



The Beacon

Bethania Lutheran Church
621 Atterdag Rd
Solvang CA 93463

May 2026

805-688-4637
bethanialutheranch@gmail.com
www.bethanialutheran.net

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.

Thoughts from Pastor Chris Brown

I spend a lot of time reflecting on The Church, our church, and other churches. What makes us different, what are common threads across the global spectrum, what are people looking for when they are "church shopping", and where is all this going in a rapidly changing world. As I think about this, I've had a metaphor ruminating in my head for a couple years that I want to share, in the hopes that this might encourage all of us to reflect on the meaning of coming to church.

I think going to church is like going to the gym, or an exercise class. You get pumped up and tell yourself that you're going to do this activity that is good for you and you show up and quickly realize you're out of your element. The equipment seems strange, you're worried you don't know the routines that everyone else seems to know implicitly, you worry you stand out amongst the others, and it all feels foreign. Afterwards you might be a little sore and somewhat tuckered out, and honestly, you're showing up earlier than you'd like. But as you continue to go, you pick up the routines, you start to understand the equipment a little better, you recognize the same people and strike up conversations, and after a few weeks of this, you notice something: it feels good. Your whole body responds to these workouts that are becoming consistent, and it craves more of this good thing. If you stick with it long enough, it becomes a habit that makes life feel better in an all-encompassing way.

Anyone who exercises regularly will tell you that the amazing feelings never happen right away. In fact, depending on how long it's been, exercising can feel downright uncomfortable in the beginning, and there's no way around it except to stick with it. But if you do, you get to this wonderful place that exists on the other side. Church has always been this way. It was built in a way where the joy comes from being part of a community, engaging in a liturgy that crosses time and space, committing to ministries that care for others, which takes time and energy, and in the midst of that creates feelings of belonging and meaning.

However, it takes time. American churches in the 1950s realized this and tried circumventing it by turning to business leaders and researchers to understand how they could create feelings of joy and meaning from the moment people walked in the doors. And it worked incredibly well. The megachurch was born. Churches let go of ministries that care for others and poured resources into "worship" services that were geared to give people immediate dopamine hits. But it's superficial. It is like

watching people workout or exercise, admiring their determination and success, understanding their technique, but never stepping in to do it yourself. You avoid the discomfort of exercise, but you also miss out on the incredible feeling that sustains it. As many people were walking out of churches as were walking in. The immediate feelings of joy were short lived, and church decline across the board started in the 1980s and is now at its lowest point. Megachurches felt superficial, and small churches asked for too much.

I share this, not to bash on megachurches, but to highlight what kind of a church Bethania is. We are not a small dying church; we're a small thriving church. We are a church that focuses as much on ministries and gatherings that create community, belonging, and compassion as we do on worship on Sunday morning. And these activities are like walking into a gym. They may feel foreign at first and it may not feel amazing the first time you show up because of that. But if you stick with it, I promise it'll give way to something incredible. And the reason we stick with this way of being church, is it's far more sustainable.

I want to conclude by saying I also believe this is the future of the Church. Our society as a whole has moved away from being directly involved in activities and relationships and instead having experiences through screens. It's given a sense of immediate gratification, but people are starting to realize these ways of being are not long-lasting, and they're starting to look for something else, something more sustainable. I believe small churches are starting to realize what they offer is what people are looking for, but it will take a little bit of commitment, energy and time.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Chris

Bethania Preschool & After School News

Happy May! As we step into a month full of sunshine, growth, and discovery, we are excited to share all the wonderful learning experiences happening in both our Preschool and Afterschool programs. This month, our classrooms will be blooming with engaging, hands-on activities designed to nurture each child's curiosity, creativity, and confidence.

Our preschoolers will be exploring themes centered around *Spring, Growth, and New Life*. Through interactive lessons and play-based learning, children will:

- Discover how plants grow and what they need to thrive
- Observe nature and learn about insects, weather, and seasonal changes
- Engage in sensory activities, art projects, and storytelling that spark imagination
- Build early literacy and math skills through songs, counting, letter recognition, and hands-on exploration
- Strengthen social-emotional skills like sharing, kindness, and cooperation

We are especially excited for outdoor exploration as we take advantage of the beautiful weather to learn beyond the classroom!

Our school-age students will dive into exciting opportunities that balance learning and fun. This month, we will focus on:

- **STEM activities** that encourage problem-solving, creativity, and teamwork
- **Homework support** to help students stay confident and successful in their schoolwork
- **Creative expression** through art, building challenges, and group projects
- **Physical activity and outdoor play** to promote health and well-being
- **Character development**, emphasizing responsibility, respect, and leadership

We aim to create a space where children can unwind, connect with friends, and continue growing academically and socially.

Across both programs, May is all about *growth*, not just in nature, but in each child. Our dedicated staff continues to support every child's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development while fostering a strong sense of self-worth and wonder.

We are thankful for your continued support and connection with our preschool and after school programs. It is a blessing to partner with you in the growth and development of these children.

**With gratitude,
Monica**

Service at Bethania and in the Community

Bethania's Tuesday Food Distribution: Donations and Doings



Thanks to New Frontiers, we received an incredible donation of about 1000 pounds of chicken wings and drumettes for our Food Distribution. They arrived frozen from Nebraska as a donation from the supplier, on a huge truck that filled our front parking lot. There were 43 cases that had to be off loaded by hand (no lift gate on the truck!). Frank Moore and Josh Bratt were rock stars. This was a huge donation, and the driver was happy we were able to help so many families. And so were we!

Recent activity has included packing a higher count of weekly bags, due to the increased numbers of people needing food. Our produce packing crew is dedicated and has a lot of fun too – who knew Lou Fox Bender was the Cabbage Queen?

Our annual fundraiser, the “Hike Against Hunger” is coming up on May 17th. Please plan to sponsor a hiker, attend the BBQ, and tell others about this fun event. Help us as we help make local lives a little more healthy.

What else is something you can do to help? Our volunteers are dedicated. But we need more help. We especially need people who are able to run pallet jacks to unload the truck deliveries in the afternoon, move heavy items, and help with distribution in the evenings. Can you help us out? Let me know.

Food insecurity is a problem that affects all of us. Think of the people you encounter daily: working at stores, restaurants, cleaning the hospital or hotel rooms, taking care of our elderly, working the fields. Santa Barbara County is the #1 county in all of California with the highest amount of poverty and food insecurity. Help us change this statistic we are battling each week, one food bag at a time.

Food Distribution Shifts on Tuesdays:

- 9:00 a.m. – Packing stable food items in bags in the sanctuary.
- 1:15 p.m. – Trucks arrive for unloading.
- 1:30 p.m. – Produce bags packed.
- 4:45 p.m. – Moving out items and Setting up for Evening Distribution (starts at 5:15)
- 6:45 p.m. – Shut down and clean up

If you are able to volunteer at any of the shifts, or have any questions, please contact Linda Marzullo at vikingpressprint@verizon.net.



Piecemakers

The Piecemakers were busy in April with a few first timers joining us. We have 7 quilts completed and 8 tied and ready for binding. Our next meeting dates are May 8 and May 29.

While we are now focused on quilts for LWR we are still supporting Sleep in Heavenly Peace. The Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians are sponsoring a bed build Saturday, May 16 from 9-12 at 100 Via Juana Road in Santa Ynez. To register go to volunteer.shpbeds.org. Our group name is Bethania Builders. I will have Thrivent shirts for us to wear. The goal is to complete 60 beds that day.

- Lois De Meyer

Noisy Sunday: Wreaths Across America

The next “Noisy Sunday” is coming on May 24th. Our donations from the offering will be used to support the “Wreaths Across America” program.

The official Wreaths Across America date is Dec. 19, 2026. On this date, Veterans’ graves in the US and abroad are decorated with a wreath and their names read aloud. Sponsor a veteran’s wreath in honor of or in memory of a loved one who served in our armed forces. Or, sponsor a wreath and allow us to designate a recipient among the millions of heroes who rest in honored glory.

Our local chapter of the DAR (Daughters of the American Revolution) participates in this program. The Noisy Offering will be used to offset the cost of wreaths purchased for those who do not have someone to donate a wreath.

Locally, the DAR have adopted Oak Hill Cemetery. They will place wreaths on Veterans' graves and read the names aloud on Dec. 19. Our local cemetery currently has over 900 veterans at rest. You can also request a wreath be placed on any veteran's grave, anywhere in the world. Carolyn Schuit will have forms available after worship services if you would like to designate a veteran to honor. Each wreath costs \$17.00 and will be placed by the DAR here locally, or in another cemetery that is specified.

2026 THEME: REMEMBER ME

"We often speak of "our service members" as though they are one unified group. Yet within that group are countless individuals, each with a name, a family, and a story that helped shape the freedoms we cherish today. While we honor them collectively, we can sometimes overlook the deeply personal sacrifices: the parent who never met a grandchild, the young recruit asked to shoulder more than any teenager should, the veteran who returned home carrying memories too heavy to share."

- Karen Worcester, Executive Director

We all really "make change for the better" with the Noisy Sunday! So bring your coins and make some noise on May 24th. Together, we can honor our veterans with dignity and pride this December.

- Linda Marzullo

Hike Against Hunger

Start getting your sponsors!



Our annual **Hike Against Hunger** (formerly Hike for Hunger) is happening Sunday, May 17th this year. Hikers leave the church at 8:30 am and hike to Nojoqui Falls Park. A delicious BBQ will be available to all around 11:30 am, costing \$18 per adult and \$12 per child. (Please RSVP by May 14th)

Hikers, walkers, bikers, runners, joggers, skaters...all are welcome.

Invite friends and neighbors to participate or to sponsor you! Please consider this another opportunity to help fight local hunger, either by your personal donation or by sponsoring a Hiker, and attending the BBQ at Nojoqui Falls Parks while congratulating the walkers with your cheers!

We are asking each hiker to try to gather as many donations as possible, with a minimum donation requested of \$20.00 per hiker. Any hiker who raises over \$100 in donations will be honored with a free lunch. Hikers need to pre-register with Linda Marzullo (see contact info below). Sponsor sheets will be available in the narthex, parish hall and the church office. All sponsor sheets and donations must be turned in the day of the hike.

We will be having incentive prizes for the most donations raised by Kids 12 and under, Teens 13-18, and Adults 18-59, Adults 60 and up. Winners will be announced during lunch at the park.

Proceeds from this event will be used to purchase items for Bethania's own Tuesday Food Distribution, which has been serving over 250 area families weekly. With cuts to the federal USDA programming, reduced levels of support to Food Bank, an increase in the need for food locally, and other procurement challenges, we must purchase more and more food items to keep these families healthy. All our purchases are made from donated funds and grants.

Come out and enjoy walking to benefit hungry households and help a local family move from food insecurity to health. (If you would like to attend but cannot afford the cost of the lunch, please contact Pastor Chris for a scholarship.)

Worship in a beautiful setting, a fantastic BBQ lunch, friendly competition, and a great way to help fight against hunger. Invite your friends, your walking group, your service club, your teammates, co-workers, relatives...let's get a big crowd out there to celebrate a gorgeous day and a fantastic event!

HELP US! We need: Desserts, Set Up and Clean Up help, Rovers (to check on hikers and give a ride if they need one), Drivers to return hikers to the church parking lot after the event, If you would like to help with any area of this event please **contact the church office at (805) 688-4637 or Linda Marzullo at (805) 688-5219 or email her at vikingpressprint@verizon.net**

Activities at Bethania

Coffee Time

May 3 - Confirmation - Christian Education hosts coffee.

May 10 - Available

May 17 - Available

May 24 - Terry Billings

May 31 - Recognition Sunday - Christian Education hosts

Please sign-up in the Parish Hall or contact the church office if you would like to host coffee hour.



Theo Pub is Back!

Theo Pub is back now that it's warmer out and we'll be gathering on Thursday, May 14 at Solvang Brew at 7pm. Come a little early and grab a drink and some food and meet us by the fire pit!

Bethania Women's Group

You are cordially invited to
Bethania Lutheran Church Women's annual dinner
at Carol Skoog's!
Monday, May 18, at 6:00 pm
3325 Erica Place in Lompoc



RSVP to Carol (408) 398-5673, call or text

Men will meet there at 6:00 and go out to dinner at a restaurant in Lompoc before returning to Skoogs for dessert.

Cemetery Work Day Saturday, May 23, 9-11am

All are welcome to come help clean up our Cemetery for Memorial Day. Bring gloves, brooms, or rakes if you can. We hope to see many of you there.

**Thank you,
The Cemetery Committee**

Recognition Sunday

Recognition Sunday will be May 31 during our 9:30 service and we want to recognize any achievements among our community! Please let us know of any middle school promotions, high school graduations, college or grad school graduations, trade school completions, promotions, retirements, etc. We would love to celebrate all these as a community, so please reach out to the office and let us know! And of course, join us at worship on May 31 to honor our community members and for dessert and celebration afterwards in the Parish Hall!

Theaterfest - June 24

Nineteen tickets have been reserved for the play "Come From Away" on Wednesday, June 24th for \$34 per person. The musical play deals with the 38 planes that were diverted to Newfoundland after 9/11—true story. Emmy Abello will be selling tickets after services on May 24 & 31.

Honoring Maria Jacobsen

Maria Jacobsen was born in 1882 in Siim, Denmark, the daughter of a pastor in a close-knit rural community. From an early age, she showed a quiet resolve and deep compassion that would guide her life's work. Trained as a missionary and nurse, she traveled to the Ottoman Empire in the early 1900s, where she served among Armenian communities. It was there, during the Armenian Genocide, that her courage would be tested in ways few could imagine.

As violence spread and families were torn apart, Maria Jacobsen became a protector of the most vulnerable. She sheltered and cared for thousands of orphaned Armenian children, often at great personal risk. Her work led to the founding of an orphanage in Lebanon known as "The Bird's Nest," a place of refuge and healing that still stands today. Remembered by Armenians as "Mama Jacobsen," her legacy is one of extraordinary humanity and moral courage, an achievement that Danes everywhere can take rightful pride in.

That legacy found a home in Solvang about eight years ago, when Bethania Lutheran Church was approached by the Armenian community in the Los Angeles area. They had commissioned a statue honoring Maria Jacobsen and were seeking a place where it could stand not only as a monument, but as a gathering point for remembrance. Bethania welcomed the opportunity and has been deeply honored by its relationship with the Armenian community, and the statue now rests on church grounds as a symbol of shared history and gratitude.

Since then, the site has become a place of annual pilgrimage. Each year, except during the COVID pause, members of the Armenian community travel to Solvang to honor "Mama Jacobsen." They gather with song, heartfelt words, and generous tables of Armenian food, creating a deeply moving tribute. In these moments, Maria Jacobsen's story continues to live on, linking Denmark and Armenia through a legacy of compassion that still resonates today.

- Lori McConnell



Congregational Business

Many good things are happening at Bethania—the dessert auction benefiting the youth, the first visit from the Armenian community to honor Maria "Mama" Jacobsen since before COVID and the annual Touch a Truck fundraiser, which benefits the preschool and after school programs.

Additionally, the Endowment Committee plans to fund three \$1,500 scholarships this year and give \$1,000 to Veggie Rescue's Sweet 16 (16th anniversary) fundraiser. You may know that Veggie Rescue delivers produce to the food distribution most weeks. I strongly encourage everyone to donate (again) to the endowment fund.

**In Christ,
Jan Zigler**

Council Members Contact Info

Jan Zigler, President (559) 740-3676	Rikka Rasmussen, Vice-President (805) 453-8535	Carol Skoog, Treasurer (408) 398-5673
Cheryl Heredia, Secretary (714) 450-5487	Denise Johns (661) 713-1516	Ron Walsh (805) 705-3736
Donna Hinsbeeck (805) 245-5907	Lou Fox Bender (805) 245-0553	Robert Laufer (805) 717-1696

Bethania Lutheran Church
Notes for March Financial Statement
Period Ending 03/31/26

Balance Sheet				
	February 2026	March 2026	Variance	Notes
Checking Account	\$ 79,368	\$ 77,176	\$ (2,192)	
Money Market Account	141,719	141,744	25	
CDs	154,807	155,273	467	
Fund Accounts	2,609,977	2,609,977	-	Cemetery, Endowment & Heritage
Accounts Receivable	-	-	-	
Fixed Assets	1,880,048	1,880,048	-	Property & Equipment
Total Assets	\$ 4,865,919	\$ 4,864,219	\$ (1,700)	

Profit & Loss				
March	Actual	Budget	Variance	Notes
Total Income	\$ 32,356	\$ 28,649	\$ 3,706	
Total Expenses	36,237	32,561	3,676	
Net Income	\$ (3,881)	\$ (3,912)	\$ 31	

Offerings				
March	Actual	Budget	Variance	Notes
General Fund	\$ 25,271	\$ 22,348	\$ 2,923	
Non-Members	883	1,089	(206)	
Total Offerings	\$ 26,154	\$ 23,437	\$ 2,717	

Donations - Designated Funds and Pass-Through Accounts		
Pass-Through Accounts (Managed by BLC)		
Food Distribution	\$13,171	City of Solvang Grant \$8,710, We Are Community \$600
Noisy Offerings	\$130	
Preschool/Child Care Gifts	\$50	
Designated Funds (Managed Outside of BLC)		
Cemetery	\$100	
Endowment Fund	\$50	
Heritage Fund	\$1,558	

Questions? Call Carol Skoog, Treasurer, (408) 398-5673

New Church Directory!

There are many Bethania members who haven't given us their information or a photo, and we'd love to include you. You can send your contact info and a photo to the church email, email me, text me or look for me on a Sunday. Once your information is added, you will get access to the directory via a link. Also please ask me any questions!

Becky Sutherland
(562) 505-1726
padelobeck@msn.com

Thank You from the Youth Group!

That Dessert Auction was so much fun! We came together with 20 different desserts and from the silent auction and live auction, we raised \$3676 for the Youth Group! Thank you so much to all who donated desserts, all who bid, and all who showed up for a fun time! We will definitely be doing this again next year!

Our Prayers

Carol Aides, Kief Adler, Andy Blanton, Sheldon & Pat Green, John Groh, Barbie Haile, Luis Haro, Karl Hatch, Belle Hoger, Ariana Macias, Robby Meinhert, Denise Morris, Mike Murray, Jerry Olsen, Kate Pearrrson, Tom & Carolynn Petersen, Doyle Phillips, Jane Shade, Judy Stamat, Hayes Robert White and those who serve our country both at home and abroad.

May Calendar

Sundays

9:30 am Worship Service in the Sanctuary
Sunday School **9:30 am** (Rm 1) & **11:00 am** (Fireside Room)
11:00 am Unorthodox in the Sanctuary
5-7 pm Youth Group in the Fireside Room (twice monthly)

Mondays

5:30 - 7 pm Dungeons and Dragons Teen Group in the Parish Hall
7 pm AA in the Fireside Room

Tuesdays

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

Wednesdays

9 - 10:30 am Praise Band Practice in the Sanctuary
11:30 am & 2:30 pm Chapel in the Sanctuary
5:30 pm Yoga in the Parish Hall
7 pm Choir Practice in the Parish Hall

Thursdays

5:15-6:15 pm Contemplative Prayer in the Sanctuary
5:15-6:45 pm Irish Dance in the Parish Hall

2nd & 4th

7-8 pm Boy Scouts in the Parish Hall

Fridays

9 am Jim Skoog practices in the Sanctuary
Noon - Lisa Blanton practices in the Sanctuary

Friday, May 1

Preparations for BPSAS Touch-A-Truck

Saturday, May 2

Touch-A-Truck on the Church Grounds

Sunday May 3

Confirmation

Wednesday, May 6

5:30 pm Social Ministry Committee Mtg. in the Fireside Room

Friday, May 8

9 am Quilting in the Parish Hall

Saturday, May 9

9 am-12 noon Private Baptism in the Sanctuary

Wednesday, May 13

6:00-8:00 pm Youth Connect in the Fireside Room

Thursday, May 14

7 pm Theo Pub at Solvang Brewing Company

Saturday, May 16

8:30 am-4:30 pm Fund for Santa Barbara in the Parish Hall & Fireside Room

3:30 pm-5:30 pm SIMH Piano Recital in the Sanctuary

Sunday, May 17

Hike Against Hunger (see article)

Wednesday, May 20

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

Thursday, May 21

6 pm Church Council Meeting in the Fireside Room

Friday, May 22

All-Day Set-Up of Parish Hall for Preschool Program

6 pm Preschool End of Year Program in the Parish Hall

Saturday, May 23

6:00-8:30 pm SIMH Piano Recital in the Sanctuary

Sunday, May 24 - Pentecost

Noisy Offering during the 9:30 service

Monday, May 25 - Memorial Day

The Church Office and Bethania Preschool and After School are closed.

Friday, May 29

9 am Quilting in the Parish Hall

Sunday, May 31

Recognition Sunday

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Pentecost is May 24, 2026.