



## The Beacon

Bethania Lutheran Church  
621 Atterdag Rd  
Solvang CA 93463

December 2024

805-688-4637  
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[www.bethanialutheran.net](http://www.bethanialutheran.net)

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## 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.

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## If God Does Not Exist

I want to share something a bit provocative with you. You've heard me talk quite often in sermons about how this faith of ours is not merely a belief system, but a way of life. The Kingdom of God being at hand is not so much about showing allegiance to the more powerful kingdom (it's kind of the opposite), it's about committing to a value system that is breaking into our world. Bethania is very committed to this value system through our many ministries and gatherings that incorporate community and compassion. We are a welcoming place, not centered so much in a oneness of belief, but far more in a desire to come together in ways of fellowship and caring for others. We do this through so many different activities and it's such a profound joy for me that I recently had a radical thought.

It hit me one day that if I woke up tomorrow and believed with 100% conviction that God does not exist, I would have zero regret about how I've spent the last 14 years of my life. I would have zero regret for moving to Chicago and going to seminary and learning all about this historic guy named Jesus who created a very real movement about 2,000 years ago. I would have zero regret for being the pastor at Bethania for the last 9 years and getting to teach, work and grow with, and be part of this amazing community. I would have zero regrets about the sermons I've given, the spaces I've helped cultivate, and the people I've come to know and love so much. I would have zero regrets because if I believed God no longer existed, this way of life I've been committed to for the last 14 years, that you all have been such a big part of is still such an integral and meaningful part of how I experience true joy in this world of ours. I would have zero regrets because if I believed God did not exist, I would STILL be committed to this way of life.

I'm not entirely sure how to put this into words, but I think this is such a big part of understanding what Jesus was doing in the world. The Jesus movement wasn't necessarily about creating a new religion to believe in, but to point to a way of life in which all are invited because it creates such meaningfulness. Jesus spends far more time talking about and highlighting actions for his followers to participate in this way of life and not beliefs to sit back and hold on to because Jesus wants for us, his followers to be people of action, people who step into how we navigate each and every day.

Please understand, I'm not saying I don't believe in God. Rather, I believe so much in God because I participate in this way of life and it's a testament to God's goodness and Jesus' ministry. But if you allow yourself the space of a hypothetical, could you say the same thing? If you woke up tomorrow

and believed with 100% conviction that God does not exist, would your faith life feel in vain? Or would you feel like your faith life has brought you into contact with a way of living that has brought meaning, joy and community into your lived experience? However you answer this question (and it doesn't have to be one or the other), I wonder if this could be a litmus test for Christianity. Does our faith bring us merely into spaces of belief or do they bring us into spaces of living that add to our belief and convictions? As I said, this was going to be a bit provocative, but I hope at a minimum it can help us understand Jesus as so much more than an object of worship, as also a model to imitate. These are some thoughts to hold on to as we navigate Advent and this promised savior who comes to our world and lives. What does it mean to hope Jesus is always coming into our world and our lives?

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

## **Bethania Preschool & After School**

The preschool held its 2<sup>nd</sup> Fiesta Fundraiser in September. The success was largely due to the support of our staff, close family members, very close friends, our local community members and our Bethania families. Thank you to everyone! I had a lot of fun and I really hope everyone enjoyed themselves as much as I did. We are looking forward Fiesta Fundraiser 2025. The monies raised from our Fiesta Fundraiser go back into benefiting both our Preschool and Afterschool programs.

Miss Monica's class had two field trips to Summerset Farms one for some apple picking and the 2<sup>nd</sup> time for the pumpkin patch.

Our preschool field trip to Solvang Farmer Pumpkin Patch was on Oct. 25. It was great to see how many parent volunteers helped out on this day. Each child was able to pick out their own pumpkin and walk through the small corn maze.

On Oct. 31, children came in costumes and paraded up to Atterdag Village where they sang Halloween songs for the "grandmas and grandpas." It's great to continue this tradition with our friends up at Atterdag Village.

We closed Nov. 11 to honor our Veterans. And we closed on Nov. 26th and 27th for Thanksgiving.

The Preschool Christmas Program will be Friday, Dec. 6 in the Parish Hall. Our theme is Winter Wonderland. The children are currently practicing their Christmas songs in the mornings and I am sure they will put on a wonderful performance for everyone.

The children's Christmas gift exchange will be on Tuesday, Dec. 10 in the Parish Hall with milk and cookies served afterward. The preschool and afterschool programs will be closed Dec. 23-Jan.1.

This year the Preschool will be participating in the Solvang Christmas parade on Saturday, Dec. 7. All are welcome to join the festivities.

Feliz Navidad,

**Lola Gonzalez  
Director  
BPSAS**

## Faith in Action

### **Renate Sanders Bequest**

I want to express deep gratitude towards Renate Sanders. Renate passed away a few months ago and we received word from her estate attorney that she had included Bethania in her final act of giving. We recently received a check for a little more than \$22,000 from Renate's estate. I knew this was coming but wanted it to be a surprise to Council.

A while back, Renate asked me to come visit her and she wanted to know what would happen should she include Bethania in her estate planning. I reminded her of our Gift Policy from 2020, which directs undesignated gifts to our Endowment Fund, and I told Renate if she decided to do this, that money would become an ongoing source of giving for Bethania, as it would add to the principal amount, and we would only ever use what comes from the interest. It gave Renate a lot of comfort knowing that this money would continue to support Bethania long after she passes away.

I asked her if it would be okay to share this with the congregation when the time came and she said yes, so I'd like to use this as both an example and a reminder to please consider including Bethania in your estate planning. As a church we entirely rely on the donations from church members, however, when a church member passes, that giving stops. For churches with an older congregation, this could be a serious problem, but the folks at Bethania had the wisdom and foresight to create an Endowment Fund, and with that, give our members the ability to give a gift to Bethania that will keep on giving long after they've passed away. Renate included a percentage to Bethania and with the rest she was able to donate to other things that meant a lot to her and it brought her comfort and joy in knowing that gift would always be there.

We have a wonderful and intelligent person at the Synod named Lisa Higginbotham who is able to both answer any questions folks might have as well as help them write a gift to Bethania as part of their estate planning, and there are so many ways to give. And she does this free of charge, so if you would like to get in touch with her, please let me know.

### **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 (304 Households) 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 two clients who used to come during the COVID pandemic had to come back for food again. The man told me, "I was doing all right but now I can't pay my rent and eat and I remembered how you gave me food during COVID. I thank God you are still doing this." Another of our clients, Ms. E needs Ensure for protein and incontinence briefs which she cannot afford. "You help me make it through the week. I am especially grateful I can leave the house with the briefs you provide."

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 as well, especially since the Food Distribution will be closed on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve and we anticipate heavy use of the box. 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 as well.

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](mailto:vikingpressprint@verizon.net)**

## **Piece Makers at Bethania**



The Piece Makers had a setback which turned into a blessing. The quilts did not make it to the Ingathering in October. Several worthy organizations were



considered before the quilters decided to donate them to Sleep in Heavenly Peace, the Santa Maria chapter. It is a non-profit group that makes beds for children who don't have one. Colleen Grant drove over from Lompoc and picked them all up to deliver them for us. We are hoping to have her come and tell us more about their organization and ways we can help.

Our December quilting day is Friday Dec. 13. We will meet in the parish hall from 9-12.

## Noisy Sunday: Celebrating the Birth of Jesus

The next “Noisy Sunday” is coming on Dec. 22nd. The Noisy Offering 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! Purchasing items helps struggling families keep their babies healthy, clean, fed and nurtured. For many of these families, finding funds to purchase diapers and formula are 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. 22nd. Together, we can CHANGE a child’s world!

– Linda Marzullo

## Christmas Angels & Preschool Presents

Would you like to be an “angel” to a child in need? You can make Christmas special for a child at Iglesia Luterana San Juan Baptista or our Preschool this year. Any way you can help is appreciated... We have committed to adopting 50 little Angels this year so far plus some children from our own Preschool/After School program. Your help makes their holiday happier.

The **CHRISTMAS ANGEL** project helps members of Iglesia Luterana San Juan Baptista by providing Christmas gifts for needy children who attend the church. Iglesia is a mission partner of 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 supports local families who attend Bethania Preschool and After School program. These families are chosen by the Preschool Director. The children remain anonymous. Your donations will assist us in purchasing gifts and other necessary items for these children, whose 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” (funds donated go towards this project, not to the Preschool itself).

We are 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”. As soon as we receive the “wish lists” we will be able to coordinate meeting the children’s needs. An email will be sent out once we have the names and our little Angels’ most desired items! 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 [vikingspressprint@verizon.net](mailto:vikingspressprint@verizon.net), call her work 688-5219 or contact the church office.

**Christmas Angel Wrap**  
**Sunday, Dec. 22nd**  
***Beginning at 10:30 a.m. in the Parish Hall***

**Christmas Fun - Gift Wrapping for Iglesia Luterana San Juan Bautista Children**

Bring yourself and your willing hands and joyful hearts. Everyone is welcome, whether you want to wrap, sing, have coffee and watch...we have 50 children to wrap presents for, and we need your help! We provide the paper, boxes and tape - you help do the wrapping of the gifts our Angels have purchased, and have some fun at the same time.

We will be enjoying Christmas music, a delicious coffee spread made by Carolyn Schuit, and fellowship as we wrap gifts for low-income 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!

WE NEED HELP DELIVERING THAT DAY! 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](mailto:vikingpressprint@verizon.net).

**If you would like to buy gifts for a child, names and wish lists will be available Dec. 1 at coffee hour.**

**Meals on Wheels**

Meals on Wheels needs substitute drivers. Please contact Emmy Abello, 805-350-3072, if you would be available to drive from time to time.

**“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: Carolyn Schuit for the Silent Auction, Denise Morris and Donna Hinsbeeck who ran around for all the legwork, Bill and Jan Zigler who made such great food that we sold out, all the bakers who donated the delicious goods for the Bake Sale, and Elizabeth Breen, who helped in all areas with super power!
- We appreciate all of our great vendors! We had 16 wonderful vendors, who shared their passion and their artistry with us. It was fantastic to see all their lovely work. Many of them donated items they had created for our Silent Auction in order to help raise funds for the Tuesday Food Distribution.
- A huge thank you to all who attended, shopped, bid, donated and enjoyed. Thank you, thank you! We raised over \$4000.00 to help with the Food Distribution costs.

**- Linda Marzullo**



# Events and Occasions

## Julefest Parade

The Julefest Parade is Dec. 7 at 11am in Solvang. Bethania Church and Preschool will be having our float in the parade again this year and we'd love to invite you to help us decorate and join us in the parade.

**Decorate:** Dec. 5 at 5pm in the back parking lot

**Candy Help:** Please help us by purchasing miniature candy canes (or any candy really) to throw out during the parade. We need about 15 lbs of candy so we need a lot!

**Join us:** Please join us for the parade. We will meet in the Vets Hall parking lot at 10:30 am. Children are most welcome!

**A Truck:** We need a truck and driver to help us with the float. If you can offer your truck and services, please let us know.

**For questions, please contact Pastor Chris.**

## Theo Pub

Theo Pub is Thursday, Dec. 12 at 7pm at Solvang Brewing Co. We have a topic each month and questions to help us think and wonder together. You do not have to have an in depth knowledge of the Bible or Theology to participate, just an open mind and hungry appetite.



## Cookies, Cocoa and Caroling!!



Sunday, Dec 15, 2:30 pm Parish Hall

All are welcome!

Come and enjoy singing around the tree  
and some fabulous, tasty treats.

*No cost – Please bring a plate of  
your favorite holiday cookies or bars to share!*

*Coffee and Cocoa will be provided!*

## Book Group

The Bethania Book Group will be discussing the second half of *The End of Drum-Time*, by Hanna Pylväinen. We will gather on Dec. 19 at 2pm in the Parish Hall. A zoom link will be sent out for those who are out of the area.



## Christmas at Bethania

### Little Christmas Eve Service - Dec. 23 - 6pm

Pastor Anne-Grethe Krogh Nielsen will be here Dec. 23 at 6 pm in the Sanctuary. The entire service is in Danish.

### Christmas Eve Services - Dec. 24

4 pm Traditional Service  
10 pm Candlelight

### Poinsettias

We will have 15 poinsettias in the sanctuary for Christmas time. Each one is \$15/each. Please let Kristyl know. Fill out a form and return with payment.

Thank you.

#### Poinsettia Order Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (\$15/each)

Listing in the bulletin: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact info: \_\_\_\_\_

## Coffee Hosts in December

**Thank you** to the people hosting coffee this month.

**Dec. 1** - Ron & Kathy Walsh

**Dec. 8** - Available

**Dec. 15** - Susan Beckman

**Dec. 22** - Carolyn Schuit/Christmas (W)rap Party

**Dec. 28** - Jan Zigler



# Church Business

## Council Meeting Highlights - Nov. 21, 2024

Thank you to all who attended the Congregational meeting on Nov. 17. It was a fairly short and productive meeting—the best kind! Lou Fox Bender and Cheryl Heredia will join the council in 2025. Donna Hinsbeeck replaced Josh Bratt. We are still in need of one additional Congregational Council member for 2025. If you are interested in serving, please contact Pastor Chris. Things are running smoothly at the church as we anticipate Advent and Christmas. Your Church Council wishes you love and peace at Christmas and always.

**Jan Zigler**  
**Council President**

Jan Simonsen (805) 319-8652	Leigh Berenger (310) 877-8418	Ingelise Pedersen (805) 688-3836
Karin Baty (612) 229-8172	Jan Zigler (559) 740-3676	Rikka Rasmussen (805) 453-8535
Donna Hinsbeeck (805)245-5907	Carol Lake (805) 688-6797	Carol Skoog (408) 398-5673

## Financial Statement - Period Ending Oct. 31 2024

### Balance Sheet

	September 2024	October 2024	Change	Notes
Operating Acct	\$80,526	\$137,783	\$57,257	** see Food Distribution & Brown Bag for \$80,000 in grants
Money Mkt Acct	\$141,320	\$141,344	\$24	
Petty Cash Acct	\$26	\$26	\$0	
Fund Accounts	\$2,056,642	\$2,056,642	\$0	Cemetery, Endowment & Heritage
Fixed Assets	\$1,880,047	\$1,880,047	\$0	Property & Equipment
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$4,158,560</b>	<b>\$4,215,841</b>		

### Profit & Loss

October	Actual	Budget	Variance	Notes
Total Income	\$24,273	\$27,510	-\$3,237	
Total Expenses	\$43,263	\$28,270	\$14,993	** See Below for notes
Net Income	-\$18,990	-\$760		

## Offerings

	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Variance</b>	<b>Notes</b>
General Fund	\$20,124	\$17,181	\$2,943	
Non-Members	\$453	\$181	-\$272	
	\$20,577	\$17,362		

## Other Donations

Brown Bag	\$10,000	\$10k A. Bean Family Trust Grant	
ELCA World Hunger	\$10		
Food Distribution	\$75,621	\$20k Kei Lin Foundation Grant, \$40k A Bean Family Trust Grant, \$10,000 Mission & Ministry Grant (Synod)	
Noisy Offering	\$308		
Produce Table	\$195		
Youth Fund	\$2,131	Halloween Party	

Expenses for October: New office computer \$1608, payroll distribution includes an extra paycheck due to how October pay period fell.

If you have any questions please reach out to Leigh Berenger / Treasurer Bethania / 310-877-8418

## In Our Hearts, In Our Prayers

Carol Aides, Andy Blanton, Anabelle Dalberg, Dyann Driggers, Sheldon & Pat Green, Luis Haro, Belle Hoger, Ariana Macias, Denise Morris, Mike Murray, Kate Pearrrson, Tom & Carolynn Petersen, Doyle Phillips, Jane Shade, Rick Shade, Judy Stamat, Hayes Robert White and those who serve our country both at home and abroad.

## December Calendar

**Please note:** Bethania's Calendar is accessible on-line from our web page [bethanialutheran.net](http://bethanialutheran.net)

### Sundays

**9:30 am** Worship Service in the Sanctuary

**11:00 am** Unorthodox in the Sanctuary/Sunday School in the Fireside Room

### Mondays

**6-10 pm** Dungeons and Dragons Teen Group in the Parish Hall

**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** Preschool/3:30 pm After School Chapel in the Sanctuary

**5:30 pm** Yoga in the Parish Hall

**7:00 pm** Choir Practice in the Parish Hall

**Thursdays**

**7-8 pm** Boy Scouts in the Parish Hall

**Fridays**

**8:30 am** Jim Skoog practices in the Sanctuary.

**Noon** - Lisa Blanton practices in the Sanctuary

**Sunday, Dec. 1**

Sunday School does not meet.

Angel Names available at Coffee Hour.

**Thursday, Dec. 5**

**5 pm** Decorate Float for Julefest Parade

**Friday Dec. 6**

**5:30 pm** Preschool Program in the Parish Hall

**Saturday, Dec. 7**

Julefest Parade

**Sunday Dec. 8**

**7 am - 2 pm** Elverhoj Food Preparation in the Kitchen

**Thursday, Dec. 12**

**7:00 pm** Theo Pub: Solvang Brewing Company

**Friday, Dec. 13**

**9 am-noon** Quilting Group in the Parish Hall

**Saturday, Dec. 14**

**3:30 - 9 pm** Baptism Party in the Parish Hall

**Sunday, Dec. 15**

**2:30 pm** Caroling, Cookies and Cocoa in the Parish Hall

**Wednesday, Dec.18**

**5:30 pm** Preschool BoardMeeting: Fireside Room

**Thursday, Dec. 19**

**2 pm** Book Group in the Parish Hall

**7 pm** Council Meeting

**Sunday, Dec. 22**

**Noisy Offering** during the 9:30 service

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

**Monday, Dec. 23 - Little Christmas Eve**

**6 pm** Danish Service in the Sanctuary

**Tuesday, Dec. 24 - Christmas Eve**

**4 pm & 10 pm** Worship Service in the Sanctuary

**The Beacon December 2024**  
**Bethania**  
**621 Atterdag Rd.**  
**Solvang CA 93463**

*Merry Christmas &  
Happy New Year!*

*May your season be filled  
with light and joy!*

Image by [Tomislav Jakupec](#) from [Pixabay](#)

