



BETHLEHEM STAR

Gratitude and the Brain

I bet if you look at Pastors' newsletter articles across churches and denominations during November, you'll find lots of articles on gratitude. I've probably written some myself. Coming up with ideas for newsletter articles can be hard and when a month gives you a holiday you can work with, you go with it.

Most of you will remember that 2018 was a very difficult year for me. Our son got sick at the end of 2017 and spent seven weeks in a hospital in Chicago and another month at Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha. He then stayed with us for another several months under home health care.

Both of my parents began experiencing a myriad of problems associated with being nearly 90, and my mom died in the summer of that same year. Another family crisis occurred in October.

By November, I was feeling pretty shelled. I decided to post something I was grateful for every day for a while. I think maybe a month. It was very hard to be grateful in big ways. But I found I could find one ordinary thing I could be grateful for each day...things like the YMCA where I can exercise when the weather's bad, or the Bengal Spice Tea that I love. It seemed to be helpful to me, even though I couldn't find a way to feel grateful for much.

This month those posts have come up regularly as Facebook memories and it's been nice. I'm in a different place now, but I'll have to admit my default way of being in the world is not gratitude. When I do spontaneously experience gratitude, it feels like a blast of God's grace. But mostly it truly is something I have to practice.

In the last several years, I've read some things on gratitude and the brain. It's kind of big in pop psychology – in fact all sorts of things fall under what's often called “positive psychology.”

Gratitude is good for your brain, as well as your heart and soul. It releases dopamine, a so-called “feel good” neurotransmitter. Research studies have shown it can be helpful in people with anxiety and depression, in conjunction with other therapy.

Even in PTSD under the right circumstances it can be helpful. Severely traumatized people need psychotherapy and possibly medications. Encouraging them to be grateful can sometimes just trigger shame and guilt and make things worse. But a clinical trial showed that in conjunction with therapy, when they were able, a group that practiced small expressions of gratitude did better overall than the groups that used therapy alone or therapy with journaling.

So, maybe in November, it would be good for me to try that again. I am grateful for lots of big things in my life, not least of which is God's ongoing grace and love for me. It's easy to take those things for granted. But sometimes expressing gratitude for the small ordinary things gets my brain and neurotransmitters more in the groove of being a grateful person.

By the way, I am really grateful today that I found my Bengal Spice Tea at Walmart after searching for it in vain at the two HyVee locations closest to us.

In Christ,

Pastor Kris

Bethlehem Lutheran Church Council Minutes
October 13, 2024

Present: Pastor Kris Bohac, President Charlie Brown, Secretary Virg Unverferth, Corey Carlson, Linda Sestak. Mike Unverferth was present for the treasurer's report. Absent: Jerri Daugherty

Meeting called to order by President Charlie Brown at 11:22am. Opening prayer was given by Virg.

Treasurer's report presented by Mike Unverferth. A written report was available. Discussion was held. No questions presented. Motion to accept the report was MSA (moved, seconded, approved).

Secretary report: report from 9/8/24 meeting was read by Virg Unverferth. Motion to accept the minutes as read was MSA after one minor correction.

Pastor's Report: Pastor had nothing to add at this time.

Old Business:

Sharing pastoral service/Bethlehem/Zion/Grace/Czech Presby-2nd collaboration meeting: The first meeting was very positive. The second meeting is scheduled for 11/10 with our Synod Representative, Pastor Heidi Wallace, planning to attend. Pastor will continue to keep the congregation informed as new information is obtained.

New Directory Update: Virg has continued to do pictures and collect contact cards. Corey and Linda will research ways to construct the directory

Kitchen faucet/sink replacement: There continues to be a leak under the sink. It was decided to proceed with replacing these after estimates are obtained. Charlie will contact Davidson Plumbing-Waverly and Corey will get faucet/sink estimates.

Church front doors replacement: Charlie received 2 estimates, but will get a third.

Caulking water leaks: Charlie and Corey will do during fall clean up day

Insurance settlement/sewer backup: There has been no further backup. Pastor is waiting to hear more back from the insurance companies.

Fall Cleaning: scheduled for 10/19 at 9 am

New Business:

Replacing church laptop: The council approved Pastor buying a new laptop

Potato Bake Report: Curtis had given a report during morning church service. Just over \$1200 was raised. It was once again a great event to engage with the community. Curtis has offered to chair the event again next year!!!

Nebraska Lutheran Outdoor Ministries presentation to council about sustaining sacred spaces: We received information from NLOM regarding this. Pastor will submit the information in the newsletter as it is a fundraising campaign at the camp

Other Business: Thanks was expressed to Corey for planting the 2 new trees in the front of the church. He has been watering them and they are doing well.

Next Meeting: November 10th

Motion to adjourn was made at 12:17, MSA.

Respectfully submitted,

Virg Unverferth
Council Secretary

Worship is at 10:30 am Sundays, in person or online on either YouTube or Facebook. Links to the bulletin and YouTube channel and Facebook page can be found on our website:

<https://www.bethlehemdavey.org/worship-in-person-and-online>

Calendar

- November 3** 10:30 am—All Saints Sunday
Worship with Holy Communion and Remembrance
- November 10** 10:30 am—Worship
Council following worship
12:45 pm—Shared Ministry meeting—Grace
- November 17** 10:30 am—Worship with Holy Communion
- November 24** 10:30 am—Worship
- December 1** 10:30 am—Worship. First Sunday in Advent
No communion, Pastor Kris is gone



Pastor Kris—402-499-4993

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Church Website—bethlehemdavey.org

[Bethlehem Lutheran Church - Davey](#)

Council president—Charlie Brown—402-525-0040
Council members—Virg Unverferth, Corey Carlson,
Linda Sestak, Jerri Daugherty

November Helpers

Lector—Theresa

Usher—Arline/Rhonda

Communion Asst.—Mary

Altar Setup—Rhonda

Cleaning—Jerri