

October 2024



BETHLEHEM STAR

Most of you know that I am only a few years from retirement. My current plan is summer 2027. You also know that finding pastors to fill openings has become increasingly difficult. In particular, filling a part time call such as mine can be even more difficult.

For the last several years, Grace Lutheran in Swedeburg and the Czech Presbyterian Church near Wahoo were served by Gary Grinvalds, a seminary student. Gary graduated in May and was called by American Lutheran Church in Filley. The folks at Grace and Czech Pres loved Gary, but they can't afford a full-time pastor. Presently they are using supply pastors to cover Sunday worship, I'm teaching the Grace confirmation class, and our cluster pastors are available for pastoral care needs. I've done one funeral for Grace. There will not be a seminary student available this year and although the application was submitted to Wartburg for a Contextual Learning student when one is available, that is unlikely to be a consistent resource.

As a result, we have begun a conversation between Bethlehem, Zion, Grace, and Czech Presbyterian to form some type of shared ministry. We are very early in this discussion. There are lots of possible configurations, but all of them will depend on lay people leading the church and doing ministry. There would be one pastor serving the four churches on a full-time or near full-time basis. But no pastor can be two places at once.

In our first conversation, there was lots of energy and even excitement about the possibilities of doing ministry in different ways. It might seem new, but the reality of the very early church is that it was led by lay people – farmers, tradesmen, merchants, craftsmen, and so on. Even in our own history, there were circuit pastors who traveled to visit multiple churches, on horseback, for sacraments and guidance. The rest of the time, the churches were led by lay people – farmers, merchants, tradespeople. That's why communion in many places was only done quarterly. The Czech Presbyterian church has been doing that for years.

Our next step will be to meet again with congregation leaders and a representative from the Nebraska Synod and from the Presbytery.

What would change for us? The main thing is that there would likely be Sundays where I would be preaching and leading worship at the other churches. This depends a bit on the model we might choose, but you would be sharing me. We would also likely work to learn more intentionally how to do ministry in a model that doesn't depend on a pastor doing everything. All four churches are very good candidates because they already do that.

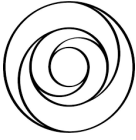
What would be the advantage of this? First, it might make a full-time call possible. Shared, for sure, but that makes this a more viable option for a pastor who needs a full-time salary. I'm also hoping we can treat this as an interim so that when I do retire, there would not need to be a long gap before the call process could even start.

We will do a trial and some listening sessions before the congregations actually formally vote on it. We will need honest feedback to help us decide.

The primary hope of course is that this gives us a way to continue to thrive and be a vibrant part of God's work in the world and in our community into the future.

In Christ,

Pastor Kris



Seeking the Spirit By Virg Unverferth

I recently started my second year of training to become a spiritual director. The spiritual practice we are currently practicing is a form of a body prayer given to us by the mystic, Julian of Norwich. I've been doing it daily and it really helps to focus my body and to be more receptive to God's loving ways.

-Await: sitting quietly, hands up on lap or out in front in a giving/receiving posture. Slow your breathing and relax your body. Clear your mind as you invite God into your presence.

-Allow: you can put your hands on your forehead (or I sit in a praying posture), resting in God's presence, receiving whatever the Spirit would offer you. It may be a phrase or a sensation.

-Accept: place your hands on your heart, open and receptive

-Attend: place your hands on your belly center, tending to God's inner movements, attentive and embodied. Be ready to act on what has been given.

Spiritual practices are important in our lives as they help to slow us down so that we can hear God through the chaos of everything else going on. If you find yourself thinking more about the people in the upcoming election than God, you might want to try this prayer practice.

Bethlehem Lutheran Church Council Meeting Minutes September 8, 2024

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

Meeting called to order by President Charlie Brown at 1127 with an opening prayer given by Charlie

Treasurer's report presented by Mike Unverferth. A written report was available. Discussion was held. It was to be noted that normal operating expenses are approximately \$3500. Motion to accept the report was MSA (moved, seconded, approved).

Secretary Minutes from the 8/11/24 meeting were read. Motion to accept the minutes was MSA.

Pastor's Report: She will be gone the week of September 15th for vacation.

Old Business:

Sharing pastoral services with Zion/Grace/Presbyterian Czech: meeting with church leadership is set for Sunday, September 22.

Grant applicants update: no new interest since an impromptu council meeting approved \$500 to Sophia Olson to support Girls on the Run as she participates in the New York City marathon on 11/3/24.

New Directory Update: Virg continues to take pictures and collect contact information from congregants

Tree replacement update: Corey will be looking for Red Maple trees that could be planted in October. He will update the council via e-mail as he collects more information re: cost, etc.

Kitchen faucet leak: No new leakage. We may consider a new sink and faucet in the future.

Church front doors replacement: Will continue to monitor especially if the doors get wet. May consider new doors in the future.

Water leaking into basement: Pastor spoke with the plumbers. They have no idea from where or why the water is coming in. We will hold off on flooring until we go a period of time with no new issues. The plumbers did suggest doing caulking which Charlie and Corey will plan to do. They felt that the slope up to the church was adequate so no new dirt will be placed there.

Sewer backup damage/insurance settlement: It is currently going through insurance and any additional expense will then be sent to the Davey Village Board.

New Business:

Fall Cleaning Date will be set for 10/19/24 at 0900

Curtis submitted the Potato Bake Flyer which was approved. Proceeds will fund the Camp Carol Joy Holling Camper fund so hopefully local children will be interested in attending.

Produce Stand: has been very successful. Virg will get a thank you card and gift certificate for Steve O'Hare who donated his time.

We had discussion on how best to communicate the council minutes to the congregation. Pastor will plan to attach the minutes to the newsletter with a brief treasurer's report.

Next meeting: October 13th.

Motion to adjourn was made at 1218, MSA.

Respectfully submitted,

Virg Unverferth
Council Secretary

Financial Report—August

	Aug 2024	Year to Date
REVENUE		
General Contributions		
Weekly Offerings, Tithes	1,730.00	18,339.00
Memorials	0.00	2,495.00
TOTAL General Contributions	1,730.00	20,834.00
Other Revenue	975.00	10,170.71
TOTAL REVENUE	2,705.00	30,492.99
EXPENSE		
TOTAL Pastoral Ministry	2,529.37	20,322.28
Other Expenses	3,867.20	18,582.86
TOTAL EXPENSE	6,396.57	38,905.14

At the last council meeting, we decided to include council minutes and a shortened financial report in the newsletter. Although we have a very healthy financial reserve and investment income is beginning to recover, you can see income is not keeping pace with expenses.

Typically, total expenses monthly are around \$3500. There are extra expenses both August and September for the sewer back-up. Some of that will be reimbursed by insurance.

There are also income and expense lines for the shoe project.

If you would like to see the full treasurer's report, contact Mike;

mikeunverferth@gmail.com

Everyone's generosity is greatly appreciated. If it's been awhile since you've assessed your giving and you're able to nudge it up a bit, it would help greatly.

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

- October 6** 9:45—Boundless Compassion group
10:30 am—Worship with Holy Communion
- October 13** 9:45—Boundless Compassion book group—last session
10:30 am—Worship
Council following worship
- October 19** 9:00 am—Cleaning Day
- October 20** 10:30 am—Worship with Holy Communion
- October 27** 10:30 am—Worship



Pastor Kris—402-499-4993

krisbo90@gmail.com

Church Website—[bethlehemdavey.org](https://www.bethlehemdavey.org)

[Bethlehem Lutheran Church - Davey](#)

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

October Helpers

Lector—Arline

Usher—Randy

Communion Asst.—Laurie

Altar Setup—open

Coffee—open

Cleaning—open—Cong.

Cleaning day Oct. 19