



BETHANY LIFE

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THE GREAT “I AM”

The reluctant servant of God, Moses, stood at the Burning Bush in the wilderness of Midian and asked the question that was burning itself in his soul. He had been called to deliver God’s people from slavery. In Exodus 3 we read, **The Lord said . . . I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring My people the Israelites out of Egypt . . .**” Moses said to God, **“Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is His name?’ Then what shall I tell them?”** God said to Moses, **“I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”**

Moses had been raised in Pharaoh’s household, and the Egyptians had many gods with many names. Moses wanted to know the true God’s name so that the Hebrew people would know exactly who had sent him to them. God called Himself I AM, which describes His eternal power and unchangeable character. In a world where values, morals, and laws change constantly, God wants Moses—and us—to know that we can find stability and security in our unchanging God. Malachi 3:6 says, **I the Lord do not change.** Later on, the same thing is said of Jesus. Hebrews 13:8 says, **Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.** Because God’s nature is stable and trustworthy, He’s in control of His creation, and we’re free to follow and enjoy Him rather than spend our time trying to figure Him out, or worse, trying to control Him.

Jesus identified Himself with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—and Moses—when He spoke of Himself as “I AM.” He said **I AM the Door; I AM the Vine; I AM Making All Things New; I AM the Resurrection and the Life; I AM the Way, the**

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Truth, and the Life; I AM the Alpha and the Omega; I AM the Bread of Life; I AM the Light of the World.

This year, as the Lenten season again guides us to the food of the cross and the opened, empty tomb, I thought I'd preach a series of sermons on those "I AM" sayings of Jesus. They give us a fuller and more rounded out picture of who Jesus is and how He carried out His ministry among the Israelites of the first century. It helps us see Him for who He is and how He revealed Himself in His great teaching discourses.

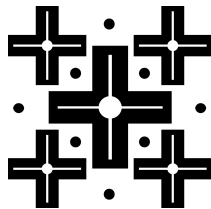
The I AM series begins on Ash Wednesday and continues on the Sundays of Lent, culminating in the Vespers services of Holy Thursday ("I AM the Bread of Life") and Good Friday ("I AM the Light of the World") and finally Easter Sunday ("I AM Alive Forever and Ever").

The midweek Vespers services are special, too. Several pastors in our Circuit, including our own Pastor Bob, are conducting a sort of "Round Robin" of preaching assignments. We'll have a different circuit pastor in our midst each Wednesday, preaching on some aspect of the theme, "Together at the Cross."

One note: since Pastor Bob and I are both participating in the circuit preaching, we will not be here for those Wednesday services. You will be served by a different pastor from the circuit, and we will be serving your counterparts in other circuit churches.

Please join us each Sunday morning at 8:15 or 11:00 and each Wednesday at 12:00 noon or 7:00 p.m. for our special worship opportunities.

Pastor Krieger



The Greek cross has four arms of equal length. The five crosses grouped together is an appropriate symbol for Lent because they represent the five wounds of Christ (hands, feet, and side).

**TALK OF VISION BECOMES
2008-09 COMMUNITY OUTREACH MISSION:
WITH “A HAND UP” WE CAN CHANGE LIVES**

Bethany Lutheran Church has a unique opportunity to effect change in our community over the coming months. After careful consideration, conversation, and with the guidance of Pastor Krieger, our congregation will embrace the opportunity to sponsor *A Hand Up, Inc.* as our local mission project, supporting them in their efforts to provide furniture and household goods to people in need.

The story of *A Hand Up* is an inspiring one. Working with social agencies in Hartford who do the social work and provide the case management, *A Hand Up* provides furniture and household goods to their clients once they are housed. They help clients like Joel – a single man who lost his apartment and landed in a homeless shelter. He worked hard and was able to find an apartment, but couldn't afford to furnish it. *A Hand Up* made sure he had a bed, dishes, towels, pillows and blankets. On January 13th, they made a delivery to a woman who was able to leave *My Sister's Place* in November 2007 for a tiny efficiency-style apartment in Hartford's West End. She has M.S. and also has some mental impairment. She did well getting some furnishings on her own, but still needed a dresser, lamps, end tables, and all the necessities of an operational kitchen, as well as linens, towels and curtains. She was delighted to get a set of pots and pans, and a microwave, and was anxious to get cooking. She had been using plastic utensils, which she reported broke easily, and was happy to be getting real silverware. Without these items, people like Joel and the woman from *My Sister's Place* have a less stable home environment, become discouraged and are at risk of slipping back into homelessness.

According to the 2000 Census, the poverty rate in Hartford, Connecticut is 29.4%. That's 36,000 people living in poverty. In the Hartford area, there are agencies to provide meals, counseling, job training and apartment assistance but there are very few agencies who work to provide free household items to people moving out of homelessness into their own apartments.

A Hand Up began in 2003 when four women -- Rosemary Cleaves, Jane Arnold, Robin Gilmartin and Diane Mack -- came together with the desire to develop a project that would both make a difference in the community and allow them to use their work and volunteer experience. Two years later *A Hand Up* was born with the mandate to help those in the Hartford area who are leaving homeless shelters and moving into a home of their own. They made their first delivery in

September 2005 with a pickup truck named Horton in honor of the Horton Brass Company in Cromwell who donated the truck. Since then, they have helped more than 150 families.

Why choose *A Hand Up* over a bigger, more established organization? In a word, impact. We will literally make *A Hand Up* grow. With our support, *A Hand Up* will more than double their volunteer base allowing them to help more needy people each year. Funds provided in part by the Board of Christian Care made it possible for *A Hand Up* to begin negotiations to lease warehouse space on New Park Avenue, increasing their storage space by 100%. And to help more people and utilize the warehouse, *A Hand Up* will need quality furniture and household goods donations. Bethany will make a significant contribution with our own donations and by soliciting donations from friends and family.

Pastor Krieger pointed me to a passage from Saint Paul in 2 Corinthians 8:9 to illustrate the goal of this mission. Saint Paul writes, *You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.* And so we will be asked to do the hard thing: make a substantial commitment of our precious time to help those in need. But by giving away our abundant resources of time, talent and treasure, we will make others lives richer and in turn enrich the life of our congregation.



Over the coming months, I will be working with Parish Planning and the board of *A Hand Up* to continue to move this mission forward. Our goal is to build participation, so that by September we are ready to call on every member of our congregation – from the Sunday School children, to the youth, to the adults – to volunteer time regularly for this important work. In the meantime, don't be surprised if we ask you for your input, advice and time as we work through the many ways Bethany members will participate in our 2008-09 Community Outreach Mission.

Let the service begin!

--Lisa Swayne

The difference between what we do and what we are capable of doing would suffice to solve most of the world's problems.

- Mohandas Gandhi

NOTES FROM KATIE BENASHKI, PARISH PRESIDENT

- We are currently looking to fill the Chairman of Stewardship/Congregational Vice President slot.
- Lisa Swayne, who already chairs the Board of Christian Care, has asked to take on the Public Relations Board. For a number of years that board has just consisted of our webmaster and archivists/historians. Lisa will be looking for board members to assist her in advertising/publicizing both internally and externally events at Bethany.
- You don't need to wait for the bi-annual election of officers and boards to join a board. If you have an interest or have been thinking about lending your time and talent to a board, please contact the board chairperson. The list of boards can be found on the last page of the directory distributed October 2007.
- The PPC and all boards are starting a review of the church constitution. Our constitution has not been updated since 1996 and it is always good to at least review the need every ten years.
- We have discussed the time of the Voters' Meetings, currently held during the education hour, and are considering options/alternatives such as evenings or Sunday afternoon, etc. No final determination has been made.
- The Thanksgiving worship in 2007 was held on Thanksgiving Eve with 68 in attendance. The hope was that this time change would enable a greater number of our members to attend. That was not the case. The attendance at past Thanksgiving (10 AM) services has been: 2006 (78), 2005 (25), 2004 (69), 2003 (56), 2002 (58), and from 1997 to 2001 (>100). We will consider the time change again in 2008 and welcome your input.



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- Mission and Value: Thank you for the feedback on the Values; please continue to provide this. A number of social events have been held to enable us to know each other better. We have decided to support *A Hand Up* as our primary, local outreach effort in '08 – '09. See Lisa Swayne's write up for more info on *A Hand Up*. We are also planning a larger involvement with Habitat for Humanity through Thrivent Build in Hartford County. And as part of this year's Time and Talent we would like to match members with needs and abilities in Bethany's own "Make a Difference Day".



Abraham Brunk, a professor and researcher in the Netherlands, found that people oriented toward giving and sharing are more physically and emotionally fit than their self-focused and less generous peers.

Brunk's study showed that givers use 50% fewer sick days. They also have lower blood pressure and higher self-esteem.

The anonymous poet who wrote the following words was right on target:

*Give strength, give thought, give deeds, give of your wealth,
Give love, give tears, and give thyself.
Give, give, always giving. Who gives not is not living;
The more you give, the more you live.*

THE FOURTH "R" OF A WELL-EDUCATED PERSON



Most people would agree with the premise that human beings need to know certain basic things in order to function effectively in an increasingly complex and challenging world. The three "R's" of education, reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic are so fundamental that people accept their importance without question. But what about a fourth "R": religion? Recent trends and research indicate that many Americans living now are "religious illiterates;" that is, they lack basic religious knowledge that would be considered necessary for an individual to have in order to properly understand and appreciate the diversity of faith in our world today.

In light of this situation, Bethany's Board of Christian Education has been considering for several months now the question of what a young person brought up as a Lutheran Christian "ought" to know by the time he or she reaches the Rite of Confirmation in 8th-grade. It's easy to assume that professionally-designed Sunday School curricula and well-intentioned teachers will impart all of this basic knowledge to students as they undergo their religious education, but can we really afford to make that assumption?

With that in mind, the board is currently undertaking the task of creating a catalogue of essential religious knowledge for our young people, to be used as a reference in being certain that they are, in fact, learning what we believe they should know as well-rounded Christian individuals. And this is where you, the reader, come in!

The board would like your thoughts and opinions as to what you think is basic to a young person's Christian literacy. The categories that we seek responses to include the Parables of Jesus, Bible stories (Old & New Testament, besides the obvious ones such as Adam & Eve, Noah's Ark, and the like), Bible passages, and fundamental practices (how to take Communion, how to pray, etc.). There will be suggestion boxes set up around the church to receive your ideas, but in the meantime please call Mark Litke at 313-0472 or email him at mlitke@netzero.net if you have suggestions or questions.



On Ash Wednesday, February 6, Lent begins. During this 40-day period, Christians reevaluate their spiritual lives. It's a time for us to have a spiritual check-up and to strive to live the Christian life more faithfully and more intentionally.

Our pilgrimage through Lent should inspire us to serve God more faithfully in our daily lives.

EVANGELISM INITIATIVES



Webpage: A subcommittee has been established to discuss and make recommendations on how to make Bethany's webpage more informative and user friendly. Some changes have already been made. If you have suggestions, please contact Glenn Wall at 582-2881.

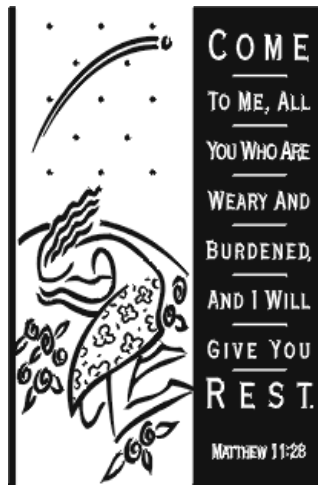
Greeter Training: Pastor Krieger facilitated a "greeter training" session on December 9 during the Adult Education Class. Specific instructions were given to designated greeters, and pointers were provided on how all members can approach newcomers or people they don't know and become "friendly" ambassadors for Bethany. We want to make our guests feel welcome.

Welcome Center/Welcome Bag: A Welcome Center will be established in the narthex of the church with information for members and visitors. A Welcome Bag has also been created which will be distributed by the Greeters or Ushers to visitors to the congregation.

Banner: The Evangelism Committee recently purchased the banner which was displayed in the narthex for the Christmas season. It is planned that other "theme" banners will be provided throughout the year.

WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE?

What is your favorite part of church? I asked this question of a number of Bethany members, young and old. It wasn't a survey. It was just a question that was asked after talking about the weather. The answers varied, but there were a few themes. Some of us really like a particular part of the service, like the music and singing – perhaps in appreciation of the skill of our musical performers, and our own opportunity to belt out a tune thinking know one else can hear. We



value Holy Communion – where we are brought close to our Lord. And in a testament to our Sunday School teachers – a resounding favorite is Sunday School. My favorite part of the church service is the children's sermon. The simplicity of the message hits me straight between the ears, often hits the heart, and usually makes me smile. Don't you see something new each time the pastors ask us to look at a stained glass window, or notice the colors on the altar, or read one of the banners? And we all shift in our seats to get a look at what the pastor has brought in his bag. I'll close with one last repeating theme which does not call

out a particular part of the service – “I just like to take a break from the weekly rush, to be reminded of a greater cause, and to be with people that feel the same way.” See you next Sunday – no matter what brings you there.

Joe Presing, for the
Board of Lay Ministry

The unselfish effort to bring cheer to others will be the beginning of a happier life for ourselves.

Helen Keller

HAPPY WINTER, HAPPY SPRING!

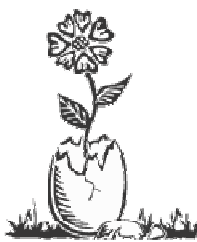


We will be incorporating both (Winter and Spring) during these two months here at Nursery School! "Jesus Loves Me" will be our theme for February. Our focus will be displaying our love of Jesus and all he has given to us. Valentine Parties will highlight this as the children make and share their valentines with each other. Good dental

health habits will also be taught during this month, as it is National Dental Health Month. The tooth fairy helper from Dr. Cipes office comes to visit both classes, which is always a fun time! How can you not get excited about a new toothbrush!



March will bring spring, St. Patrick's Day, and Easter. We will rejoice in the newness God creates for us each spring through colors and flowers. We will remind the children of God's great gift to each of us through Jesus by retelling the story of Easter over and over again! March will also bring National Lutheran Schools Week. We will open our classroom to parents in the four/five year old-class during this week so they can come and observe, spend a little extra time with their child and even stay for lunch. We observe this week every year and it really makes us feel part of the Lutheran School's network, as we know most Lutheran schools throughout America are also participating. This is a great week to showcase our commitment here at Bethany to Lutheran Education and especially to God's most precious creation, the children!



As always...remember this is your nursery school and you are always welcome to stop by and see what is going on. Just follow the sounds of the happy and joyful voices heard everyday here at Bethany Lutheran Nursery School!

YOUTH PLAN FELLOWSHIP ACTIVITIES FOR ALL AGES

All are invited and welcomed to our Annual Dinner and a Game Night and then the traditional Easter Brunch.

Dinner and a Game Night will be Saturday, March 1st. We will have a tea-cup auction, proceeds to be donated to a local charity this year, dinner with sandwiches, salad, and dessert and entertainment. We will kick-off the festivities at 5pm and wrap up around 7:30pm. We will provide the dinner, games and entertainment. The baskets will be on display a week before so you can preview them and purchase the tickets with which to bid on your favorite basket. You do not have to be present to win the basket. Please let Scott know if you would like to help donate or make a basket.

Then, on Easter Sunday, March 23rd, the youth will sponsor our annual Easter Brunch between services. Come enjoy, relax and show off your new Sunday bonnet.



MUSICIANS WELCOME!

The Bethany orchestra invites all interested musicians to join them. There is a place for you, whatever instrument you play. We are currently preparing for the Easter and early summer performances, with rehearsals in the nursery room after Sunday School on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month.

Please contact Scott Baumer - 233-2678 - if you should have any questions. And thanks to all who performed in the Orchestra and BYG Band over the Christmas season. What a blessing that you all shared your talents!



DORCAS & LWML NEWS

The women in the Dorcas Society have resumed their regular Tuesday morning meeting schedule after taking the month of December off. We are looking forward to busy days ahead.

The first business meeting of the new year was held on January 8th. The main topic on the agenda was a discussion on the distribution of the funds earned at the Fair held in October 2007. We are grateful that our very profitable Fair will allow us to make donations to the same local and national worthy organizations that we have supported over the past several years. We will determine amounts that we can give, and will also consider additional projects at our next monthly business in February.

At our annual Christmas Party in December, we gathered 'Mites' for LWML and our LWML President, Alvina Roux, encouraged the giving of gifts for the men at the Open Hearth in Hartford. The congregation was once again very generous in supporting this effort during the first two weeks in December. A total of 56 gifts were collected, wrapped, labeled and ready for Christmas giving to the men in the Open Hearth Shelter.

Early in February, LWML with the help of the Dorcas ladies will make and assemble 'Love Boxes' to send to our members of Bethany who are away at college – a Valentine remembrance of homemade cookies and candies.

For Easter we will be decorating coffee tins and making cookies once again to be given to Bethany shut-ins. We thank our Pastors who deliver them on their visits during Holy Week.

We will also be checking on the Hymnal Ribbons and make additional ones as needed.

Currently there are 19 active members of Dorcas/LWML who work together to carry on these activities. We now have 6 'Lifetime Members', former active members whom we honor in various ways, but who can no longer participate as active members. As the list of Lifetime Members continues to grow, WE NEED to also see growth in our active membership in Dorcas or LWML or both. IF YOU ARE RETIRED, OR WORKING PART-TIME, won't you consider joining with us, if only on an occasional basis, so we can continue to reach-out? We have all been 'blessed' to be given the opportunity to 'be a blessing' to others.

Current Dorcas Officers: President, Edith Schirmer; Vice-President, Edith Hartleb.

A BOY WAS ASKED BY HIS SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER IF HE THOUGHT Noah did much fishing off the ark.

How could he?" replied the lad. "He had only two worms and there were only two fish."



The security system that was installed as the result of an initiative by the Dorcas Ladies is now complete and fully functional.

KEYHOLDERS: please be aware that the exterior doors have been rekeyed, so you will need to use the keypad to gain entry. The Board of Church Properties has provided a code to staff members, Board Chairs, Altar Guild members, and everyone they identified as needing to be able to enter the church at potentially unstaffed times. Please contact Mike Johnson (677-5150) if you feel you have been overlooked and/or are in need of a code, but have not yet been provided with one.

Additionally, the doors can be programmed to lock and unlock at scheduled days and times, and as such will generally open 20 minutes before scheduled meetings and events, and will relock 20 minutes after the start time. For large Fellowship events, the doors will remain open for the duration.

If you are locked out and know that people are in the building, please use the intercom next to the keypad. It will cause the phones to ring. Anyone answering the phone can buzz others in by pressing the star (*) button on the phone 3 times.

Please contact Bunny in the church office (bunny@blcwh.org or 521-5076) if you need to schedule an event or meeting that will require the doors to be programmed.

We are pleased and excited at the convenience and safety that these changes are providing.

ATTENDANCE & COMMUNION FIGURES

Date	Communed		Communed		Total	Total
	8:15 AM		11:00 AM		Attend.	Communed
12/2	107	83	66	56	173	139
12/9	88	75	112	95	200	170
12/23	89	80	71	59	160	151
12/30	84	75	65	64	149	139
1/6	86	80	205	na	11	80
1/13	84	74	108	96	192	170
1/20	109	97	73	47	182	144
Thanksgiving Eve 7 PM	68					
Wed. Advent 1	63					
Wed. Advent 2	48					
Wed. Advent 3	101					
Christmas Eve 4PM	125					
7 PM	259					
10:30 PM	29	24				
Christmas 10 AM	50	47				
New Year's Eve	22	21				

MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

Released

Peter & Betty Bauer

Goody Kelly

7/30/1920—1/17/2008

Service held on Jan. 22.

Losses

Eleanore Menzel

8/21/1916—1/4/2008

Service held on Jan. 10

Winifred Wild

Died 1/14/08 in Fl.

Memorial service to be held on

Feb. 23.

