book Group is going to read it. If you'd like to join, you can get a copy from the Book Loft or other vendors and join us on **Thursday, Dec. 21st, at 2pm in the Parish Hall**. We'll be going over pages up to 184.

Bethania Small Groups

The **Advent Conspiracy** sessions at the Ziglers' home is full. Look for another small group coming soon.

Outdoor Activities



The Laufers and the Downeys walked the path at Oso Flaco on Nov. 11 (Our hike at Midland School was cancelled due to a prescribed burn.) The weather was beautiful and we had a nice time. The star gazing watch was cancelled due to cloudy skies. Keep your eyes open for the next outdoor activity.



Mark Your Calendar!

Mark your calendar - **April 5-7, 2024!**

Plans are coming along for our Bethania Camping Trip at Lake Cachuma, Dakota Plains Group Site. Join us for outdoor games, hiking, boating, all-church potluck and fun around the campfire. You can come for a day or the weekend. There's time to relax and visit, as well as play. Sign-ups begin in January!

- **Bethania Camping Group**



BLCW Board & Brush Party



Six Bethania Church Women had a painting workshop at Board and Brush in Orcutt, Nov. 18. We had fun and made some nice projects to decorate our homes.

Pictured: Back Row - Left to Right: Kristyl Downey, Allison Piligian, Cheryl Heredia, Kathy Walsh
Front Row - Left to Right: Carol Skoog and Lois De Meyer

Congregational Business

There will be a congregational Meeting to discuss the proposed 2024 Budget at 10:30 am on Dec. 3, 2023. It will be the only item discussed.

Nyheder fra Bethania Rådet News from the Bethania Council - Nov. 19, 2023

To be more informative and transparent, your Church Council is continuing the 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.

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

- Donna Hinsbeek presented some changes to the Constitution adding a table of contents, and restating Section C5.05 by deleting the last sentence in that line item. The Council approved the changes.
- Food distribution reported that the number of people we served has increased again in the last month.
- Thanks to Don Popma, the drain line has been installed near the office to keep the area from flooding.
- Pastor Chris reported that we had approximately 125 people in attendance at the Interfaith Thanksgiving Service. He also reported that we will not have a 9:30 AM worship service on Christmas Eve (Sunday), but will have a 4 PM service and 10 PM service.
- The council voted to utilize Quick Books On Line service to streamline our bill paying, and allow access by our Treasurer for the program as well as the bookkeeper.

The next council meeting will be held on Dec. 21st at the home of Carol Lake and Marilyn Larsen at 5:30 PM.

Questions, if any, about these discussions, decisions, or messages should be addressed to a council member (below) preferably in writing.

Jan Simonsen (805)-319-8652	Leigh Berenger (310) 877-8418	Lori McConnell (805) 331-7971
Karin Baty (612)-229-8172	Jan Zigler (559) 740-3676	Anne Twigg (805) 350-1922
Josh Bratt (805) 245-0465	Carol Lake (805) 688-6797	Ron Walsh (805) 705-3736

Financial Statement Period Ending

Notes for October Financial Statement Period Ending 10/31/23

Balance Sheet

	September 2023	October 2023	Change
Operating Acct	\$83,810	\$72,428	-\$11,382
Money Mkt Acct	\$117,213	\$118,691	\$1,478
Petty Cash Acct	\$100	\$100	\$0
Fund Accounts	\$1,832,408	\$1,832,408	\$0
Fixed Assets	\$1,878,466	\$1,878,466	\$0
Total Assets	\$3,911,997	\$3,902,093	

Profit & Loss Actual vs Budget

October 2023	Actual	Budget	Variance
Total Income	\$20,661	\$22,522	-\$1,861
Total Expenses	\$30,446	\$25,649	-\$4,796
Net Income	-\$9,785		

Offerings

	Actual	Budget	Variance
General Fund	\$15,018	\$16,700	-\$1,682
Non-Members	\$376	\$720	-\$344
	\$15,394	\$17,420	-\$2,026
			*Total offerings are short \$14,473 YTD

Bethania Heritage Fund	\$8	
ELCA World Hunger	\$10	
Facilities Fee	\$1,595	2 events (\$1295 + \$300)
Food Distribution	\$6,735	\$5000 Mission & Ministry Grant Synod
Memorials	\$250	
Noisy Offering	\$122	
Produce Table	\$253	

If you have any questions please reach out to Leigh Berenger, Treasurer: 310-877-8418.

Thank You!

Montecito Bank & Trust recently gifted a \$2500 donation to our Food Distribution Program. This is part of their year-end dividend distribution, a program which gives out grants to non-profits from the profits the bank has made during the year. This idea was created by MB&T founder Michael Towbes. Ron Walsh attended the luncheon and received the donation and our plaque, which is in the narthex. A huge thank you to Montecito Bank & Trust, Ron Walsh, Dave Wong and all who made this happen. This donation will help fund several weeks of food purchases for our hungry neighbors.

“Grateful Goods” Arts & Crafts Sale – So grateful!

- THANK YOU to those who went above and beyond helping out at the “Grateful Goods” Arts & Crafts Sale: Donna Hinsbeeck, Carolyn Schuit, Denise Morris, Josh Bratt, Jasmine Day, Bill and Jan Zigler, Ron and Kathy Walsh, and Kristyl Downey for her Raffle.
- We appreciate all of our great vendors! We had 23 wonderful vendors, who shared their passion and their artistry with us. It was fantastic to see all their lovely work.
- A huge thank you to all who attended, shopped, bid, donated and enjoyed. Thank you, thank you! We raised close to \$5000.00 to help with the Food Distribution costs.

- Linda Marzullo

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 and ours.

For Prayers During Grief for the family and loved ones of Steffany Thomas (Rosemary Thomas & Tom Dimmette's niece).

Health and Other Concerns

Carol Aides, Frank Amby, Andy Blanton, Dyann Driggers, Sheldon & Pat Green, Luis Haro, Belle Hoger, Ariana Macias, Loretta McConnell, Stewart & Sheila Mee, Denise Morris, Mike Murray, Erwin Ostertag, Kate Pearnson, Tom & Carolynn Petersen, Doyle Phillips, Renate Sanders, Jane Shade, Rick Shade, Judy Stamat, Theresa Tannasacoli, Hayes Robert White and those who serve our country both at home and abroad.

December Calendar Items

Sundays

9:30 am Worship Service in the Sanctuary

11:00 am Unorthodox in the Sanctuary

11:00 am Sunday School in the Fireside Room

Mondays

7:00 pm AA in the Fireside Room

Tuesdays

9:30 am, 1:45 pm, and 5:15-6:45 pm Food Distribution Shifts

Wednesdays

11:30 am and 3:30 pm Chapel in the Sanctuary

5:30 pm Yoga in the Parish Hall

7 pm Choir Practice in the Parish Hall

Thursdays

Noon - Lisa Blanton practices in the Sanctuary

7-8 pm Boy Scouts in the Parish Hall

Fridays - **8:30 am** Jim Skoog practices in the Sanctuary

Saturday, Dec. 2

1-8 pm Motorcycle Parade Group Party in the Parish Hall

Sunday, Dec. 3

10:30 am Congregational Meeting to Discuss and Adopt the 2024 Budget in the Parish Hall

Children's Wish Lists Available for Christmas Angels at Coffee Hour

2-4 pm Soccer Party in the Fireside Room

5-7 pm Youth Group in the Fireside Room

Friday, Dec. 8

9:30 am Quilting Group in the Parish Hall

6 pm Preschool Christmas Program in the Parish Hall

Saturday, Dec. 9

Violin Recital in the Sanctuary

Set-up and Decorate for the Danish Sisterhood Party in the Parish Hall, Kitchen and Fireside Room

Sunday, Dec. 10

5:30 pm Danish Sisterhood Christmas Party in the Parish Hall

Tuesday, Dec. 12

7-9 pm BLCW Christmas Party at Emmy Abello's home

Thursday, Dec. 14

7 pm Theo Pub at Solvang Brewing Company

Friday, Dec. 15

5-9 pm Decorate the Parish Hall

Saturday, Dec. 16

10 am - 10 pm Quinciñera in the Parish Hall

Sunday, Dec. 17

Noisy Offering

10:30 am Angel Gift (W)rap in the Parish Hall

5-7 pm Youth Group in the Fireside Room

Wednesday, Dec. 20

5:30 pm Preschool Board Mtg. in the Fireside Room

Thursday, Dec. 21

2 pm Book Group in the Parish Hall and via Zoom

5:30 pm Council at Carol Lake's home

Sunday, Dec. 23

6 pm Little Christmas Eve Danish Service in the Sanctuary

Sunday, Dec. 24th

NO 9:30 AM SERVICE

3-3:30 pm Choir Practice in the Sanctuary

4 pm Christmas Eve Service in the Sanctuary

10 pm Candlelight Service in the Sanctuary

Dec. 25, 2023-Jan. 1, 2024

Bethania PreSchool and After School will be closed.

Sunday Dec. 31

9:30 am Service in the Sanctuary

The Beacon December 2023
Bethania
621 Atterdag Rd.
Solvang CA 93463



*May Christmas bring joy
to every heart.*