

## PASTOR'S PAGE

### The Light Leads into Darkness

From backyards in Tennessee to riverbanks in Southeast Asia, researchers said they have seen fireflies — also called glowworms or lightning bugs — dwindling in number.

No single factor is blamed, but researchers in the United States and Europe mostly cite urban sprawl and industrial pollution that destroy insect habitat. The spread of artificial lights also could be a culprit, disrupting the intricate mating behavior that depends on a male winning over a female with its flashing backside. “It is quite clear they are declining,” said Stefan Ineichen, a researcher who studies fireflies in Switzerland and runs a website to gather information on firefly sightings. “When you talk to old people about fireflies, it is always the same,” he said. “They saw so many when they were young, and now they are lucky if they see one.” ... “I know of populations that have disappeared on my farm because of development and light pollution,” [researcher Lynn] Faust said. “It’s these McMansions with their floodlights. One house has 32 lights. Why do you need so many lights?”

\* “Firefly populations fading worldwide,” The Columbus Dispatch, August 31, 2008. [dispatch.com](http://dispatch.com). Retrieved August 6, 2019.

This past summer I did not experience what these researches have sited. My back yard is adjacent to a field. We had hundreds of lightning bugs. My eyes would dart back and forth in the darkness and would catch a glimpse of the lightning bug’s light fading and another shining forth. When I was a kid, I could follow a lightning bug and eventually catch it in my bug catcher.

Chasing the lights, studying the light, in the night sky has been ongoing since the fall. Star gazers, astrologers, have used the lights in the night sky to guide their lives. That’s very likely what caused the magi of Matthew 2 to journey to Judea. Whether or not they were priests of Persia’s ancient Zoroastrian religion, as some suspect, it seems clear they were also astrologers. Matthew’s account is of the star moving, then hovering over Bethlehem. Matthew understands the star’s behavior as a miracle rather than celestial science. I would say both.

It’s a miracle because God places the orientation of the star to come forth at the exact time of the Messiah’s birth. Many believe it was the alignment of not stars, but the planets of Saturn and Juniper. They align every 800 years. The last time they aligned was in the 16th century. The next time will be in the year 2400. I don’t think many of us will be around to see it.

The importance of the star is that it led non-Jews, Gentiles, to the Christ Child. God is using Matthew to reveal to the Jewish reader that Jesus is the Savior of both Jews and Gentiles. He dies for all people. “For God so loved the world that He gave His One and only Son that whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.” (John 3:16-17) Many have speculated that the “magi” did not believe in the Messiah. This is palpable because God has used those who did not acknowledge Him to bring about His purposes. For instance, Isaiah writes: who says of Cyrus, ‘He is my shepherd, and he shall fulfill all my purpose’; saying of Jerusalem, ‘She shall be built,’ and of the temple, ‘Your foundation shall be laid.’” Thus says the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped, to subdue nations before him and to loose the belts of kings, to open doors before him that gates may not be closed... For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen, I call you by your name, I name you, though you do not know me. I am the Lord, and there is no other,

besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me (Isaiah 44:28ff). God used Cyrus to re-establish the nation of Israel, its capital and its temple.

The purpose of the Star was to bring the Gentiles to the Christ child. God in his divine providence brings the entire world to bow at the feet of the Savior of the world. God's plan of salvation is for all people.

Yours in Christ,  
Pastor Steele

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## NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

It is beginning to look a lot like Christmas, especially at Bethany. Most every part of the church has some form of decorations that say it is Christmas. The Nativity is up on the west lawn. The kids presented "What Did I Miss" and we have been having our Midweek Advent services. All of this adds up to the anticipation of the celebration of the Birth of the Savior. The kids did a great job of reading their parts and providing special music at their Christmas Program. A lot of work goes into these programs, especially from the Sunday School Staff and Music Departments. This is always appreciated and looked forward to by everyone.

Backing up to the Kohler Christmas Walk on December 8, Barb and I did not make it this year, but I heard it was well attended. This is good news because, after about forty years, the walk was discontinued for a few years due to the attendance becoming so low. It was re-introduced two years ago and now it looks like a new generation will have this tradition in their lives like we did years ago. It is a great community event and one which will ignite the Christmas Spirit in all of those who attend.

As 2019 winds down, there are some members who will be finishing up terms in office and one who is retiring after 15 years of service as Bethany's Financial Secretary. Shirley Ottman was appointed to her post at the January 10, 2006 Council Meeting. Prior to that she finished up Lonny Messner's term after he and Monica moved to Plymouth and transferred their memberships. She has been very dedicated for all of those years as she and her staff of money counters convened on Monday mornings to record and deposit the contributions. Her winter staff consists of Barb Gumm and Dave Prange. They will be relieved in May through October by Marilyn Kirchenwitz and Betsy Metscher.



Abby Marotz will take over the position of Financial Secretary on January 1. Seated (L-R) are Barb Gumm, Abby Marotz, Shirley Ottman and Dave Prange. Thank you for your years of service, Shirley.

Steve Marotz will leave the Board of Finance and Laura Tershner will become part of that board with Ben Marotz becoming the chairman. Gerry Luebke will step down from the Board of Elders where he has been Head Elder for three years. Andy Fibiger is coming back on to the Board of Elders and was selected to become the new Head Elder. I am also finished, having served two two-year terms as President. Bob Wuerzberger will take a one-year term as President, then Todd Matte a two-year term beginning in 2021. The Board of Trustees will be chaired by Tom Schnettler and Ryan Brooks will come back for his second two-year term. The Board of Education will consist of Kandice Brooks and Sara Hasler. Gina Fibiger serves as Superintendent. I am thankful to all of those who participate in the leadership roles at Bethany. I am so impressed with the way all of our people communicate with each other to ensure that everything is done in a timely manner and with the best interest of the members being a priority.

Barb and I would like to wish everyone a Blessed and Merry Christmas followed by a Happy and Prosperous New Year. We thank you for these past four years and will always look back at them with fond memories.



To God Be The Glory!  
 “Peace on Earth, Good will to all”  
 Lee Gumm - President, Bethany Lutheran Church

**JANUARY BIRTHDAYS**

- |   |  |                          |
|---|--|--------------------------|
| 1-4: Genevieve Regan<br>Patrick Johnson |  | 1-14: Jennifer Sabrowsky |
| 1-8: Audrey Nikisch                     |  | 1-19: Jeanne Toepel      |
| 1-11: Kandice Brooks<br>Kelly Paltzer   |  | 1-24: Mary Madden        |
|   |  | 1-26: Alicia Barthels    |

**January Anniversaries**  
 1-24: Tim & Megan Fibiger

If we missed a member’s birthday or anniversary, please contact the church office and let us know.

**CHARITIES OF THE MONTH FOR 2020**

In 2020, there will be 6 “charities of the month”. Each charity will run for two months at a time.

- January/February – Orphan Grain Train
- March/April – Lutheran Bible Translators
- May/June - Vernacular Video Mission International (VVMi)
- July/August – Lutheran Deaf Mission Society
- September/October - Good News Jail and Prison Ministry
- November/December - Lutheran World Relief

**CHURH CANCELLATION ANNOUNCEMENTS**

In the case of bad weather this winter, please check TODAY’S TMJ4 TV station for church cancellations. You can also go online to tmj4.com or 620WTMJ on the radio.

## **JANUARY/FEBRUARY CHARITY OF THE MONTH – Orphan Grain Train**

During the months of January and February, all money collected from your “Designated Offerings” contribution envelopes will go **Orphan Grain Train**. Orphan Grain Train is a Christian volunteer network that shares personal and material resources with needy people in America and around the world. Grain Train volunteers gather donations of clothing, medical supplies, food, Christian literature, and other aid to meet real needs. For more information, visit their website at [www.ogt.org](http://www.ogt.org)

### **2020 BOARD MEMBERS**

President: Bob Wuerzberger

Vice President: Todd Matte

Council Secretary: Jill Mengel

Board of Elders: Steve Hazen, Brian Faucher, Shua Yang, David Hasler, Jason Mengel, Andy Fibiger

Board of Trustees: Tom Schnettler, Ryan Brooks

Board of Finance: Ben Marotz, Laura Tershner

Board of Education: Sara Hasler, Kandice Brooks, Gina Fibiger

Financial Secretary: Abby Marotz

Treasurer: Derek MacKenzie

Thank you to all who serve Bethany!

### **FROM THE BOARD OF FINANCE**

Listed below are the financials from the month of November, 2019 as well as the year-to-date totals.

November Income	Yr. To Date Income
\$12,758.87	\$118,356.79
November Expenses	Yr. To Date Expenses
\$13,824.35	\$135,601.82
November Net Gain/Loss	Yr. To Date Gain/Loss
(\$1,065.48)	(\$17,245.03)

Steve Marotz	Ben Marotz
Chairman - Board of Finance	Member – Board of Finance

\*\*\*Please consider using the Electronic Giving program “Joyful Response” to simplify and budget your giving. Registration forms can be found on the counter outside Pastor’s office or see Gina in the church office. If you’d like to make a change to your electronic giving, these same forms can be used\*\*\*

### **JANUARY MITE BOX**

The large mite box will be out in the back of church January 26. This month’s grant is designated for Equipping Youth to Witness for Life through the Y4Life program, a ministry of Lutherans for Life. Y4Life seeks to equip Lutheran youth and young adults to be Gospel-motivated voices for life who set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity. Y4Life seeks to equip young people to be the voices for life in a culture that glorifies the choice of death. The need is especially true for teens, college students, and young adults who are bombarded with secular life styles that are contrary to God’s wonderful plan for life. Currently, the Y4Life program is serving college campuses such as Concordia, Mequon. The mission grant funds will go directly towards expanding the initiative to include Lutheran high school campuses, such as our own Lutheran High School in Sheboygan. By training student leaders and providing ongoing mentorship and support for the individual campus ministries, they can raise their voices for life.

## THOSE SERVING IN GOD'S HOUSE THE MONTH OF JANUARY 2020

**Sunday, January 5**  
**10:00 a.m.**  
w/Holy Communion

Elders: Andy Fibiger, Jason Mengel  
Ushers: Group 6 – Ottman, MacKenzie  
Acolyte: Thomas Yang  
Scripture Reader: Norm Giertz  
Altar Guild: Liz & Ken Buesing  
Bulletin Folder: Dan Fibiger  
Door Locker: Ryan Brooks

**Sunday, January 12**  
**10:00 a.m.**

Elders: Steve Hazen  
Ushers: Group 7 - Fibiger  
Acolyte: Annalise Hasler  
Scripture Reader: Sharon Werner  
Altar Guild: Barb & Lee Gumm  
Bulletin Folder: Dan Fibiger  
Door Locker: Steve Marotz

**Sunday, January 19**  
**10:00 a.m.**  
w/Holy Communion

Elders: Shua Yang, David Hasler  
Ushers: Group 8 – Matte  
Acolyte: Ella Albert  
Scripture Reader: Steve Hazen  
Altar Guild: Gina Fibiger, Rachel Johnson  
Bulletin Folder: Dan Fibiger  
Door Locker: Tom Schnettler

**Sunday, January 26**  
**10:00 a.m.**

Elders: Brian Faucher  
Ushers: Group 1 – B. Marotz, Schnettler, I., A. Hazen  
Acolyte: Kaleb Faucher  
Scripture Reader: Lexie Matte  
Altar Guild: Sue Prange, Lois Schmideler  
Bulletin Folder: Dan Fibiger  
Door Locker: Patrick Johnson

# JANUARY 2020

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			01 	02	03	04
05 8:45am Bible Study Sunday School  10am Worship w/HC	06 6:30 Elders	07	08 Confirmation 3:00 – 8 <sup>th</sup> grade 3:15 – 5 <sup>th</sup> grade 4:00 – 6/7 grade  6pm Joy Choir	09 7:15pm Dartball Bethany @ St. Paul, Sheb	10	11
12 8:45am Bible Study Sunday School  10am Worship	13 5:45pm Bd of Ed 6:15pm Finance 7pm Council	14	15 Confirmation 3:00 – 8 <sup>th</sup> grade 3:15 – 5 <sup>th</sup> grade 4:00 – 6/7 grade  6pm Joy Choir	16 7:15pm Dartball Bethany @ Immanuel	17	18
19 8:45am Bible Study Sunday School  10am Worship w/HC	20	21	22 Confirmation 3:00 – 8 <sup>th</sup> grade 3:15 – 5 <sup>th</sup> grade 4:00 – 6/7 grade  6pm Joy Choir	23 7:15pm Dartball St. Paul, SF @ Bethany	24	25
26 8:45am Bible Study Sunday School  10am Worship	27	28	29 Confirmation 3:00 – 8 <sup>th</sup> grade 3:15 – 5 <sup>th</sup> grade 4:00 – 6/7 grade  6pm Joy Choir	30 7:15pm Dartball St. Luke @ Bethany	31	