

Bethany Messenger

Bethany Evangelical Lutheran Church, Montoursville, PA

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Montoursville, PA

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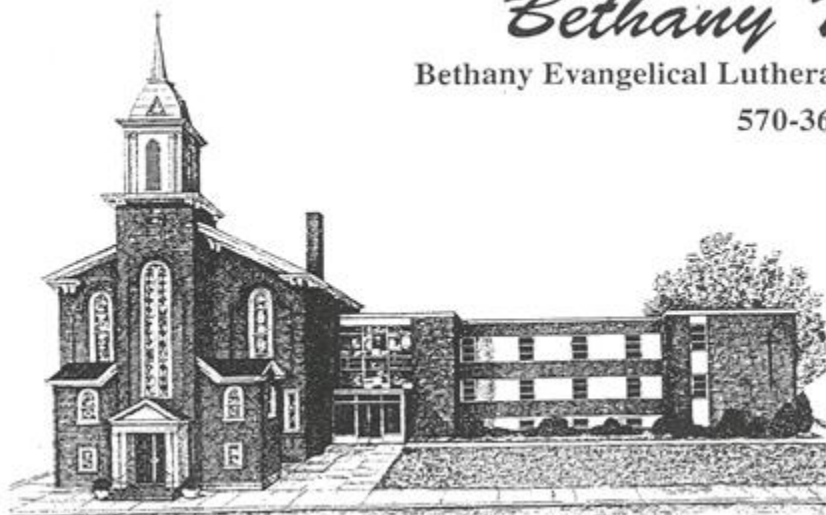
Vicar Megan Shaffer – Intern
(570-764-1214) MeganAnnShaffer@gmail.com

Mrs. Mary Paulhamus – Director of Church
Music

Mr. Michael Twigg – Church Secretary

Mrs. Deborah A. Harman - Sexton

Mrs. Deborah A. Harman
Sexton



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At A GLANCE, THIS IS WHAT'S GOING ON:

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UPCOMING EVENTS

CHICKEN & BISCUIT DINNER - Saturday January 28th 4:00pm – 7:00pm at Bethany Lutheran Church. If you will help or provide desserts, please contact Deb Harman (326-0942). All profits will go to the Pastor's Discretionary Fund, or to feed the needy during the meal. Free will offering will be accepted.

"SOUPER BOWL" Is one way to help the Shepherd of the Streets to help more people in need. It is an effort to glorify God and care for "The least of these" by donating a dollar (or more) on February 12. Offering plate will be at the door.

MESSAGE FROM VICAR MEGAN SHAFFER

Merry Christmas, Beloved Bethany, and Joyous Greetings to the Flock beyond these walls,

With this joyous season, I am happy to report that my schedule has slowed down, and I am getting some much-needed Christmas rest. Advent is over, and Christmas is here! As my letter reaches you, sadly, this wonderful season of celebration will almost be over.

The Christmas Festival is genuinely 12 days long, and it is not the 12 days leading up to Christmas Day. Sorry if you have been misled, but the time before Christmas Day is known as Advent. Christmas begins on Christmas Day and continues until Epiphany. With this, I strongly encourage you to leave the tree and the decorations until Epiphany! Why not? We can all use a bit more joy.

Merry Christmas to you, my brothers and sisters. I now leave you a few educational excerpts from Christianity.com. Their website shares the following information on the classic carol "The 12 Days of Christmas." Enjoy, and Merry Christmas! - Vicar Megan

What Are the 12 Days of Christmas?

- Excerpts are taken from Christianity.com

The Twelve Days of Christmas, also known as Twelvetide, is a festive Christian season celebrating the Birth of Jesus. In 567, the Council of Tours "proclaimed the twelve days from Christmas to Epiphany as a sacred and festive season, and established the duty of Advent fasting in preparation for the feast."

The 12 Days of Christmas - Christmas Carol Meaning and Origin

"The Twelve Days of Christmas" is an English Christmas carol that lists a group of increasingly superb gifts given on each of the 12 days of Christmas (the 12 days that make up the Christmas season, starting with Christmas Day). The song, published in England in 1780 without music as a chant or rhyme, is thought to be French in origin. The melodies of collected versions of the carol vary throughout history. The standard tune now associated with it is derived from a 1909 arrangement of a traditional folk melody by English composer Frederic Austin, who introduced the familiar prolongation of the verse "five gold rings" (now usually called "five golden rings").

Though a host of modern internet sites and some magazine articles have tried to reduce "The Twelve Days of Christmas" to a little more than a silly Christmas carol, most scholars of the Catholic Church deem it a very important surviving example of a time when that denomination used codes to disguise their teachings. Originally a poem written by Catholic clerics, this song was transformed into a carol at a time when celebrating the 12 days of Christmas was one of the most important holiday customs. By understanding the meaning the clerics chose the 12 days as wrapping for their poem, the full impact of the tradition of the 12 days of Christmas can be understood.

Lyrics for 12 Days of Christmas: Meaning of Each Gift

- 1. On the First Day of Christmas, My True Love Gave to Me: A Partridge in a Pear Tree.** The partridge in a pear tree represents Jesus, the Son of God, whose birthday we celebrate on the first day of Christmas. Christ is symbolically presented as a mother partridge, the only bird that will die to protect its young.

2. On the Second Day of Christmas, My True Love Gave to Me: Two Turtledoves.

These twin birds represent the Old and New Testaments. So in this gift, the singer finds the complete story of the Christian faith and God's plan for the world. The doves are the biblical roadmap that is available to everyone.

3. On the Third Day of Christmas, My True Love Gave to Me: Three French Hens.

These birds represent faith, hope, and love. This gift harkens back to [1 Corinthians 13](#), the love chapter written by the Apostle Paul.

4. On the Fourth Day of Christmas, My True Love Gave to Me: Four Calling Birds.

One of the easiest facets of the song's code to figure out, these fowl are the four Gospels — Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

5. On the Fifth Day of Christmas, My True Love Gave to Me: Five Gold Rings.

The gift of the rings represents the first five books of the Old Testament, known as the Torah or the Pentateuch.

6. On the Sixth Day of Christmas, My True Love Gave to Me: Six Geese a-Laying.

These lyrics can be traced back to the first story found in the Bible. Each egg is a day in creation, a time when the world was "hatched" or formed by God.

7. On the Seventh Day of Christmas, My True Love Gave to Me: Seven Swans a-Swimming.

It would take someone quite familiar with the Bible to identify this gift. Hidden in the code are the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit: prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhortation, giving, leading, and compassion. As swans are one of the most beautiful and graceful creatures on earth, they would seem to be a perfect symbol for the spiritual gifts.

8. On the Eighth Day of Christmas, My True Love Gave to Me: Eight Maids-a-Milking.

As Christ came to save even the lowest of the low, this gift represents the ones who would receive his word and accept his grace. Being a milkmaid was about the worst job one could have in England during this period; this code conveyed that Jesus cared as much about servants as he did those of royal blood. The eight who were blessed included the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, and those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake.

9. On the Ninth Day of Christmas, My True Love Gave to Me: Nine Ladies Dancing.

These nine dancers were really the gifts known as the fruit of the Spirit. The fruits are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

10. On the Tenth Day of Christmas, My True Love Gave to Me: Ten Lords a-leaping.

This is probably the easiest gift to understand. As lords were judges and in charge of the law, this code for the Ten Commandments was fairly straightforward to Catholics.

11. On the Eleventh Day of Christmas, My True Love Gave to Me: Eleven Pipers Piping.

This is almost a trick question, as most think of the disciples in terms of the dozen. But when Judas betrayed Jesus and committed suicide, there were only eleven men who carried out the gospel message.

12. On the Twelfth Day of Christmas, My True Love Gave to Me: Twelve Drummers Drumming.

The final gift is tied directly to the Catholic Church. The drummers are the 12 points of doctrine in the Apostles' Creed. "I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day, he rose again. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the [resurrection](#) of the body, and life everlasting."



CHURCH COUNCIL ACTIONS: THE CHURCH COUNCIL HELD IT'S LAST MEETING ON MONDAY DECEMBER 19 ,2022

The Annual Congregational meeting was held on December 11, 2022 preceded by a congregational luncheon. Recognition was given to the retiring council members Richard Hillegas David Neidig and Weston Miller Phillip Oechler.

New council member to be installed January 8th, 2023 during the Sunday Service are Sally Lomison, Tracy Rhian and Dennis Smith.

2023 CHURCH COUNCIL OFFICERS:

- PRESIDENT- DAVE GRUBE
- VICE PRESIDENT – MIKE STOVER
- SECRETARY – NICOLE CAREY
- TREASURER – WES MILLER

NOVEMBER Reports are posted outside the church office

Worship and Music

2022 Congregation Officers:

Dave Grube – President Mike Stover – Vice President Nicole Carey – Secretary

*Council Members:, Jamie Brouse, Michael Brouse, Richard Hillegas, Glenn Kaufman, Weston Miller, David Neidig, Philip Oechler, Kathie Snauffer, Gail Stover, Michael Stover
Council will hold its next meeting Monday DECEMBER 19TH at 7:15pm*

Income & Expenses through November 2022

<i>2022 Income</i>	<i>\$112,619.93</i>
<i>2022 Expenses</i>	<i><u>150,514.30</u></i>
<i>Expenses Over Income</i>	<i>- 38,960.18</i>

CONTACTING THE CHURCH OFFICE:	9:00 am. to 2:00 pm., Monday through Thursday (570)368-8933 & email: secyBethanyNALC@gmail.com <i>*this email can reach ALL STAFF</i>
IN AN EMERGENCY:	Vicar Megan Shaffer (570)764-1214 (Call twice in a row – if no answer) Gail Stover - Prayer Chain (570)971-5710 / stover1104@gmail.com
BETHANY'S WEB SITE:	www.BethanyNALC.org
BETHANY'S FACEBOOK PAGE:	www.facebook.com/BethanyNALC.org

MINISTRY UPDATES

What does the Holy Spirit have to do with Epiphany?

Each Sunday, we recite one of the Creeds of the church, which for centuries have united us as God's adopted children. We confess our belief in the Holy Spirit. We know his name, acknowledging his being a part of the Holy Trinity, yet, many of us still are unfamiliar with what he does for us. Sometimes it is easier to understand a person when we see what they do versus talking about them in abstract terms. Take an example of the Holy Spirit's involvement with Epiphany.

Epiphany is one of the three oldest principal festivals of the church. We celebrate it each year on January 6th, which marks its beginning and continues to the Transfiguration of Our Lord. On this day, according to the second chapter of Matthew's gospel, the Magi visited the Christ Child, bringing him gifts of frankincense, gold, and myrrh. Epiphany is defined as the *appearance or manifestation of God*. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, epiphany is a sudden manifestation or perception of the [essential](#) nature or meaning of something *OR* an intuitive grasp of reality through something (such as an event) usually simple and striking *OR* an illuminating discovery, realization, or disclosure.

According to scripture, Epiphany was not the only time God revealed himself to the Gentiles through his son, Jesus Christ. At his baptism, Christ was acknowledged by God as we read in the third chapter of Matthew "[16](#)And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; [17](#)and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

Jesus also turned water into wine at the wedding that took place in Cana, again revealing his divinity to those around him. All three of these events comprise what is called the **Theophany**. All these events *illuminate or enlighten* us about who Christ is, which is one of the main jobs of the Holy Spirit. He *enlightens* us. He revealed to the Magi who Christ is, giving them saving knowledge of Christ. By showing the Magi who Christ is, he brought them to faith and sanctified them just as he does for us.

But, one can only have faith in Christ if one understands why they are a sinner. This is another job of the Holy Spirit; he reveals to us by educating us on our sins. And when we have been tempted by the world and have gone astray, he calls us back into communion and gathers us with our fellow believers. He gives us preachers and other Christians who then speak the Word of forgiveness back into our ears. You shall be raised to eternal life by the Holy Spirit on the last day.

Vicar Megan Shaffer

Attitude of Gratitude

We would like to thank the following during this Christmas Season in which so many have helped with our traditional services and programs.

THANK YOU - To everyone who helped with the Children's Christmas program, decorating of the Church, the outdoor manger scene, flower boxes front of the church, The Christmas tree. To our Pastors and everyone participating and providing our Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Services. For the poinsettias from everyone and our altar flowers by the Wentz family. Thank You to everyone helping with the Annual Congregational meeting and luncheon. For everything you do, Thank You!

THANK YOU - *to the Women of Bethany for the delicious cookies. I am really enjoying them!* Marjorie Fantasky

THANK YOU – *Many Thanks to all who donated money or filled shoe boxes for Samaritan's Purse – Operation Christmas Child this year. Because of your generosity, we were able to send 29 shoe boxes!*
June Grube

THANK YOU- TO THE *Women of Bethany for the Christmas cookies, they are very good. Gail Stover, thank you for dropping them off.* Mary Anne & Charles Lichter

THANK YOU – *Joan Hiller expresses her thanks for bringing her Christmas Cookies! God Bless You All!*

Joan Hiller

THANK YOU – *Thank you to the Women of the Church for the Christmas cookies. Thank You to the Altar Committee for the flowers and to Colleen Oechler for bringing them and the very nice visit.* Vonnie Hawley

THANK YOU – *Thank you to all who participated in the donations of treats, labels, and delivery of the boxes to our seniors!* The Women of the Bethany

THANK YOU - *To the Women of Bethany for the delicious cookies and to Beverly Brown for the nice visit and delivering them. Really appreciate your thoughtfulness* Eugene

Want to thank someone who showed you kindness? This is a great way to show our appreciation for our brothers and sisters in Christ who take time to up lift others! Feel free to submit your 'gratitude' for our next issue.

Email Vicar Megan: MeganAnnShaffer@gmail.com with Attitude of Gratitude in the Subject Line.

Looking for resources to Enrich Your Walk with the Lord? Here are Free Resources

<https://thenalc.org/> - See the Devotions Tab

<https://www.bible.com/> - Has a large variety of studies and devotionals by topic, book or author. Its Free!

https://www.moravian.org/daily_texts/ - Daily Texts and Reflections for Study.

***Prayer List Changes ***

We Are Updating And Refining How We Monitor The Prayer List.
Some Changes You Need To Be Aware Of:

- *New* 90 Day Cycle - Every 90 days the list will be updated to remove/add/keep persons on it.
- When requesting someone be added to the list we kindly ask for the following to be provided:
 - Individual's First & Last Name
 - How Name is to Appear in the Bulletin (Full or First)
 - If Name is Only to be Mentioned During Service (Not in Written Communications).
 - Connection to Congregation (If a Non-Member)
 - If the Person Would like Pastoral contact (Include Phone Number)
 - Any Specific Intentions (If Possible)
 - Long Term or Short Term

Thank you in advance for your understanding. It is an honor to pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ and it is something we take very seriously.

Harvest of Hope – Volunteer Opportunities & Fresh Free Veggies and Fruit

We are currently following the COVID-19 requirements. The Fresh Express program continues the second Thursday of every month; however, we distribute the food as cars drive by. We are currently supplying the schools with backpack food items to supplement weekend food.

Fresh Express is open every 2nd Thursday of the month from 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM.

Volunteers assist with this program every 2nd Thursday of the month from 1:00 PM - 5:30 PM utilizing 2 hour shifts for set up, sorting, distribution and clean up. The **Backpack program** packs food every 3rd Thursday of the month from 6:30 PM - 8:00 PM during the school year. The backpack supply team meets the 1st and 3rd Mondays of the month from 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM. The backpack set up team meets every 3rd Tuesday of the month from 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM.

Harvest of Hope is now celebrating our fourth year! Although the dream and seed of this project began about 5 years ago, we could not have imagined the rate of its growth. The community involvement from the schools, organizations, businesses and churches has been a blessing. The stories that we have been privileged to hear warm our hearts! With that being said, we have a long way to go to meet the needs of the community. We are currently serving 120 students in the Montoursville School District with weekend supplemental food. We have approximately 550 students that qualify for this food. We are working on a financial plan to increase the number of students to meet this need. We serve approximately 75 families with our Fresh Express program. If you are interested in being part of helping financially please see "How to Help".

Our Backpack program is organized so that a child in need will receive one bag of food every Friday during the school year. In that bag they receive 2 entrees, 2 breakfast items, 1 vegetable, 1 fruit and 2 snacks along with a special item on holidays.

We have 12 churches committed to help us with food donations for the backpack program as it functions purely from donations. We are so blessed to have this community group effort. We have received food donations from school events and personal food donations. If you would like to donate please see "How to Help".

Our Fresh Express program receives a delivery of fresh and nutritious items in the morning from the Central PA Food Bank. We open our doors later that day for families to shop for their groceries. A hospitality team welcomes the families and provides them with snacks. The initial paperwork is completed as required by the State for statistics.

Thank you for your interest in the Harvest of Hope and we look forward to meeting you in some way in the future. Sharon Atherholt Jane Zimmerer Co-Chair's of Harvest of Hope Located within Faith Church: 700 Fairview Drive, Montoursville, PA

BACKPACK BREAKFAST NEWS:

The Backpack Program is continuing into this new school year. Families are grateful for the items that we are able to contribute!

They continue to appreciate our donations of:

- Oatmeal (1-2 oz. packets)
- Boxed Cereal (Individual, 1.5-2 oz)
- Multigrain Bars; Breakfast Bars; Pop Tarts; Belvita Breakfast Biscuits (1.76 oz.)
- Cream of Wheat (1-2 oz. packets)
- Cereal Bars (individually packaged)

EQUIPMENT AVAILABLE

Equipment is always available to borrow during recovering from surgery and for those who may be experiencing difficulties. We have walkers, canes, equipment for the bathtub and commodes are all available. Please let us know if you have any needs, and we will assist you.



HOME COMMUNION AVAILABLE

Home Communion is again available to our shut-ins! If you wish to have a pastor come and visit and administer the Sacrament, please contact Flip Oechler or the church office to schedule a visit.

NEED A COAT, TAKE ONE; HAVE A COAT, LEAVE ONE



Winter is coming, and we know that cold days are ahead! If you are considering some closet cleaning, we certainly can use more coats, especially as we know that there are some local families who are going through difficult times. We accept children's and adult's sizes, and have a bin for hats, mittens, scarves, and gloves.

Also, if you know **anyone** in need of a coat or jacket, please remind them of our supply.

When someone receives a gift of warmth, it helps show others that people who Love Our Lord also care about them!



PROJECT LINUS & SHEPHERD OF THE STREETS

We are still sharing our knitting, crocheting, and quilting gifts with others by making blankets of all sizes (baby, children, adult) for those with cancer or going through traumatic experiences at hospitals. You may bring these items to the Church Office. We are also collecting winter hats, gloves, and scarves to share with the Shepherd of the streets.

UNITED CHURCHES FOOD PANTRY

The Food Pantry currently is blessed with an abundance of food, but that will probably change as we go into the fall. They are beginning to prepare for the upcoming holidays, and are also beginning to distribute gift cards (\$5-\$10) to each client so that they are also able to purchase if they need something that is not available at the pantry (so monetary donations are also very appreciated).

The following is a list of pantry items for which they are currently requesting:

- Coffee
- Rice
- Condiments
- Pop Tarts
- Hamburger Helper
- Potatoes
- Jello & Pudding mixes
- Pie Filling

You may drop off items at our church and they will be delivered to the pantry.

YOU give them something to eat. Mt 14:16

