

BETHEL LUTHERAN CHURCH
2018 NON-FINANCIAL REPORTS

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**FOR IN THE
one
SPIRIT
we were all
BAPTIZED
INTO one
BODY**

• • • •

1 Corinthians 12:13, NRSV

MINUTES OF THE BETHEL LUTHERAN CHURCH ANNUAL MEETING OF 2018

Bethel Lutheran Church held its Annual Meeting on Sunday, January 28, 2018 with President Lance Moeller presiding. Pastor Munter led devotions. The secretary's report from the 2017 meeting was approved and placed on file.

Reports

Pastor's Report: Pastor Munter wanted to reiterate the idea that we all minister to each other, stating that is part of what binds us together as a family of Christ. Thank you to all who make Bethel 'go'. Special thanks to Terry Dybsetter for her organization and ideas and all the work she does. Thank you to Lou Knutson and appreciation for how good everything looks and her dedication. Thank you to both Terry and Lou for playing organ/piano for us. Thank you to those that clean the snow at the parsonage and Josh Sumption for mowing. And Tracy Wente and family for taking in Katie and helping out. Thank you for being a blessing to Katie and I.

Pastor Munter shared a video from the Synod about mission support. Also shared a reminder that the Equipping Congregations event is in February and encourage attendance.

Pastor Munter included in the annual meeting reports the message from presiding bishop Elizabeth Eaton and the Annual Report from Bishop Jon V. Anderson to review.

President's Report:

Lance Moeller reported: Lance talked agreed to a second term as president. Discussed completing the roofing project and how well that went. Appreciates all that gets done throughout the church. And all that Lou does and those that help take care of the grounds/church. Thank you to all. Also appreciates that the boards work well together.

Deacon's Report:

No additions

Board of Education:

No additions

Trustee's Report:

No additions

Manna Fund:

Josh Sumption reported another extraordinary year of growth. The entire Manna Fund planned disbursements were not made and undisbursed amount from 2017 will roll into the 2018 budget. Josh noted in the cost basis column, that dividends continue low. The Market value based on stock market and shows a gain on stock. To continue the 50/50 split between stock and fixed assets, Bethel sold \$45,000 in stock. Total \$214,415.30. Manna Fund recommends a 2018 budget \$15,068.00. Motion was made to adopt the 2018 budget was seconded and passed.

Financial Report/Memorial Report: Josh Sumption reported. General fund: Net ordinary income \$119,844.20 with large transfers for the roof project. Attendance statistics noted a minor error within the Average Service Attendance year noted as 2011 is actually 2016. Similarly, Average weekly offering per person year of 2012 was actually for year 2016.

The Actual Revenue vs Budgeted Expenses is frequently reported in the newsletter. In December shows \$4423.74 ahead of expenses however, in December we received a \$5,000 offering for 2018. So, in the

end, our revenue fell short by \$556.26. Simply Giving is going well and good way to continue to contribute throughout the year. Pastor Munter reminded to look for smile.amazon.com and scroll to bethel for additional benefit from giving.

Savings Account: Josh noted shifts for the roof funds. The memorials are self-explanatory. No questions voiced on the financial reports.

Expenditures supported by General Fund:

Reviewed proposed budgets and noted similar budgeting this year. Virginia brought forward budgeted increase for the organists to have a raise this year. Terry Dybsetter commented on Bringing Christ to All the World, that she is proud of the church in that we designate and budget our benevolence and follow through and those are paid. Anna Kamrath noted increase in budgeted amount for office supply is for maintenance of the new copier. No further questions were voiced.

Bethel Lutheran/Hemnes Lutheran Parish Budget:

Noted budgeted for a 2% raise for Pastor Munter. No questions/concerns.

Summary of General Fund: Virginia Thomsen reported total reimbursed expenses of \$43,953.85. Reviewed 2017 receipts vs 2017 disbursements. Reviewed the actual 2017 year to date and the proposed 2018 budget.

Motion to accept the 2018 budget was seconded and passed.

Funeral workers group:

No additions

Altar group:

No additions

2017 Church Council:

No changes

2018 Ballot:

Lance Moeller reviewed the ballot and no questions/concerns. Noted Ethan Evjen add to the usher ballot. Terry Dybsetter noted that Beryl Kuester will continue through 2020. Motion to accept the ballot as presented by the nominating committee was seconded and passed.

2017 Statistical Report:

Terry Dybsetter noted italicized text is her summary of the statistics. Noted Terry reports statistical information to the synod.

Bethel Lutheran Church Directory:

No additions

Approval of 2018 Budget

Approval competed during review of budgets and proposed budgets.

Old Business: Lance Moeller reported the roof project is completed. The pancake supper will be run by the kids going to Texas and they will use the proceeds for their trip. Reviewed the importance of these trips and the importance to keep the young kids involved. Voiced appreciation to the people that work with Luther League. Anna Kamrath said that they will continue to report to the church updates on the planned trip and Pastor Munter is planning blessing for the kids in church prior to the trip.

New Business: Lance Moeller reported. Checking into new light fixtures, possible LED. Discussed have a fund for carpet replacement. Terry Dybsetter talked about ongoing issues with the organ and may need to replace this at some point in the future. Lou Knutson noted that family members asked about current funds for memorial donations and Lou suggested that Bethel create an Organ Fund. Suggest fund a baby grand piano for in the church. Beryl Kuester talked about baby grand pianos in several churches. Beryl mentioned that she has contact information for a repairman that has experience with Bethel's type of organ and could come out and appraise for repair/replace. Paula Syltie also noted that when seeking donations for the ice cream social people will ask what donations are used for. Lance recommended set up an organ/piano fund. Lou reported: Bethel purchased this organ in 1975 for \$8,300.00 with a life expectancy of about 30 years. In 2002, the replacement cost was estimated between \$12,000-\$23,000. Noted there have been a lot of changes in the past and a new organ will sound more like a pipe organ. Motion to establish a grand piano/organ fund was seconded and passed.

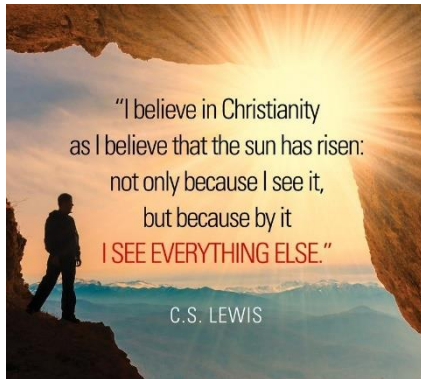
Lance reported: Hemnes approved their portion of the budget. Also noted Hemnes is losing members. Pastor Munter reported Hemnes continues to be a very small congregation.

Motion for adjournment was seconded and passed.

The meeting was adjourned with the praying of the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Alley, Council Secretary

Pastor Munter's Report



You may know C.S. Lewis as the author of the Chronicles of Narnia, which began with *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. In these books, Lewis explored many different aspects of Christianity as well as retelling the stories of creation, the death and resurrection of Christ and Christ's coming on the last day set in the world Lewis had created. But what many people may not know, is that Lewis became a Christian later in life. In fact, it was fellow author J. R. R. Tolkien who brought Lewis to faith through the working of the Holy Spirit. Lewis didn't only write Narnia books. He also wrote one of the best defenses of the faith in his book, *Mere Christianity*.

I write all this to give some context to the quote pictured. It is sometimes slightly misquoted as, "I believe in Christ, like I believe in the sun – not because I can see it, but by it I can see everything else." Which, while not exactly correct, is saying essentially the same thing. When Lewis became a Christian, when he learned about the great love of God for him and how God sent His Son to die for him, everything changed, including how he saw the world around him. From this quote, I imagine him looking at the world with eyes wide in wonder – like a child discovering something new and exciting – as he sees the imprint of God's love and work everywhere.

Being able to see the world around us through the lens of Christ is what we all should be hoping and praying for. It means seeing the world not only as it is, and how God is at work in the world as it is, but also seeing the world as God means it to be, and how God is at work bringing that about. And when you see that, I hope you see yourself in the picture. Because you are! God is at work in the world through you – your prayers, your worship, your actions, your words. And in the same way God is at work bringing about the world as He means it to be through you. And me. And all the baptized. This is part of what it means to be the children of God.

Once again this year you have all demonstrated your willingness to be a part of what God is doing, not only here in our community but around the world. You have given of your time, talents and resources to share the love of God with others in many and various ways – from donating food for the hungry here in Minnesota to providing school supplies to enable children around the world to get an education. Your faithfulness to the gospel is truly a blessing for the world around us.

I thank you for your partnership with me in the gospel. The people of Bethel and Hemnes are certainly a blessing for Katie and me. Your unfailing support and care keeps us going and reminds us that while our biological family is far away, our church family is all around us. Finally, a personal heartfelt thanks to the ones who clear out the driveway at the parsonage (I don't usually know who it is!), to Josh Sumption for mowing the lawn, to Lou Knutson for all her work keeping our building and lawn looking fantastic, and to Terry Dybsetter for her tireless work in the office. The church is not one person, it is all of us together, empowered by the Holy Spirit to see the world in the light of Christ.

In Christ,

Pastor Munter

President's Report

Being President wasn't as demanding as I thought it would be – it has been a great year. We have a great council and amazing congregation to support our church. It makes being President a wonderful experience.

Examples of this great support are sharing with our community and supporting our church. Whether this is by putting backpacks together for school children in need, the pancake supper, the ice cream social or Christmas caroling. A wonderful show of support this year was the beautiful piano that was donated to our church. This has been a beautiful and wonderful way to listen to God's word and music within our church.

I want to thank the Council for their time, talents, and love for the church this year. The meetings were never very long, but the agenda was accomplished, and we moved forward on every item that needed action.

Thank you again to the members for the love and support for our wonderful church.

Lance Moeller
Bethel Congregational President 2018

Deacon's Report 2018

The Deacons continue promoting efforts to do congregational service projects during the year. The purpose of the projects is to involve members of all ages in activities that reach beyond our walls, but are tangible to us and our local community.

In March we celebrated our blessings by participating in Food Share Month. This year we chose as a theme “40 days of Fighting Hunger”. Food share month was celebrated each week in March with a special theme designation and a cash offering on Sunday March 25th (Passion Sunday) concluded our effort. Bethel’s March Initiative for the Canby Food Shelf was successful with an offering of \$370.00 and 175 pounds of shelf stable items.

We, with the assistance of Paula Syltie, sponsored a “Thanksgiving Tree” in November which was coordinated with Prairie Five in Canby. This year Bethel members young and old provided Christmas gifts to 36 children in our community. Prairie Five made one additional request: socks and mittens for all the children. Lou Knutson and Nancy Bakalakos using a Thrivent Action Project grant shopped for and purchased socks and mittens for all the children.

Late summer and early fall our thoughts turned toward helping students around the world with supplies to enhance their learning. Young and old were enthusiastic about buying discounted supplies at back to school sales and the mountain of supplies grew. Young and old arrived on Rally Sunday ready to sort, count and assemble the kits. Many hands made the work light and the project was completed in record time completing 70+ bags that were delivered to the Lutheran World Relief depot in the Twin Cities.

The Bethel family celebrated four baptisms, a confirmation and two weddings in 2018 . For these we are blessed. The Bethel family also mourned the death of four members and friends in 2018. We are daily reminded that each of us is indeed “a child of God” and bear the cross of Christ on our forehead.

Last year at the annual meeting, the congregation decided to start a fund to replace the organ and at some future date to purchase a baby grand piano for the sanctuary. God answered our prayer for the baby grand –the future date came quickly in the form of a donation of a beautiful baby grand piano by a family member of a Bethel member. We are currently enjoying the music from this beautiful instrument. Thank You.

Bethel is blessed with many talented and generous people who share their gifts with our congregation and beyond. Thank you Pastor Ellen for your inspiring messages and constantly reminding us whose we are. Thanks to everyone for your efforts this past year. You prayed for our church and leaders, willingly were readers, set up communion, served at funerals, ushered, recorded, visited members in their homes, delivered recordings, shoveled snow, hung banners and provided so many small efforts during the year. These are the things that make Bethel so special. One special thank you goes to Virginia Thomsen for all the beautiful bulletin boards in the social hall. She decided to retire from that activity this year. Bethel is truly a family of believers and servants.

THANK YOU to everyone- **THAT MEANS YOU!**

Anna Kamrath, Chairperson

Martha Melrose, Craig Petersen, Sarah Wollum, Terry Dybsetter

Trustee Report 2018

2018 was a difficult year. The Sunday giving was down. Had to borrow \$8000.00 total from our reserve fund numerous times to meet our monthly regular bills and salaries.

We want to thank our Financial Secretary and Treasurer for keeping the Trustees informed of our finances.

We realize that Bethel lost many of our faithful and supportive members in past couple years. It is up to us the next generations to be faithful and support Bethel Lutheran Church.

The trustees worked hard to keep monthly costs down.

Some of the larger expenses that we incurred this year: insurance cost for the church property went up, repairs to the handicap restroom, parsonage heat pump and furnace fan, church kitchen electrical.

We were thankful for the Mana Fund - Bethel share, in that were able to update the lighting in the sanctuary and narthex with LED lighting. This was done in partnership with Lyon Lincoln REC 50% rebate. Bethel's yearly projected lighting cost should drop from a high of \$78.00 per year to \$17.00 per year. A new LED parking lot light was gifted by a member of the congregation.

The board replaced our Frontier Communications (telephone / internet service) with MIDCO Communications (telephone/ internet service). This will be a better service and lower cost. Our new email address: bethel@bethelofporter.com

We were blessed this year with a gift of a beautiful baby grand piano, given to us from a member's family.

Trustees want to thank everyone who supported the 'Special budget offering', and the member who put up the matching money. This will help to meet our budget and start to refund our reserve fund.

Trustees wish to thank all who gifted their time and talents in doing extra work around the church property. Including annual church cleaning, mowing and trimming at the cemetery, spraying weeds, trimming and cutting the bushes and trees, and snow removal. THANK YOU.

Annual Report Bethel Board of Education

January, 2019

The Board of Education began the year with the planning of First Communion and Confirmation Sunday. On Palm Sunday there were three third graders that took First Communion. Confirmation was held on April 29, 2018. We had one student who was confirmed. Bethel also recognized six high school seniors on May 13th.

With summer comes Green Lake Bible Camp and Vacation Bible School. Bethel had five students venture to Green Lake Bible camps this year. Over four evenings in July Bethel hosted Shipwrecked VBS, welcoming about 25 students including some from the community who discovered that God is with them wherever they go. We could not do this event without the wonderful youth and adult helpers!!

We currently have 27 Sunday School students and five confirmation students. Rally Sunday was held on September 9th. Thanks to congregational donations, and the work of student and adult volunteers we put together around 70 school kits for Lutheran World relief!

The year came to a close with a Christmas program titled The Best Story: An Imperfect Christmas Eve Pageant. We want to extend a huge Thank You to the Sunday School teachers and youth leaders who devote their time and energy to sharing God's message with the youth of our congregation.

Thank you to our Luther League youth and parents who worked hard to provide Lenten meals on Wednesday evenings, Easter brunch, and lunch after our Christmas program, creating an atmosphere of comradery and fellowship for our Bethel family!

A sincere Thank You also to the congregation for your continued support of Bethel's youth educational programs. We look forward to making more memorable moments in 2019.

Carmon Mamer
Tracy Wente
Anna Noyes
Megan Syltie
Nikki Petersen

2018 STATISTICAL REPORT

BAPTISMS (4)

Kase Frederick Wilke
Ella Marguerite Dybsetter
Casen Joseph Syltie
Stella Mae Bliss

CONFIRMANDS (1)

Rachel Wollum

WEDDINGS (2)

Kyle DeVos and Kayla Barton (September 8, 2018)
Kaitlyn DeVos and Cole Regnier (January 5, 2019)

FUNERALS (4)

Norma Elaine Syltie
Betty Emeline Kindelberger
Bradly Joseph Noyes
*Bob Loy

MEMBERS RECEIVED (0)

MEMBERS TRANSFERRED OUT (0)

MEMBERSHIP TOTALS

Beginning	12/31/17	Baptized	330	Confirmed	247
Ending	12/31/18	Baptized	331	Confirmed	245

<i>Calculations</i>	<i>Baptized</i>	<i>Confirmed</i>
<i>Beginning # 12/31/17</i>	<i>330</i>	<i>247</i>
<i>Add new members</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Add baptisms- not counted as new members</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Remove member deaths</i>	<i>-3</i>	<i>-3</i>
<i>Remove transfers</i>	<i>-0</i>	<i>-0</i>
<i>Add Confirmants</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>

**non member*

2018 Church Council
Bethel Lutheran Church
Office held through January

President		Lance Moeller	1/19
Vice President		Mike Knutson	1/19
Secretary		Sue Alley	1/19
Financial Secretary		Josh Sumption	1/20
Treasurer		Virginia Thomsen	1/19
Board of Deacons		Sara Wollum	1/21
		Anna Kamrath	1/20
		Martha Melrose	1/21
		Craig Petersen	1/20
		Terry Dybsetter	1/19
Board of Trustees		Curt Blumeyer	1/21
		Tom Gawerecki	1/21
		Roger Longhenry	1/19
		Bob Merritt	1/20
		Jerome Bruns	1/20
Board of Education		Megan Syltie	1/20
		Anna Noyes	1/20
		Tracy Wente	1/21
		Nicole Petersen	1/21
		Carmon Mamer	1/19

Other Elected Officials

Ushers			
Paul Bruns	1/19	Jacob Crowser	1/19
Dylan Bruns	1/19	Josh Sumption	1/19
Merv Anderson	1/19		1/19
John Drietz	1/19	Brian Mamer	1/19
Nominating Committee			
Shawn Jackson	1/19	Bonnie Merritt	1/19
Lou Knutson	1/19	Mike Knutson	1/19
John Appelen	1/19		
Auditing Committee			
Doug Anderson	1/19	Carol Jeremiason	1/19
Bonnie Merritt	1/19		
Green Lake Delegate			
		Harvey Syltie	1/19
Librarian			
Norma Dovre	1/19	Gift Priority	
		Monica Wilke	1/19
		Barb Anderson	1/21
		Beryl Kuester	1/20

2019 Ballot

All terms expire at Annual Meeting, (January) of the following year as indicated on the ballot.

Bethel Lutheran Church Council

Office	Candidate	vote	expr.
President (1 yr.)	Mike Knutson	_____	1/20
Vice President (1yr.)	Randy Kamrath	_____	1/20
Secretary (1 yr.)	Sue Alley	_____	1/20
Treasurer (2 yr.)	Deanna Moeller	_____	1/21
Board of Deacons (3 yr.)	Terry Dybsetter	_____	1/22
Board of Trustees (3 yr.)	Roger Longhenry	_____	1/22
Board of Education (3 yr.)	Rachel Wollum	_____	1/22

Other Elected Officials

Ushers (vote eight)

_____ Paul Bruns	1/20	_____ Chad Moeller	1/20
_____ Dylan Bruns	1/20	_____ Josh Sumption	1/20
_____ Mervyn Anderson	1/20	_____ Brian Mamer	1/20
_____ John Drietz	1/20	_____ Chris Wilke	1/20

Nominating Committee (vote five)

_____ Shawn Jackson	1/20	_____ Bonnie Merritt	1/20
_____ Lou Knutson	1/20	_____ Paula Syltie	1/20
_____ John Appelen	1/20		

Auditing Committee (vote three)

_____ Doug Anderson	1/20	_____ Carol Jeremiason	1/20
_____ Bonnie Merritt	1/20		

Green Lake Delegate (1 yr.)

_____ Harvey Syltie 1/20

Gift Priority (3 yr.)

_____ Monica Wilke 1/22

Bishop Jon V. Anderson's Annual Report - 2018

You are all synod ministers. You are the synod as baptized ones living out your vocations in your everyday life, inside the communities of faith of Southwestern Minnesota and beyond. Thanks for all the ways you have lived out your faith, loved your neighbors, and invited people to join you in following Christ. The attached infographic lifts up some information about our synod's life. We are also working on a new poster map to share with you that includes our vision statement.



EMBRACE
God's Mission

EQUIP
God's People



Southwestern Minnesota Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.



DEEPENING CONGREGATIONAL VITALITY

ENHANCING LOCAL/GLOBAL MISSION



DEVELOPING SERVANT LEADERS

Deepen Congregational Vitality

Congregations exist to proclaim the Good News we know in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus through word and sacrament. Growing gracious, generous Christians who follow Christ provide energizing focus. We are thankful for churches' sending capacity to engage God's world. Our staff continues to use tools to help congregational leaders grow and engage the work of reforming congregations to serve our changing mission field.

These involve stewardship education programs, evangelizing training that will begin in the new year, and ongoing use of planning assessments. What is God up to in your community and your congregation? God is working in your midst.

I want to share the five steps of our "Leadership for Faithful Innovation" project with Luther Seminary. A cohort of leaders is learning to slow down to more deeply engage the adaptive challenges of our time.

LISTEN – We are called to be "listening to God, listening to each other, listening to ourselves, and listening to the world around us."

RECONNECT – In addition to "Dwelling in the Word," we are also called to be "Dwelling in the World." We are called to reconnect spiritually with God's faithfulness, God's story, and God's promises to us as God's people.

DEFINE – the challenges God has called us to face.

REFRAME – “Leaders need to articulate the challenges congregations are facing in ways that invite others to learn by doing in order to discern God’s movement and God’s call to a new way forward.” We have to be willing to change as congregations and leaders to speak to our time.

CULTIVATE – “Involves whole congregations cultivating life together through spiritual practices and innovation focused on discerning God’s presence and joining God’s work.”

Enhance Local and Global Mission

Congregations that have a mission beyond themselves are healthier. Congregations that have a focused sense of mission externally and internally live with greater joy and energy. Inside of even the most challenging situations are opportunities to serve in Christ’s name.

Develop Servant Leaders

We continue our work of equipping God’s people for service in God’s world, developing people who serve in congregations and rostered ministry. Our dream to develop our synod’s “culture of call” continues to develop.

Again, Thanks

We are grateful for each of you as you live out your faith and many callings. We are thankful for your congregations and the institutions of our synod. We are grateful for your support of God’s whole church – the ELCA and our Global Companions. Thanks for your faithful witness in God’s world. I also want to thank our staff (particularly Pr. Linda Pedersen who has concluded her service) and the committees, boards, and council of our synod.

Bishop Jon Anderson
Southwestern Minnesota Synod, ELCA

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Phone: 507-637-3904 Fax: 507-637-2809
Website: www.swmnelca.org

Bishop Jon V. Anderson; Synod Ministers: Rev. Kathryn L. Skoglund, Rev. Stephen W. Cook
Director for Evangelical Mission: Rev. Larry E. Strenge

A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDING BISHOP ELIZABETH EATON

Dear siblings in Christ,

As members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, we are freed by grace to live faithfully, witness boldly and serve joyfully. As communities of Jesus that nurture life-changing relationships with God, one another and the world, we are confident about who we are in Christ and what God is calling us to do. Whether worshiping wherever two or more are gathered, engaging in lively conversations about faith, or rolling up our sleeves and getting to work, we strive to share God's grace and love in Christ for all people and creation. This reflects the vitality we find in Jesus Christ, our own spiritual life and our desire to participate in what God is doing today.



Within each community of Jesus there are leaders who strive to model an attitude of servanthood, trustworthiness, humility, patience and listening first while striving to work with others in healthy ways. These leaders teach all ages, motivate believers, build consensus, share a vision, discern direction and facilitate action. Their attention is focused on growing disciples who are sent into their daily life to love and serve others as friends, neighbors, parents, citizens and workers. Together we recognize the importance of growing disciples and multiplying leaders who serve inside your congregation and beyond your walls.

As our congregations plan their work for the coming year and how to use the resources God has entrusted to them, I invite you all to think about the relationships that bring you vitality and the leaders you nurture for God's mission in the world. While you make many decisions, remember you are not alone. We are all partners in sharing the gospel. Together, by God's grace, we can do what God is calling us to do. May you go forth to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God.

Serving together in Christ's name,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elizabeth A. Eaton".

Elizabeth A. Eaton
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

You shall love the Lord your God
with all your heart, and with all
your soul, and with all your mind,
and with all your strength.

Mark 12:30

Reflections on Understanding a Living and Vital Faith

In Mark 12:28 Jesus is asked by a scribe: “Which commandment is first of all?” Jesus responded with “the Lord is one,” and went on to say, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength” (Mark 12:30). These words are very similar to those that served as Israel’s central confession of faith (Deuteronomy 6:4-5). Joshua (22:5) later reminded the people of Israel to observe these words. With this text as a guide, how do we begin to explore the ways we will nurture a living and vital faith in each person and the congregation?

Within the work of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, congregational vitality is defined as “communities of Jesus where there are life-changing relationships with God, one another and the world.” These are three important dimensions of our work together. But it is the way in which we bring our heart, soul, mind and strength into our life and work that shows how the light of Christ shines in and through us. Our heart is the way we feel and sense God’s presence in and through emotions. The soul is our mindful awareness of the presence of God within us and the world. This awareness encourages us to find meaning and purpose in life, both individually and as a community of faith. The mind is how we learn our beliefs, perspectives and practices that shape our understanding, knowledge and expressions of faith. And strength is the way we use our abilities, passions and skills to shape and live a life of faith.

The vitality of our faith as Christians, and as a church in the Lutheran tradition, finds meaning and purpose in Jesus’ words from Mark 12:30. As we engage our strategic directions for the future, we find both power and insight by reflecting on what brings us vitality. Please consider the following:

Heart

- When are the times you feel or sense God is present?
- How are these experiences different when you are with others rather than alone?
- How do these emotions bring vitality to your faith and relationship with God?

Soul

- What Scripture passages give you an awareness of life or “living faith”?
- How does this awareness of a living faith help you find meaning and purpose in life?
- What about your life experiences brings a sense of vitality to your faith?

Mind

- What motivates you to continue growing in your relationship with God?
- What have you found helps you learn more about God?
- Where do you find vitality through your learnings and spiritual practices?

Strengths

- What God-given abilities, passions and skills have you discovered in your life?
- How does your faith guide you in using these?
- What about using these abilities, passions and gifts gives you vitality?

May your responses to these questions help you gain new vitality and insight into your relationship with God, each other and the world.