

PASTOR'S PAGE

January is Life month. Even though Roe was finally overturned this year. Sadly, abortion is entrenched in our culture. In Last year's mid-terms life took a setback. Being a Michigander both houses of their state flipped from pro-life to abortion. Surveys in Michigan found that most suburban women voted overwhelmingly on the candidate's abortion stance. The battle for life now becomes a state-to-state battle. As you read this article by this mere 16-year-old from Minnesota, God the Holy Spirit is at work in the lives of our young people. Enjoy the read! - Pastor Steele

Blessed **by Grace MacPherson**

2022 Lutherans for life (LFL) National Essay Winner – Grades 9-12
Homeschool Educated
Minnesota First Place
Essay Title: Blessed

*Grace Emma MacPherson lives in Mankato, Minnesota, and is 16 years old. Until this year, she has been home educated, but thanks to the Post-Secondary Education Option in Minnesota, Grace is now completing her first semester at Bethany Lutheran College as a junior in high school. Grace enjoys the flute and plays the organ. She constantly analyzes the grammar around her, and carries a dictionary, just in case! She is the author of *The King's Sword*, her first publication. Grace is the beloved biggest sister to six siblings, precious daughter to Ryan and Marie, and God's own child, through faith in Christ.*

When I first babysat Paul, he was four months old. I have six younger siblings, and the rhythm of a baby's development is familiar to me. Like many four-month-olds, Paul wiggled around, rocked on his tummy, and responded to my voice. It came as a surprise when I learned he has Down syndrome.

The CDC defines Down syndrome as “a condition in which a person has an extra chromosome ... Typically, a baby is born with 46 chromosomes. Babies with Down syndrome have an extra copy of one of these chromosomes, chromosome 21.” This leads to facial characteristics that differ from the average baby, including a flatter face and smaller ears. Down syndrome usually causes delays in developmental stages and a somewhat lower IQ than the average population (www.cdc.org).

While a staggering 96.5% of abortions occur for social or economic reasons (www.hli.org), countless precious lives of the unborn are ended due to other reasons, and birth defects such as Down syndrome are among them. But is it realistic for a mother to think that being pregnant with a baby with Down syndrome is a good reason to have an abortion?

Actually, statistics reveal the opposite. A 2011 study interviewed numerous individuals with Down syndrome and discovered that 99% of people with Down syndrome were content with their lives, 96% were happy with the way they looked, 97% liked their siblings—and the list goes on (Skotko). I can testify to this after my months of caring for Paul. He just celebrated his first birthday, so I could hardly interview him the way this study interviewed others, but he is one of the happiest babies I have ever met.

The first few verses of Psalm 41 read, “Blessed is he who considers the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him and keep him alive.... The Lord will strengthen him on his bed of illness” (Psalm 41:1-3). God promises here not only to protect and care for the healthy, but also for the weak. As God's children, we should honor the sanctity of human life, and care for and love the healthy and the weak alike.

Those needing extra care throughout their lives are still a gift from God. When I was eleven, my grandmother came to live with my family for several months. She had been struggling with dementia for years, and due to my grandfather's work schedule, it was hard for him to meet all her needs. It wasn't always easy to have an extra person in the house—especially someone who required a lot of care—but her presence was still a blessing. I was able to spend a lot of time with her that otherwise would have been impossible. Not only do we bless people whose needs require more patience and time, but in doing so, we find ourselves blessed by them. Paul directs older women to “admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed” (Titus 2:4-5). I had the opportunity to experience this through my grandmother's presence in my home. Even when her memory was failing, her faith in God remained strong. Long after she had lost the ability to speak more than a few words at a time, she sang the Lord's Prayer with my family as part of our evening devotions.

God's love is with us always, regardless of our abilities. Even the strongest and wisest among us can do nothing to gain forgiveness. Salvation is ours by the grace of God. Our Heavenly Father assures us He will never leave us. Isaiah 46:3-4 reads, “Listen to Me, O house of Jacob..., who have been upheld by Me from birth: even to your old age ... I will carry you!”

Psalms 121 reads, “The Lord will preserve [you] and keep [you] alive, and [you] will be blessed on the earth.” But this is not all that the mercy of God does for us. Not only are we blessed on this earth, but we can rest assured that anyone who, by the power of the Holy Spirit, believes in the forgiveness we have in Christ will also receive eternal life. This is the life that my grandmother now has and that all other believers will have some day. Resting in this promise, we trust that God will preserve us and keep us alive forever!

Works Cited: HLI Staff. “Why Women Abort.” Human Life International, 05 May 2021, <https://www.hli.org/resources/why-women-abort>. Skotko, Brian G., et al. “Self-perceptions from people with Down syndrome.” American Journal of Medical Genetics, 09 September 2011, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/ajmg.a.34235>. “What is Down Syndrome?” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, accessed 27 March 2022, <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/birthdefects/downsyndrome.html>.

In the name of Jesus.
Pastor Steele

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

1-4: Patrick Johnson
1-8: Audrey Nikisch
1-10: John Willadsen
1-11: Kandice Brooks
Kelly Paltzer



1-24: Mary Madden
1-26: Alicia Barthels
1-29: Zakary Willadsen



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.

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

At the time of writing this, we are about to celebrate Christmas. We just had the children's Christmas program which is always wonderful thanks to our Sunday School teachers and, of course, the children. The program had to be altered last minute due to half of the class being ill, but as they say, the show must go on. We hope everyone is recovering from their illnesses and will be able to enjoy Christmas in health where we praise the Lord that our Savior is born!

There are a few announcements for me to make this month:

- First, we are planning to donate some of the dishes and other items that have been taking up the Altar Guild closet for over a year without use.
- Second, the Christmas tree in the Bawden Fellowship Hall was beautifully decorated by the Brooks family this year, but the tree is getting old, and the needles are starting to fall off. We're asking for congregation members to consider donating toward a new one. Last month I mentioned the need for a TV and DVD player for Sunday School, and so far, we have received about half of what it would cost to purchase these items. Thank you to the generous donors.
- And, finally, we received an offer from TDS Telecom for \$10,000 to purchase a 10-foot by 16-foot easement of the church property to install a utility cabinet for fiber-optic high-speed internet in the village of Kohler. The equipment itself has a 3-foot by 3-foot footprint and stands just over 5 feet tall. We are one of three locations TDS is considering in Kohler. We are reviewing details of the project, any possible restrictions within the village, the compensation amount, location of the equipment (behind the church), and agreement timeframe. The Council will review this project as a means to offset operating costs for the church. Please reach out to me if you have any questions or concerns about this project.

I'll make one more request to the congregation to consider setting up an e-giving option if you aren't using it right now which allows regular giving to help the Treasurer and Board of Finance to better forecast giving and manage cash flow for the church. The Board of Finance plans to begin giving quarterly presentations on church finances starting in January due to the current gap between giving and expenses we have. Thank you to everyone who supports our church and the missions we strive to continue funding.

With my last President's note, I want to say "thank you" to all the Council members, Committee members, and volunteers who keep Bethany moving forward. We all have a gift that God gave us to participate in our congregation and community, and I have been blessed to see that in practice over the last two years. Many thanks also to the congregation for the support and encouragement I have received over the last two years. I genuinely appreciate it. I'm confident the church will be in good hands with Andy Fibiger as President.

Dori and I wish everyone a healthy and Happy New Year!

God Bless and to God be the Glory!

Todd Matte - Council President

2023 BOARD MEMBERS

President: Andy Fibiger

Vice President: Todd Matte

Council Secretary: Lisa Willadsen

Board of Elders: Brian Faucher, Shua Yang, Gerry Luebke, Lee Gumm, **(Open Position)**

Board of Trustees: Ryan Brooks, David Hasler

Board of Finance: Steve Marotz, Derek MacKenzie

Board of Education: Dori Matte, Gina Fibiger, Megan Fibiger

Financial Secretary: Mary Ann Fibiger

Treasurer: Kelly Paltzer

Thank you to all who serve Bethany!

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

CHARITY
OF THE
MONTH

CHARITIES OF THE MONTH FOR 2023

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

To give to these charities, you can use your “Designated Offering” contribution envelopes.
Thank you for supporting these missions.



CHURCH 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. Any cancellations will also be announced on Facebook as well as our church website www.bethanylutherankohler.org



SUNDAY SCHOOL CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

Due to lots of illness, we only had 5 children in the Christmas program this year. On the left we see Mary and Joseph (who also narrated), our one shepherd (who also played our one wise man), the narrator and our one angel (who also did some narrating). On the right we see the children playing the bells. Everyone did a great job adjusting and taking on extra roles at the last minute. The most important thing is that we told the story of Jesus' birth!



LOVE INC

The Kitchen Kit Ministry is in need of some important items.
Can you help?

- **Plates, bowls, flatware**
- **Cups, glassware**
- **Measuring cups and spoons**
- **Cooking utensils: spatulas; wooden spoons**
- **Cookware: 1 quart and 2-quart pots; frying pans**



Donations may be dropped off at:

Love INC Office - 807 Forest Avenue, Sheboygan Falls
Office Hours: Monday-Thurs 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
(Items can be placed in barrel in lobby any time of day)

Or at:

Bethany in the Love INC bucket near the elevator lift

THOSE SERVING IN GOD'S HOUSE THE MONTH OF JANUARY 2023

Sunday, January 1
10:00 a.m.
w/Holy Communion

| | |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| Elder: | Gerry Luebke |
| Ushers: | Thompson, Rademacher, Kuehlman |
| Altar Guild: | Sue & Dave Prange |
| Scripture Reader: | Todd Matte |
| Door Locker: | Dan Menzer |
| Streaming: | Grace Matte |

Sunday, January 8
10:00 a.m.

| | |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| Elder: | Shua Yang |
| Ushers: | Steve & Diane Marotz |
| Acolyte: | Maggie Faucher |
| Altar Guild: | Lynn & Gerry Luebke |
| Scripture Reader: | Mary Ann Fibiger |
| Door Locker: | Patrick Johnson |
| Streaming: | Thomas Yang |

Sunday, January 15
10:00 a.m.
w/Holy Communion

| | |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| Elder: | Lee Gumm |
| Ushers: | Hazens |
| Acolyte: | Katelynn Regutis |
| Altar Guild: | Liz & Ken Buesing |
| Scripture Reader: | Kelly Paltzer |
| Door Locker: | Ken Thompson |
| Streaming: | Noah Fibiger |

Sunday, January 22
10:00 a.m.

| | |
|-------------------|---------------------------|
| Elder: | Brian Faucher |
| Ushers: | Mattes |
| Acolyte: | Elanore Faucher |
| Altar Guild: | Kristine & Maggie Faucher |
| Scripture Reader: | Sharon Werner |
| Door Locker: | Andy Fibiger |
| Streaming: | Kaleb Faucher |

Sunday, January 29
10:00 a.m.
w/Holy Communion

| | |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| Elder: | Gerry Luebke |
| Ushers: | Ray & Shirley Ottman |
| Acolyte: | Aidan Faucher |
| Altar Guild: | Barb & Lee Gumm |
| Scripture Reader: | Lee Gumm |
| Door Locker: | Dan Fibiger |
| Streaming: | Austin Fibiger |

January 2023

| SUN | MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT |
|---|--|-----------|---|----------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| 01 10am Worship w/HC New Year's Day | 02 6:30pm Board of Elders 6:30pm Board of Education | 03 | 04 3:15pm Confirmation | 05 10am Bible Study | 06 | 07 |
| 08 8:30am Bible Study 8:45am Sunday School 10am Worship | 09 6:15pm Board of Finance 7pm Church Council | 10 | 11 3:15pm Confirmation | 12 10am Bible Study | 13 | 14 |
| 15 8:30am Bible Study 8:45am Sunday School 10am Worship w/HC | 16 | 17 | 18 3:15pm Confirmation | 19 10am Bible Study | 20 | 21 |
| 22 8:30am Bible Study 8:45am Sunday School 10am Worship | 23 | 24 | 25 3:15pm Confirmation | 26 10am Bible Study | 27 | 28 |
| 29 8:30am Bible Study 8:45am Sunday School 10am Worship w/HC | 30 | 31 |  | | | |