



BETHLEHEM STAR

Go and...tell the story



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Last week’s tornadoes presented an opportunity for lots of stories. People had stories about where they were when they saw it. People at Garner Industries and many homes in Elkhorn, Blair, and Bennington have harrowing stories to tell.

It awakened memories and stories for me. In 1980, I was home for the summer in Grand Island when 7 tornadoes hit the city. Countless businesses and homes were completely destroyed and many more damaged, including our home. My sisters and I told tornado stories when we were back in Grand Island visiting a relative the day after the recent storm. One of the most distinct memories for all of us, besides the tornado itself, was trying to sleep on the living room floor in a house full of June bugs. It seems a home with one end wide open to the sky is an open invitation to June bugs. My middle sister and I also remember going with my mom to the hospital where she was Director of Nursing and where we both worked. It was dangerous and we probably lucked out.

It was a traumatic experience for so many in Grand Island, many much more so than us. Telling the story about traumatic experiences is a part of healing from them. It’s the foundation of trauma based mental health care and treatment of things like PTSD.

But there’s a story that happens in disasters like tornadoes that we need to rethink. It’s the one that tries to work out God’s hand in either the disaster or the fact that more people didn’t die. In particular, those who narrowly missed true tragedy will tell the story of God watching out for them – protecting them.

But one person did die. His family and friends might have wondered where God was for him. And in Grand Island in 1980 five people died. What about them? Where was God for them?

I do think it’s right to give God thanks that things were not as bad for us as they could have been. But I also think we need to rethink our story about how God acts in the midst of all that. And our key is in realizing that how God ultimately acted in history was through a cross, not a shield. The cross tells the story of a God who suffers with humanity. The cross tells the story of new life that comes through death, not by avoiding death. The cross means that God suffers with those who shelter in their basements while their life’s dream gets blown to smithereens over their heads. And God suffers with those whose lives are catastrophically ended by tornadoes and other disasters, and with those who love them.

Then out of those disasters, we look for signs of resurrection. We see people coming together for the sake of helping those who were affected. We see volunteers picking up debris, handing out meals, and gathering supplies. We see new dreams rise. We see healing happen as the traumatized tell their stories over and over. And we place our hope for those who died in a God whom even death can’t defeat.

Finances

Bethlehem has largely enjoyed good financial health over the last quite a few years. But inflation has impacted us just as it has others. As numbers grow smaller, income does as well. We continue to have periodic repairs to an aged HVAC system and will likely need to replace it in the near future. Removing the two oaks out front was an expensive endeavor. Insurance for us is much more expensive, as it is for everyone else.

Our income from congregational giving has not kept up. Over the last several months, our offering income is often around half our monthly expenses. Our checking account balance has dropped from \$22,000 at the beginning of 2023 to \$12,000 most recently.

Most of the time, the total income and expense sheet looks better than that because of the investment funds, but that's been more up and down since the pandemic. And it's not real income until we withdraw it.

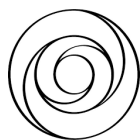
The investment funds in some ways function as an operating reserve. It's there if we need it, but you'd rather not dip in unless you have to. But it's also a fund for mission, and we can do more cool things with it if we don't have to rely on it for operations.

I realize inflation has impacted everyone. If you are already giving as much as you can, thank you and keep doing that.

But if it's been a while since you've increased your giving, I ask you to prayerfully consider bumping it up if you can.

Opportunity to Serve—Matt Talbot

We are signed up to serve the evening meal at Matt Talbot Kitchen and Outreach on Saturday August 17. Please get this on your calendars. We'll have more details as we get closer, but the meal is served from 5:30 to 6:30 pm and we'll need prep time before.



Seeking the Spirit By Virg Unverferth

The Rhythms of Life

I was recently on a weekend spiritual retreat and it gave me time to think about the rhythms in my life. I feel the rhythms of the seasons, the hours of my days and weeks, my breathing, my heart beat, in the music I play on the piano, how my feet hit the ground when walking on grass versus hard pavement, and in the rhythmic pedaling of my legs when biking. I also have rhythms when responding to positive and negative interactions, when driving during rush hour versus on an open country road, and when speaking to my children versus an elderly person who has difficulty hearing.

We can't avoid the rhythms of life and most of us don't want to avoid them as they give us a sense of repetition that brings us comfort and a sense of security. These rhythms are especially important to children and their lives can be very disrupted when there is no rhythm or sense of security in their daily activities.

Our lives can be improved spiritually when we can take time to identify the rhythms in our lives especially those that tap into the sacredness of nature as those give more meaning to our lives. As we go through the spring season, I hope you can find time to spend in nature listening to the rhythm of the wind, your breathing, your footsteps, the sound of the rain on the roof, or in the rising of vegetation from the ground. Then, find time to thank God by entering into rhythms of your faith through prayer, daily devotion, weekly church services, and service to others.

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

May 5	10:30 am—Worship with Holy Communion
May 12	10:30 am—Worship
May 19	10:30 am—Worship with communion
May 26	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

May helpers

Lector—Mike

Usher—Mike

Communion Asst.—Mary

Altar set-up—Mary

Coffee—Corey

Cleaning open

Pantry open.