



Bethlehem Star

November 2017

Stewardship Program for Giving in 2018

*Our annual focus on giving has already begun with a stewardship letter going out to all members. Every year we select a program that can inspire us in our lives as faithful stewards of God's gifts. This year our theme is based on an important passage of scripture: "**But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us ... see that you also excel in this grace of giving**" (2 Corinthians 8:7). That phrase the Apostle Paul used, "This grace of giving," opens up a fresh way of thinking about generosity and mission. Our theme statement turns the phrase into our challenge this year:*

Excel in the Grace of Giving

When you think of your lives as you are practicing this grace of giving do you consider giving: an Obligation or Opportunity?

As the Apostle Paul traveled to churches, he collected offerings for the Christians in Jerusalem who were experiencing hard economic times. When Paul was speaking to the Corinthians, he used the Macedonian believers as an example of people who, in spite of their own economic troubles, gave joyfully to the people in Jerusalem. The Macedonians' love for Christ and their concern for their fellow believers moved them to give beyond their ability. They **excelled in the grace of giving**. The Macedonians gave themselves first to the Lord, and then, Paul said, they "*urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints*" (2 Corinthians 8:4). In Christ, they saw their giving as an opportunity to help other believers in need.

Does someone who views giving as an obligation plead for the opportunity to give? Probably not. When giving is an obligation, we will give, but giving as an obligation will not give us the joy or the attitude of pleading for the privilege to give as the Macedonians had. As God's people, we have both an obligation and an opportunity. Scripture is clear that we are called to give. Paul said, "*On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made*" (1 Corinthians 16:2).

Giving is an obligation, but, just as God changed the hearts and minds of the Macedonian people, he changes us so we view our giving as an opportunity rather than an obligation. As renewed and transformed people, our attitudes toward giving change from a "got to" to a "get to" attitude. We stop giving grudgingly, and we start to **excel in the grace of giving** by giving willingly and cheerfully. We want to give, because giving is an expression of our love and gratitude to God for who he is and what he does for us. The more we give of ourselves and our gifts the closer our relationship with Christ becomes and the more we want to give, and the more God blesses us, enabling our continued giving. "*You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God*" (2 Corinthians 9:11). We thank God that he fills us daily with his love so that we as members of his Body here at our church see giving as a privilege and an opportunity to praise and thank him.

God bless you, your stewardship committee:

Craig Peterson, Joan Ege, John and Cindy Muus, Paul Muus, Chet Lindskog, Eleanor Waha, Pastor Mark

BLCW News

We had a busy and productive Harvest Dinner week and are thankful to all who attended. We again are planning for our Thankoffering Sunday on November 19. Lefse making on November 16 and the 17 both days at 9:00 AM. Then the Julefest on December 9th. Whew...Many hands help make everything go smoother, so please

God Bless you all!

Four years ago Mospa Orcham entered Form One at MaaSAE Girls Lutheran Secondary School (MGLSS). Our congregation has been supporting her through our monthly missions and the Men's Torsk Dinners. It requires roughly \$900.00 annually for a student at MGLSS to have room and board, uniform and school supplies. You all have made this possible. Blessings to you! Now on October 21, 2017 Mospa along with 43 classmates graduated from Form Four.

feel free to join us at these events. Baking, setting up, cleaning up and all the planning could always use new ideas and help! To help us plan better, please call and let the office know if you are able or would like to help with either day of the traditional lefse making.

Blessings on all of you, and don't forget that the Board meets the first Monday of the month at 4:00 PM in the library, Quilting meets every Thursday from 9:00 AM-12:00 PM, and the Altar Guild is looking for some more volunteers to help set up for communion.

This is quite an accomplishment, especially for girls in Tanzania where only a small percentage reach this educational level. Now Mospa is taking her Form Five exams. She won't know the results until February 2018. Her scores will indicate whether she continues training for a career in healthcare or education. Keep her in your prayers. She is a dedicated student and a faithful Christian young woman.



Equipping Households of Faith the final session Wednesday, November 1.

This is a session for families with children of any age. In our DVD presentation Dr. Dick Hardel, Rev. Richard Staats and Rev. Cora Aguilar will share how best to share the Holy Scripture with our children. Group discussion will share our own insights. We grow strong and wise in faith together.





Mission of the Month

November's mission of the month will be for the Cook County Food Shelf. With Thanksgiving and many thoughts of celebrations with food, this will be a great time to support our local food shelf.



Plowing season will be here soon. We are looking for volunteers who could help assist Chet in the plowing. Call the church to offer your assistance or give Chet a call.

Youth and Family Ministry News

October was an exciting month for the Bethlehem Youth. All of our youth programs are in full swing. We love seeing the smiles from the kids as they head up to Sunday School and church is buzzing with kids on Wednesdays. In addition to our Sunday School kids, we have 21 children participating in our Holy Moly - Connect program and 19 middle school confirmation students! The Wednesday night all congregation meal at 5:00 is a great chance to catch up with this wonderful group.

On October 15th, families enjoyed a fall day of rock climbing at Carlton Peak. Special thanks to Shane and Emma Steele for guiding the trip and for sharing your passion of climbing.

We are looking forward to another climbing trip this Spring! If you haven't already, check out the great photos that Carin Gulstrand posted on the church Facebook page. On November 17th, 17 of our middle school students will be attending the Northeast Minnesota Synod, ELCA Middle School Gathering at Cragun's Resort. The theme for this year's gathering is, The Lord's Prayer. We are thankful for the opportunity for these young people to gather and grow in their faith. Thank you to Theresa Oberg, Brooke Shannon and Pastor Mark for chaperoning. On Saturday, December 2nd at 12:00 you are invited to join us for lunch and an afternoon of ornament making. What a great way to kick off the Advent season. Your \$10 ticket will buy you lunch and the opportunity to make 3 ornaments that you will take home with you.

All money raised will go to our youth and family account.

Families with children in 8th - 12th grade - The deadline to register for the National Youth Gathering is quickly approaching. Please let Cara know by November 10th if your child plans to attend. This is an awesome opportunity for your child to gather with 30,000 other high school youth for what is sure to be a pivotal moment in their faith formation.



Honoring our Veterans

Memorials to the Mission Endowment Fund together with recent gifts in memory of Walter and Irene Thompson have made possible a new Veterans Memorial Stand. This stand will be dedicated on Sunday, November 12. The stand with a new American Flag will be placed prominently in our Narthex just before you enter into worship. The memorial book placed within the desk-like stand can be viewed through the glass top which may be raised to allow families to turn the pages to see the names of their loved ones.

This will be a project requiring the assistance of many in our congregation.

Kathleen Johnson and Eleanor Waha have begun the process and we are very grateful. We hope to include in our Veterans Memorial Book the names of all men and women who have served in all branches of our military as well as those currently in active duty. If we miss any names that ought to be included, please inform us so we can add them.

Thank Offering Service on November 19

The BLCW will lead this service. "Refreshed and Renewed" is the theme for this year. Thankoffering go back to a tradition dating back to the 1800's. It seemed there was not enough money to carry out the work of the church, the women would take action. Gathering in groups called "cent" or "mite" societies, each woman would set aside

offerings at home throughout the year, in thanksgiving for blessings received. And on occasion, the women would come together as we do today, joining their offerings together to support ministry of many kinds.



October retreats were great

The Men of Bethlehem held their third annual faith retreat at Wilderness Canoe base October 13&14. Twelve men assembled for the discussion of where God is in our grief and how forgiveness gives life. Woodcarving led by Craig Peterson and Pastor Mark, plus fantastic music led by John Bragstad and Thomas Stamps made for a great retreat. As always Wilderness Canoe Base was a superb location with wonderful hosts: Bill and Kristin Middleworth.

The Women of Bethlehem held their retreat at Susan and John Bragstad's home. The storm of October 26 & 27 forced the change of venue away from Wilderness Canoe Base which was snowed under 10 inches and advising against using the small pontoon in the 40 mile per hour winds. Wise decision! Thank you for hosting. The evening was marvelous.

Discussions about Katherine von Bora (Martin Luther's wife) and the role of women in the reformation, plus a great meal, origami crafts prepared by Bonnie Muus and Theresa Oberg, devotions, song and prayer all made for a perfect faith retreat.

Soon we look into the Holiday Season.

Soon after Thanksgiving we will be in the planning for Advent and Christmas. Just a heads up for all: **Advent Festival for All Families**, we are planning to hold another day of making Christmas decorations at 10 am – 12 noon on Saturday December 2; **Hanging of the Greens** will be on Saturday, December 2. Please talk to Janet Simonen and Hilja Iversen if you'd like to help with the theme for this year.

Also on Dec. 2 we will host a showing of the annual **Gustavus Adolphus College Christmas Concert**. On Sunday December 10 and Monday December 11 the **Borealis Chorale and Orchestra** will offer the annual Christmas concert at Bethlehem at 7:00 pm both nights.

Many thanks to Jim Ringquist

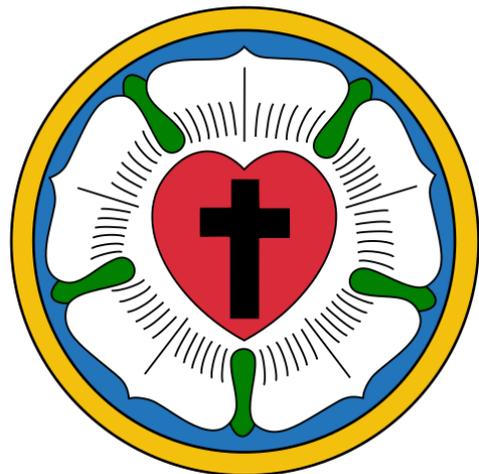
for repairing and improving the framing for the Painting of Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd by Bernie Quick. The backing of the painting was in critical need of repair and strengthening. As the painting needs to be moved seasonally, extra strong backing was required to preserve this treasure of the church. Thank you again.

Hurricane Relief in September

We dedicated our mission of the month in September to Lutheran Disaster Response, specifically for Hurricane relief. Because of your generosity we were able to send \$1,867.00 to the relief effort. Chet Lindskog then dedicated his Annual Apple Pie Social to the relief effort and another \$856.76 was given. Thanks to all of you and a special thank you to Chet!!!

Confirmation Congratulations

This year Tanner DeBoer, Louise Ramberg and Isabella Sparks were confirmed on Sunday October 29, 2017. Making the day extra special was the presence of Bishop Thomas Aitken who was our preacher as well as providing a special anointing for the confirmands. The oil the Bishop used came all the way from Bethlehem in the Holy Lands.



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*Belonging to Christ, Sharing Christ on
the North Shore and beyond.*



New Member Reception Sunday, December 3

We will hold an orientation session to membership on Sunday November 26 after the worship service. All who are interested are invited to get a cup of coffee and join the conversation. The reception will be during worship on the next Sunday December 3. If you have neighbors, family or friends who may be interested, share this invitation.



Sunday November 5 set your clocks back an hour