



Pastor Kris—402-499-4993

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Church Website—bethlehemdavey.orgBethlehem Lutheran Church - Davey**September Helpers**

Lector—Mike Unverferth

Communion Assistant—open

Ushers—Jeff and Maverick Brown

Cleaners—Wk 1/2—Dave and Vicki Nielsen

Wk 3/4—Steve and Mary O'Hare

Altar—Tonya Brown

Bethlehem Lutheran Church

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Encounter Christ**Grow in faith****Love as Christ loved****Tell the Story*****Building Community in the Kingdom of God***

We live in a time when not being an active part of the church is more common than attending worship regularly and serving in the church. In many ways, that's more like the early church. You can read about it in the book of Acts. They were a clear minority in the very early days, although that changed drastically a few generations later.

The early church struggled with theological disagreements. The gospel of Jesus Christ was so worldview shattering, they didn't all agree what it really meant for their everyday lives and what it meant for them as a community. But what often attracted people to the growing church was that they were a community that lived differently from those around them.

The social stratification so common in Roman life was missing. Rich and poor alike were a part of this new community, and although the early Christians were imperfect at it, wealth was not how leadership and participation were determined.

They were a community that spent time together. They learned together, ate together, took care of one another and even served their neighbors together. Here's one of my favorite stories about the early days of the Christian church. In the second century there was some sort of epidemic in Rome that was highly fatal. People that could afford to escaped to rural areas to avoid exposure, often leaving their own sick loved ones behind. But those early Christians didn't do that. They hung in there and took care of not only their own sick, but their sick neighbors. It was risky business. And no doubt some died. But on the whole, Christians had better survival rates because they actually got care and nutrition and such.

And because they also took care of sick neighbors, not only did more of them survive, but they also were drawn to this strange new community that didn't seem so bent on just looking out for themselves. They had love for one another and for their neighbors. That attracted new-comers.

The behavior of Christians during this and other epidemics is one of the reasons given for the explosive growth of the Christian church in the second and third centuries.

I think the future of the Christian church rests on continuing to be...or again becoming...that kind of community. We may never again experience the growth in numbers that the church has at different times in history. The 50's and 60's are very unlikely to come back. But in some ways that actually makes us better able to be that odd kind of community that does things differently...that actually cares for one another and the people around us. *That...*is a kingdom of God kind of community.

This issue of the Bethlehem Star focuses on the ways we can continue to build and strengthen our ties as a community, and in particular, a community that models the kingdom of God.

Christ's peace, *Pastor Kris*

Building Community by Learning Together

This coming year we will have two Sunday school aged kids, three confirmation students and four young people who have been confirmed. It is a true challenge to figure out how best to do education and faith formation with these numbers and age spans. The key? You guessed it...community. This will be an all-congregation mission.

The cornerstone of education for all ages is going to be All Congregation Sunday school. It will be the first and third Sunday except in September and January when it will be the 2nd and 4th Sundays. This will be a required part of confirmation and is also the only thing that will happen for Sunday school.

This is perhaps where we most need the congregation to pull together and be a community for the sake of the kids who need a good environment to learn in. And you know what? Adults will likely learn some things that can help them grow in faith as well.

All-Congregation Sunday school was a success last year. We just did it once a month. This year it will be twice. There's really two reasons for that. One is that the other Sundays, when we held what was supposed to be youth focused Sunday school, things didn't work as well. It was hard to tie those Sundays into the rest of the year's focus. And small numbers meant less energy and enthusiasm.

The other is that last year we took more time going through the Catechism than I usually do for confirmation. That means we will be covering the whole Bible this year, so it will take more time to cover what I think needs to be covered.

As always, perhaps my biggest focus is to make connections between the biblical story and life in the world as we know it today. That is always a great conversation for young children, older students and maybe especially adults, who will need to model that life to young people.

A calendar of the year's education program will be posted on our website and on the bulletin board when it is finalized.

Building Community by Engaging with our Davey Neighbors

The Potato Bake seems to remain our best way to engage with our neighbors in Davey. This year, a part of our proceeds will go to help the village buy new Christmas lights. In addition to the congregation providing some of the funds, Judy Hornung is going to help with selection.

Hopefully, we will be able to take part as a congregation in celebrating those new lights and helping in other ways that might be needed.

And as always, if you have neighbors in the area that don't have a church home, invite them to check out Bethlehem.



September Calendar

- September 2 10:30—Worship at Saunders Care Center
- September 5 9:00 am—Quilting
6:30 pm—Confirmation
- September 9 9:15—All-Congregation Sunday school
10:30—Guitar worship—Back to School Blessing
After worship—Ice Cream!
After Ice Cream—church council
- September 16 10:30 am—Worship with Holy Communion
After worship—meeting for all those interested in helping set up service projects
- September 19 9:00 am—Quilting
- September 22 Prep for potato bake
- September 23 All-Congregation Sunday school
10:30—Worship
After worship—prep, set up for potato bake
- September 30 Worship
- Pastor Kris will be on vacation September 27—October 2.

Building Community through Service and Outreach

Last year, we participated in the Center for People in Need's Christmas toy give-away. LaDonna and Judy serve lunch at Matt Talbot once a month, and we've begun providing cookies for that. But when my life went off the rails last year, so did the planning for any other congregation service projects. To me that indicates we need more people involved in planning those. If you have a heart for service and want to see the church actively serving in our communities, please join me after worship on **September 16** to assess past outreach and service activities and make some plans for the coming year.

Building Community through the Larger Church

Here is a link to the recap of the Nebraska Synod Assembly. We do good work in this state through the Synod, and through the ELCA Churchwide which does good work throughout the world.

[file:///C:/Users/krisb/Downloads/2018summary_color%20\(2\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/krisb/Downloads/2018summary_color%20(2).pdf)

There will be some hard copies available in the alcove as well.