



ANNUAL REPORT 2025

BETHEL LUTHERAN CHURCH
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HOSPITALITY **CHRIST-CENTERED COMMUNITY** **SPIRITUAL GROWTH & DISCIPLESHIP** **GENEROSITY** **RESPONDING TO NEEDS**

BETHEL at a Glance ~ 2025

First Bible Class

Landon Lee

Lucas Hanson

Thomas Heerboth

Felix Vieta

Emma Burch

Hannah Yao

First Communion Class

Felix Vieta

Confirmations

Ellis Kayla Rae Hermann
Cassidy Joy Deutscher

Ella Jayne Burkhart
Piper Aist



Baptisms

Evan Gregory Wilker (son of Erin (Abney) & Michael Wilker) on April 6, 2025

Eleanor Belle Hanson (daughter of Sarah & Ryan Hanson) on November 2, 2025

Tessa Morgan Davis (daughter of Rachel (Kawula) & Matthew Davis) on December 14, 2025

New Members

Fred Omenzetter

The Bermeo Family – Ashley, Rafael, Rosalind and Gabriel

Award Recipients

Dorothy Meyer Award ~ Dave & Barbara Larsen

Eric Hanson Award ~ Chris Ford

In Memoriam

*We had to say goodbye to our beloved members who passed away in 2025.
We thank God for their faithful service.*

Victor Chinn

Manfred Trogisch

Frank Denby

Norm Eliason

Tom Jow

Wayne Elland

Siblings in Christ,

It continues to be my great privilege to serve as your pastor. Bethel is a remarkable congregation, with faithful, compassionate, and generous members. We will continue to seek God's guidance as we Do Life Together.



This year, we continued our focus on community engagement. This includes working to develop more competence and skill in relating to our diverse community. The IDI work that has been done by members, our community interviews, and most recently our designation by NAMI as a Mental Health Friendly Stigma-Free Congregation, demonstrates our commitment to being an inclusive church. We will also continue to look for opportunities to go into the community through acts of service and being present for community events. We are still hopeful to hire a Director of Community Engagement to provide sustained leadership in this area.

I also wanted to note the great many people who actively seek to grow in their faith at Bethel. We have a wonderful children's ministry program, and dynamic confirmation and youth programs as well. These programs set us apart from other congregations and are mentioned regularly by visitors and new members. I am also impressed by how adults are actively in bible study, fellowship, music, and service at Bethel and beyond. Our faith is active!

Finally, I want to give thanks to everyone who gives their time and talent in service of Bethel. We are blessed with an experienced, talented, and deeply committed church staff. We have excellent lay leaders serving on the church council and various committees and teams that keep the congregation running efficiently and effectively. We also have an incredibly generous congregation, whose financial support enables all this good work to happen. I am especially impressed with the great results of our recently completed capital campaign which included over \$2 million in gifts! God is good!

Thank you for your ongoing support and for the partnership we share in Christ.

God's Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Pastor Ben Sandin'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Pastor Ben Sandin

ADULT MINISTRY- MARY DEUTSCHER, DIRECTOR

Bethel's 9th Annual Chili Cookoff was January 26, 2025 in Torvend Hall following late service. We had 16 chilis (!) and about 85 attend, including Andrew Templeman, director from Mount Cross. We raised over \$900 by Fillin-the-Boot that day, with a total of \$1,273 for our designated offering recipient. Congrats to our winners: Paul Baldwin (1st), Jody Volk (2nd), and Erik Edstrom (3rd) for their excellent chilis!

"It Takes a Village" Lenten Project (March 9-April 30). Your generosity is amazing and is changing so many lives around the world! Our total giving to ELCA Good Gifts in 2025 was \$9,430! Our Bethel "Village" gifted 1 cow, 1 fish farm, 6 hives of honeybees, 9 safe water filters, 2 portions of an irrigation project, 1 safe water well, 1 share of a safe water well, 4 latrines, 5 microloans for business women, 7 women's scholarships for farmer's field school, 9 girls school scholarships, school supplies for 39 children, 5 cookstoves, nutrition for 26 children (for 1 month), 1 community vegetable garden, 3 sets of tools and seeds, 14 medical clinic visits for a child, 5 weeks of health clinic supplies, 5 child vaccinations, 9 hygiene (cleaning) kits, 5 Bibles, and 1 motorbike for a pastor. We are surely making an impact! Supporting long-term, sustainable solutions and ensuring these gifts last for years and years- instead of just days or weeks- for people in Mexico, Uganda, and Cambodia. 2026 could bring yet, a new challenge – stay tuned!



All Ministry Fair & BBQ was September 7 was our annual Kid Connection carnival for ages 3 to 5th grade and Ministry Celebration BBQ. Bethel has 65 ministries and therefore a large number of volunteers, so we wanted to recognize and thank YOU all for your time and talents. Road Dogs food truck provided yummy burgers, special dogs, and fries- a fabulous lunch together on the front lawn, complete with several Bethel ministry tables. We had approximately 125 people attend- It was a great day! Special thanks to all the helpers with set up and clean up, I am very thankful for you. 😊

Reformation Lunch was Sunday, October 26 we had our wonderful annual Oktoberfest lunch of sausages and pretzels (provided by Ludwig's), and some extra sides; We dished up in Room 5 and enjoyed a beautiful day on the patio.

I am so thankful for our generous Bethel community and the numerous ministries and volunteers that create a safe and welcoming environment for all to worship and receive support.

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE – TOM HOEGEL, DIRECTOR

Dear Bethel Friends!

This starts my 42nd year of ministry with youth, as your AV/transportation/facilities director and Director of Congregational Life, I'm so grateful! Each year brings new challenges, new adventures, and the honor of walking along side members and friends of this congregation.

We commit to “Do Life Together” and this year was no exception. We had a great mix of Out and About events (see Molly's report), The Labor Day Retreat (Building Bridges with Amy Sargent) was a blast, and the Mexico trips strengthened the relationships of over 45 people with our friends to the south. One special highlight is the “Reflections on Resilience” evening we sponsored last March. Yes, not only did we make it past the 5-year anniversary of the Covid shutdown, due to the efforts of our leadership and volunteers we are a vibrant and thriving congregation today.



A highlight for the youth department this past year was the BOOCT IV trip. We focused on challenges and adventure. We visited the Donner Party Museum in Truckee, a silver mine in Virginia City, NV, an Indian Boarding School wrapping up with some group time in Bear Valley. These experiences will stay with us for years to come.

A big thanks also goes out to our Sunday Morning AV staff that make in person and online worship so effective. Adam and Brian are at the helm and our



volunteers are amazing. We are always looking to expand the team and now is a good time for YOU to join us.

I'm super excited that we added Ohana Miura to our youth leadership with Harumy Miura as our Assistant Youth Directors. Harumy is also working to gather our college young people. Harumy is a graduate of our program and is in her Senior year at Santa Clara University. Ohana is a 2nd year student at West Valley College. We are super blessed to have them working with our youth!

The 4th year of our Capital Campaign has provided a host of challenges related to ADA requirements for the Torvend Hall restrooms as well as our parking lot. We finally made all the restroom modifications and are busy building them out. I am waiting on two proposals to do the parking lot work. Both projects resulted in major delays by the City of Cupertino as well as some significant cost increases. We are finally moving forward and with all the additional challenges; our facility will be even more accessible and inviting. Thanks for your patience my friends, we are on this.

A big thanks goes out to the Men of Monday again this year. They have been instrumental in helping me prepare for Rossinca to be on our campus, set up for the summer camps, help demo Torvend Hall, and continued finding tasks to complete each week. Not only do they save the congregation significant \$'s, but they do it with smiles and a lot of laughter. Fun fact: in 2025 they completed 592 "man hours" of work. You go, guys!

So, here's to moving into 2026! This world is hurting all around us. I pray that great healing and peace come to all - physically, emotionally, and spiritually. As AI becomes a larger player in our society, it is more important than ever to be in human contact and relationships. Our ministry at Bethel is built on the relationship with God and each other. Love and grace need to be shared more than ever. Thank you for the continued partnership. Helping lead the Bethel community is a blessing beyond words ☺

Peace & Love, Tom



LABOR DAY RETREAT - Molly Schrey

The Bethel LDR ministry allows Bethel families and friends to enjoy worship and fellowship at Mt. Cross camp in Felton, CA over the Labor Day Weekend. Participants have a chance to attend speaker-led sessions and worship and enjoy a variety of fun activities, socialize, or just relax amidst their beautiful surroundings.

This year's retreat theme was "Building Bridges – Making Connections" with speaker Amy Sargent. Amy is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist with a Private Practice in Redwood City, the Clinical Director of the Tri-Valley Counseling Center and Care Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship in Livermore. Through our 3 sessions, Amy guided us to deepen our relationship with God, ourselves, and others. Together, we explored the foundation of faith as our solid ground. We journeyed inward to discover God's transformative work within us, and journeyed outward to create meaningful, life-giving connections. We were inspired to live a life rooted in love—strong, steady, and built to last.

Retreat participants had the option of our main one-day program on Sunday, or a longer relaxing weekend starting Saturday afternoon through Monday morning. Participants who came on Saturday could participate in swimming, Mt. Cross led archery and climbing wall, enjoy a nature hike in the Santa Cruz Mountains, as well as enjoy dinner and a campfire with songs led by Katlynn Rhyne.

We would like to thank the following LDR members: Patrice Sera, Chris Freckmann, Bailey Freckmann, Susan Leavitt, Kara Hermann, Robyn Winegardner, Adam Klopfenstein, Katlynn Rhyne, Daniel Rhyne, Amanda Laughlin, Jamie Jacobson, Ben Sandin, Harumy Miura, Tyler Freckmann, Molly Schrey, and Tom Hoegel.

We would love to have more Bethel friends and family enjoy this yearly event! In addition, the committee welcomes new members.



OUT & ABOUT- Molly Schrey

The Out and About Ministry focuses on enjoying meaningful activities, learning together, and inviting others into fellowship as we experience the wonders of the world around us.

In the 15 years of this ministry, there have been a total of 141 events with over 3050 participants!

2025 Out and About Activities

January – Bethel Game Night

February - Exploratorium

March – Organ Festival SF

March - Annual St. Patty’s Day Brewery Tour

May – Carmel and Highlands Inn

June – Comedy Sportz

August – Bethel Game Night

August – Santa Clara Police Dept.

September – Golden State Valkyries

September – Brunchies/Santa Cruz Wharf

September – Ludwigs Oktoberfest

October – Farm Worker Reality Tour

November – Filoli / Trolls

December– Creche Exhibit

December - Winter Lodge Skating/Caroling

Thank you to the following Out & About Team members: Marianne Nadell, Paul Baldwin, Doreen Baldwin, Adam Klopfenstein, Jill Burkhart, Ellen Aist, Diane Stauffer, Molly Schrey, Tom Hoegel,

We invite first-time participants to join us for an event in 2026!

We are always looking for fresh ideas and new members. If you are interested in being part of the planning committee for this ministry, please contact Molly Schrey or Tom Hoegel.



“BRUNCHIES” - Robyn Winegardner

BRUNCHIES is a mid-week event, open to all, including friends. It’s an outing where we meet with Tom at 10am at Bethel and he takes us on the church bus to a city in the area where we can stroll down a street or two- Window shop, visit art stores, chat a bit with each other, and then stop for a late morning/early afternoon meal, BRUNCH, returning



to Bethel before 2pm. Our second adventure was to Santa Cruz Wharf with lunch at Woodies Cafe, or any of the Wharf eatery's folks chose. Stopping at Marianne's for Ice Cream on the way home put a cherry on top of our outing.. Watch for more Wednesday and Thursday BRUNCHIES to come in 2026, both on and offsite.

SUNDAY MORNING FOOD TRUCKS -Robyn Winegardner

Food Trucks continued to bring monthly Sunday Feasts in March through September. We welcomed Waffles Amore for our Easter Breakfast, Rocio Mexican, Road Dogs for our VBS Celebration, Twister, Tlaxizco's Pizza and Lemongrass Lane.

Look forward to more Sunday morning feasts and fun times together in 2026. If you have any Food Trucks you would like to have come to Bethel please share their names with Robyn Winegardner and she will check on their pricing and availability.

“FUN FOODIE FRIDAYS” Robyn Winegardner

We had our second year of Fun Foodie Fridays three Friday nights this summer. We invited multiple Food Trucks each month to the front corner of our property for a Family-Friendly time of food, games, laughter and conversations. In June we had ... Cousins Maine Lobster and Pupusa Time and Kona Ice. Unfortunately, Tacos el Rufles got a flat tire. In July we had ... Road Dogs and Tacos el Rufles and Kona Ice. Unfortunately, Twister had a family emergency and did not make it. In August we had ... Frontera Grill and Grillzillas and Waffle Amore and Kona Ice. It is taking a while to grow this Community Outreach activity. We learned from our first year in 2024 and made some changes. It was nice when folks from the neighborhood would stop by. We will try again in the summer of 2026 and are looking at possibly adding music one month and a movie one month. Keep your eyes out and get ready to mark your calendars as we get closer to the summer months. If you have any Food Trucks you would like to have come to Bethel please share their names with Robyn Winegardner and she will check on their availability.



CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES – AMANDA LAUGHLIN, DIRECTOR

Kid Connection Sunday School meets weekly on Sundays in classrooms 1, 2 & 9 (September – May). Kids come as early as 9:30 AM to meet with their friends and have free play. Kid Connection officially begins at 9:50 AM and ends at 10:40 AM.

Kid Connections teachers – Patrice Sera, Doreen Baldwin, Jessica Burkhart, Lourdes Miura, Lauren Kettner, Cathy Stahl and Amanda Laughlin

Kid Connection Summertime – A non-structured time that children can meet outside on the playground. We have free play, art activities and snack. Families were invited to take a Sunday to host.

Parent's Room – Room 2 continues to be a hang out room for our parents as they wait for the children while they are in Kid Connection or Confirmation. They have comfy chairs, a kuerig, hot water kettle, fridge filled with cold drinks and snacks. There are also plenty of snacks for children so that the morning goes well for everyone.

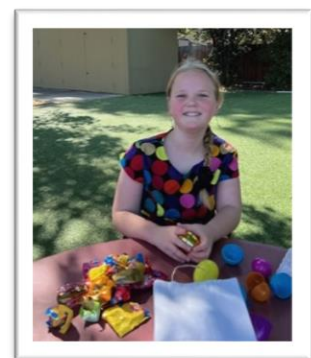
KCHO - Kid Connection Hang-Out is a once a month gathering for Kid Connection Kids(3rd grade – 5th grade) after the Second Service. We have lunch, make crafts and play games. This gives parents a chance to do what they need to do while their kids are taken care of. Kayla Burkhart and or Cassidy Deutscher help me with these events.

Children's Choir – meets every other month after the second service. Lunch is provided. We begin in room 1 for lunch and then sing in the Music and Ed Room or the sanctuary. The children's choir sings during worship, four to six times a year. This is directed by Barb Larsen and Amanda Boniface played the piano in the winter, and spring of 2025 and Greg Steinke played the piano in the fall of 2025.

Bethel's Knitting Ministry – Mi-knit-stry- an intergenerational activity. Met on Wednesday evenings, 5 PM – 8 PM in January and February and beginning in March, met every other Thursday, 5 PM – 8 PM. This ministry is led by Ellen Aist. Over 100 hats were knitted and given to the Phoenix Room, which provides kits to the unhoused.

First Communion Class – we had one child, Felix Vieta participate in first communion during Lent. His family participated in a discussion with Pastor Ben and then he baked bread and participated in his first communion during the Maundy Thursday worship service.

Easter Egg Hunt – Sunday, April 20th, on Easter in between services. All children who were here for worship, were invited to join us. We also invited Villa Montessori and the community. We had over 100 participants.



Special Speaker – Kara Haug - co-founder of Reframing our Stories (has her BA in Psychology from Hope College in Holland, MI., a master's in theological studies from Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary in Berkeley, CA, Post-Graduate Certificate in Sexual Health Education and Counseling from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor and is a Certified Sexuality Educator), provided two workshops for our parents here at Bethel. On Sunday, May 18th, she provided one workshop for parents of children, birth to 5th grade and one workshop for parents of middle school – high school.

Take Out Church - Summer 2025– “Kindness Matters” focused on Ephesians 4:32, “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you”. The box was full of activities that reminded us of the importance of spreading kindness. Our object that we took pictures with this year was a fuzzy heart. People were encouraged to take pictures with them on the vacations or stay-cations and sent them back to Amanda to include in our annual movie.

VBS 2025– True North– Monday, June 23rd – Friday, June 27th. We changed the dates of VBS from the beginning of July to the middle/end of June and it went well. We had a traditional morning program, 9-12 pm and then an afternoon program, 12 – 5 pm. We had 46 children registered for VBS, with 20 of those children also registered for the optional afternoon program.

We participated in **two Service Projects** that all of Bethel was welcome to join in. We partnered with West Valley Community Services in a Food Drive. We had four barrels available to receive non-perishable food items. We collected 600 pounds of food. We also participated in the True North VBS suggested service project, Operation Kid to Kid service project. We collected money that provided warm clothing for children who live in colder parts of northern America. We collected \$692.00 that we sent to Operation Kid to Kid – World Vision.



All those who volunteered and made True North VBS possible: Kayla Burkhart, Robyn Winegardner, Harumy Muira, Kathy Arnold, Kathleen Podraza, Patrice Sera, Bailey Freckmann, Leah Vieta, Devynn Deutscher, Cassidy Deutscher, Bryson Reidell, Jessica Burkhart, Claire Jochner, Jenell Laughlin, Jenny Edstrom, Ellie Edstrom, Grant Edstrom, Doreen Baldwin, Kit Leong, Claire Leong, Averie Abad, Emme Abad, Ellen Aist, Piper Aist, AJ Aist, Ashish Das, Lourdes Miura, Diane Stauffer, Corrine Devine, Cathy Stahl,

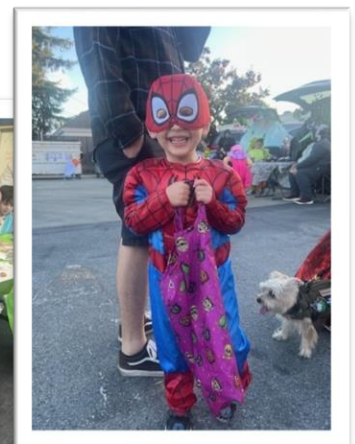
Jody Volk, Mary Deutscher, Tom Hoegel, Pastor Ben, Fara Brock, Dan Volk, Ricardo Muira, Marion Abney, Jenna Neal, Sohini Pakerla and Jamie Laughlin.

Kayla Burkhart directed the preschool portion of VBS along with the afternoon program.

First Bible Class – Six 3rd graders (Landon Lee, Lucas Hanson, Thomas Heerboth, Felix Vieta, Emma Burch, Hannah Yao) received their first bibles from Bethel on Sunday, October 26th. I led the 2nd – 5th grade class in a bible class, with the support of Lauren Burch for two Sundays. We continue to learn about the bible and how we can use it in our everyday life.

Annual Trunk or Treat – Community event with Angels on Stage. We had about 21 cars which were decorated and handed out treats. Youth from Angels on Stage, Bethel children, Villa Montessori families, Rossinca families and families from the community participated. We had over 100 participants. We had a taco vendor, crafts, games and dancing.

Secret Angels – Bethel Members prayed for a child during the season of Advent, wrote them a note and this along with a little gift was given to our Kid Connection Children on Sunday, December 21st.



Kid Connection Christmas Program – “For unto Us a Child is Born” Children acted out the Nativity Story while I narrated it. Our Children’s Choir sang during the program as well. This was shared at the second service on December 21st during the Children’s Message time.

CONFIRMATION (6th – 8th Grade)

ROBYN WINEGARDNER AND SUSAN LEAVITT

Pictures can be worth 1,000 words.

8th grade Confirmands who affirmed their Baptism in 2025:
Ellis Hermann, Ella Burkhart, Cassidy Deutscher and Piper Aist.

7th graders, now 8th graders: Luke Barto, Ellie Edstrom and Olivia Greene.

6th graders, now 7th graders: Holly Boniface and Tristan Janssen.

Current 6th graders, who joined us in September, are ... Olivia Burch and Claire Jochner.



2025 CONFIRMATION HIGHLIGHTS ... we finished our New Testament study and the year’s theme, “Everybody Has a Story,” in Spring. We kicked off our Luther's Catechism study and the year’s theme, “Building Bridges, Making Connections” at the Labor Day Retreat at Mt Cross. Donuts and Root Beer continue to be an early morning draw on Sunday mornings. Monthly on-site mini-Retreats which include ... reading the lessons during Worship, taking Sermon Notes, spending extended time with each other and special time Pastor Ben and sharing a meal together ... continue to be keys in building community. Helping Kid Connection with a Passover experience during Lent and helping with VBS in the summer continue to be opportunities to serve and discover talents, gifts and passions. Thank you, Susan Leavitt for your continued love, care and commitment for all Confirmands, especially the 8th graders when they prepare for their personal Affirmation of Baptism, aka, Confirmation.



WORSHIP & MUSIC – BRIAN SCHUETTE, MINISTRY LEAD

2025 - The Worship and Music Ministry team works behind the scenes to prepare Sunday service plans. The team meets as needed. In 2025, Bethel again extended the season of outdoor worship for our contemporary service as weather permitted. Bethel continues to offer in-person and live streaming of both the traditional and contemporary services on YouTube.

A JOYFUL NOISE Handbell Choir - Chris Hogan, Director

After 27 years, A Joyful Noise Handbell Choir is still going strong.

Please consider joining handbell choir. Our optimal size is 14 players, which would allow us to play all the music in our repertoire.

BETHEL CHOIR – Melody Wright Bast, Director of Liturgical Worship

The Bethel Choir music program is going strong! We currently have 12 full time members, rehearsing weekly on Thursdays in the sanctuary, 7:30pm to 9pm and performing typically three Sundays per month. Call time is 8:15 AM.

Sopranos: Margit Schmitt, Barb Larsen, Janice Martinson, Anna Chinn

Altos: Yvonne Loo, Hella Bluhm-Stieber, Maggie Emmert, Sue Lampkin

Tenors/Basses: Mark Evashank, Bill Weberg, Dave Tribby, Brad Martinson,

and Vadim Rivkin served again this season faithfully as our piano accompanist.

BETHEL WORSHIP TEAM- Clayton Johnson, Director of Contemporary Music

This year the Bethel Worship Team had seven members who participated on a rotating basis. In addition to leading the 10:45 contemporary service, we also had the privilege of leading all the outdoor worship services during the summer. It was also our great pleasure to participate in the Advent Music Festival *Light of the World*. Bethel has a long history of innovative contemporary worship. We are grateful to be able to continue that tradition every Sunday and look forward to another year of worshipping together. We are ALWAYS recruiting new members. If you sing or play an instrument, please think about joining us. We rehearse before church on Sunday mornings from 8:30-10:30am in the Music and Ed Room. THANK YOU to the 2025 Bethel Worship Team for their dedication and talent: Mary Deutscher, Kara Hermann, Katlynn Rhyne, Tom Hoegel, Clayton Johnson, Adam Klopfenstein, and Brian Schuette.

ALTAR GUILD – Janice Martinson and Marion Abney

The Altar Guild team takes on the important work of communion set up and cleanup. Coordinators are also responsible for parament changes, candle maintenance, and altar area cleanup. Our faithful

team includes Anita Tysseland, Debby Coleman, Sharon Parady, and Erna Trogisch. We appreciate bckup support from Marilyn Garten and Sandy Hersch's help with parament cleaning and repair. Thank you to Susan Leavitt for baking communion bread to be served the second Sunday of the month. Please consider joining the Altar Guild. Contact Marion Abney for more information.

SUNDAY MORNING COFFEE HOST MINISTRY- Marion Abney

Dedication and flexibility are the hallmark traits of our faithful team comprised of Ichiro Fujishiro, Sam Sudarsanam, Brad Martinson, Tori and Mark Evashenk, Ellen and Trixie Aist, Steve Emmert, Vera and Roger Edstrom, Bill and Joann Weberg, Sharon Parady, Carlos Rosa, Judy Johnson, and Ordetta Hovland. No matter the weather, our team secures a sheltered area for setup and strives to offer an enjoyable fellowship experience. They setup, cleanup, and often donate snacks. Please stop by the coffee cart to enjoy a hot beverage and engage in conversation as we grow together in community! We continue to serve organic coffee provided by Equal Exchange, a fair trade company to support small farmers. Leftover coffee is enjoyed by the Quilters and Men of Monday ministries. Coffee grounds are saved for use in member's gardens. Contact Marion Abney if you would like to join the coffee team!

USHERS - Lloyd Darknell

Our team of volunteers greet people on Sundays with a bulletin and a smile, helping with offering and communion during worship. We currently have a stable group of ushers helping at the two Sunday Services. Doris and I appreciate all they do when ushering. They are always ready to help our members when needed.

We are currently in need of several more ushers for the 10:45 worship service. Typical commitment is one month, with help filling in when needed/ possible. If you're interested in joining the team, please contact Lloyd Darknell.



MISSION OUTREACH – MARK EVASHENK, MINISTRY LEAD

Serving breakfast at the **San Jose Family Shelter** continued throughout 2025. Bethel serves Sunday morning the 2nd Sunday in February, April, June, August, October, and December. If you are not able to prepare and serve on Sunday morning, you may still participate by preparing food ahead of the Sunday and delivering to SJFS. Please contact Mark Evashenk to get involved as new hands and faces of Jesus are also welcome to help.

The baby layette program to support Sacred Heart Community Services was again well received and supported. A big thank you to all who donated items. A total of 30 layette bags were assembled. And special thanks to Joann Weberg and the Bethel Quilters for making the layette bags, and Sandy Siron and the Cupertino Senior Center knitting group for knitting beanie caps that were placed in each bag. The hand-made bags and beanies are a special bonus.



Bethel Lutheran Church supported **West Valley Community Services** by donating 27 turkeys with a total weight of 390 pounds! The turkeys were happily and graciously received by the staff of West Valley Community Services. An additional cash donation of \$200 was made. This allowed families in our Cupertino community to have a nice Thanksgiving meal. A big thanks to all who participated.

We had a wonderful response to the Help One Child's **Giving Tree** program. A total of 60 gift tags were picked up and gifts lovingly selected. In addition a total of \$1025

in gift cards (e.g. Safeway, Target, Amazon) were donated. The unwrapped gifts were delivered to Chinese Christian Church in San Jose for a Christmas Shop where foster parents were able to shop for their foster children. This has been an amazing display of love and "doing life together".

In 2026 Mission Outreach will continue to invite mission partner ministries to come to Bethel on Sunday morning to briefly preview their mission and services.

Throughout the year I will be collecting one-time use plastic cutlery (must be in its plastic wrapper) for donation to St. Thomas Episcopal Church Sunnyvale and new or gently used suitcases / rollie bags for KAFFA (Kinship, Adoptive & Foster Parent Association).

If you have any ideas for other mission outreach opportunities please contact me. And I look forward to helping to plan and organize our events.



BETHEL QUILTERS - Joann Weberg

Bethel's Quilting Mission supports Lutheran World Relief (LWR). For the past 30+ years the Quilters have been meeting Monday mornings at Bethel to spread quilts and kits with love around the world. In 2025 our Quilters were blessed to support LWR with 138 Quilts, 103 Personal Care Kits and 200 School Kits.

LWR sent out 803,181 Quilts and kits in 2025 to 15 countries worldwide. Within the US, LWR gifted 15 states with: 114,038 Quilts, 73,180 School kits, 108,511 Personal care kits, 22,934 Baby care kits and 7,800 Fabric kits.

We also donated lap quilts to the Heritage Home in San Jose and the VA hospital in Palo Alto. The Quilters also assemble and sew the Layette bags every year.

We want to thank the Bethel Youth who collected and assembled the Personal Care Kits and the two Cub Scout groups that helped package the School kits.

Our 2025 LWR Ingathering in October was also very successful. We hosted 25 Congregations from Northern California, including Bethel. The 479 total boxes collected contained 1394 Quilts, 751 Fabric kits, 943 Personal Care Kits, 170 Baby Care Kits and 777 School Kits. Thank you to the 20 Quilters and the Men of Monday, along with other Bethel members, who helped us host this 3-day event.

We are looking forward to 2026! Come join us on Monday morning.



CREEK CLEANUP - Hella Bluhm-Stieber

In 2025, I organized two creek cleanups. On May 4, 2025 we cleaned up Calabazas Creek between Bollinger and Blaney. 8 volunteers collected a total of 20 lbs trash, 0.6 lbs recycling, 6.6 lbs glass, 1.8 lbs metal, and 13.22 lbs of fire extinguishers. In addition, we hauled up a water-logged blanket, plastic pipes, a traffic cone base, and some wire mesh.

On October 19, 2025 as part of our Service Sunday, we cleaned up Calabazas Creek between Vallco Parkway and Tantau. This is the part of the creek that Bethel Lutheran Church adopted. We had 6 volunteers and collected 49.04 kg (108.11 lbs) trash, 0.8 kg (1.76 lbs) recyclables, and 4.085 kg (9 lbs) glass. In addition, we found a grill/microwave, a vintage Aeropostal T-shirt from 1987, a waterlogged blanket, and 2 big plastic pipes, that were too heavy to haul out.



ROTATING SAFE CAR PARK (RSCP) - Hella Bluhm-Stieber and Robyn Winegardner

We continued to do our part to make a small contribution to help with the homelessness problem. This was our 3rd year offering our parking lot for those needing a safe place to sleep. It was the first year organizing this program by ourselves without the help of another church. Like last year, we were asked to host our guests for 6 weeks. We were hosting up to 18 guests. This year, we had fewer guests coming to the morning and evening hospitality hours, but it varied a lot, between 2 and 10 guests. During the holidays fewer guests showed up, since some were housesitting and several had health issues and were staying at safer places. Some guests came only in the morning, others in the evening, and some we did not see because of work hours, etc. Some guests stayed during the hospitality times, others just came in briefly and picked up some food. The guests were very appreciative that we were providing them with a safe place to park and relax.

Donations: We received many donations of food, supplies, and money. In addition, some Bethel volunteers cooked batches of food to be frozen in smaller containers that guests could warm up if they wanted to eat something else. These frozen meals were very popular. A new donation came from the

Morgan Hill School District through Michael Jochner who provided us with ready-to-eat meals for several weeks. Other volunteers were cooking hard-boiled eggs. We had different groups providing dinners 1-2 times per week. Some of these dinners were offsite, though, which made it harder for some of our guests. The quilters provided beautiful quilts to keep our guests warm. 5 guests chose a quilt and were very happy.

Volunteers: This year, we hosted the safe car park by ourselves and therefore needed many more volunteers. We had 26 Bethel members who volunteered for hospitality hours, many who came once or twice, every week! In addition, we had 13 volunteers who cooked food, hard-boiled eggs, cut up veggies, etc.

Challenges: We had fewer guests who came regularly to hospitality hours. Therefore, it took a while to figure out what kind and how much food to buy or prepare for them. It was a very different group from last year, only 6 guests were the same.

Costs: We defrayed much of our costs by asking for donations. We received many in-kind food and supply donations, \$2065 in monetary donations, and a \$2000 gift from the church benevolence budget. The church budget paid for the port-a-potties and some other expenses.

Future: Robyn and I are planning to participate in the safe car parking program again, in 2026.

EDUCATION & DISCIPLESHIP

Discipleship focuses on spiritual growth which can take on many different forms. In the past year, Bethel has offered a variety of ways people could engage. Bible studies, Sunday forums and small groups were all mostly held in person.

WEDNESDAY NIGHT SPEAKER SERIES (WNSS) – Pastor Ben

The WNSS was revived in October 2023 and typically meets on the first Wednesday of the month October through May. Typically 30-40 people joined each session for great discussion and dessert in the Fireside Room each month. We hope you'll join us in 2026!

January- member Chris Christensen, our Amateur Traveler

February- Pastor Ben "Ask me Anything" discussion

March- Counselor Amy Sargent "Reflections of Resilience: 5 years after covid"

April- NAMI (local mental health awareness organization) shared how to best support our friends and neighbors. This session also helped us meet the requirement to become a Faith Net congregation.

May- Explore Backpacking Basics with Tony & Hella

October- Pastor Manuel Retamoza III shared immigration history and his Border Church

November- Andrew Templeman, Director of Mount Cross shared the camp's mission and events

December- Bob Dutcher shared his experiences bringing aid to the Ukraine

WOW (Women of Wednesday) – Kathryn Montano

The Bethel Women of Wednesday continue to meet in person in the Fireside Room from 10am- 12pm throughout 2025 (we take the summer months off). WOW continues to volunteer to sort food at Second Harvest Food Bank, and we pray together and support each other. Contact Kathryn Montano for more information.

MARTHA CIRCLE BIBLE STUDY – Vera Edstrom

In 2025 we had bible study from January through June. (No summer meetings) We use the *Gather* Magazine for our Bible study. We currently meet on the 3rd Mondays at 12pm in Fireside.

READERS ANONYMOUS – Kathy Arnold

Readers Anonymous meets nearly every 3rd Sunday of each month to discuss a great book chosen the previous month. The book selection vary- Love reading and laughing? Join us!

LIBRARY TEAM – Margaret Lund

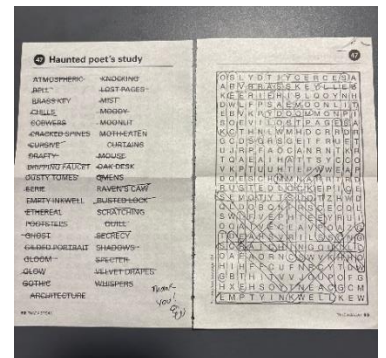
The Library Committee continues to meet most Wednesdays.

CARE MINISTRY – JOANNE STENSAAS, MINISTRY LEAD

CARING CONNECTIONS - Joanne Stensaas

Caring Connections is a prayer ministry that seeks to be action-oriented to do God's work. We meet monthly, in-person (or on Zoom, depending on the weather and health concerns) sharing information about needs in the congregation and other loved ones. This information is gleaned from prayer lists, Pastor Ben, and Caring Connections team members. Care is demonstrated in a variety of ways, including birthday cards, sympathy cards, get well notes, congratulations, phone calls, and home visits.

KEEPING IN TOUCH WITH OUR COLLEGE AGE YOUTH This was our second year of different groups within Bethel sending monthly greetings in September through May to our College Age Young Adults in the form of cards and small greetings. Thanks to the Quilters, Confirmands, Senior High Youth, Bad Girls Village and Kid Connection who sent out greetings this year. If you have a group that would like to send out a monthly greeting contact Robyn Winegardner and she will get you all set up. You will get the list of the Young Adults, address labels, pictures of who-is-who and stamps. It's a fun group activity that is appreciated by the kids.



We revived the Flower Delivery ministry in 2023, however it remains a challenge, as more volunteers are needed. Each week the altar flowers are divided into bouquets to deliver to our friends on our

prayer list, etc. Please sign up on the chart in the Narthex if you can help. Contact Joanne Stensaas or Cathy Stahl with questions. New members to the Caring Connection Team are also always welcome.

PRAYER BYTES - Robyn Winegardner

Prayer Bytes continue to be a two-sided blessing ... for those who request Prayers for themselves and their loved ones and for those who want to be caring Prayer Warriors.

81 Prayer Byte Subscribers continue to pray for the Bethel Community and loved ones who are in need, mourning loss, facing health struggles, and experiencing joy, healing and accomplishments. Thanks to Elise Holst, Dave Arnold and Liz Tribby who continue to work behind the scenes to keep Prayer Bytes current and sent out daily. If you are interested in receiving daily Prayer Bytes via email, just contact Mary Deutscher or Liz Tribby or Robyn Winegardner and you'll be set. If you have a Prayer request you would like shared with this group you may write out your request on the Sunday Bulletin insert or contact Mary at Bethel or Robyn Winegardner.

NEW! MENTAL HEALTH MINISTRY - Amanda Laughlin

Mental Health Task Force members (Amanda Laughlin, Patrice Sera, Doreen Baldwin, Karen Polyak, Minnie Sudarsanam, Tony Stieber, Melissa Janssen, Mary Deutscher)

On Sunday, October 19th, Bethel Lutheran became a Certified Stigma Free Mental Health Faith Community through NAMI Faithnet.

To make this possible, our Mental Health Task Force finished a list of requirements / tasks. These included a wellness resource table at our Ministry Fair, Having different Mental Health experts come and speak to Bethel, providing regular mental health resources in the narthex, making the suicide prevention hotline and NAMI helpline accessible to our members, participating and raising money for NAMI by participating in a NAMI walk, making May our Mental Health benevolence month and by having our special designated offering go to NAMI, and by having a mental health counseling space here onsite.



Those who participated in the NAMI walk in October were: Patrice Sera, Chris Freckmann, Bailey Freckmann, Melissa Janssen, Doreen Baldwin, Minnie Sudarsanam, Sam Sudarsanam, Susan Leavitt, Cindy Kurtz and Amanda Laughlin.

We have a therapist who will be using our counseling office space. Her name is Emily Lin and she is working on her hours to receive her own license. She is presently working under the

advisement and supervision of Amy Sargent a licensed marriage and family therapist. She can provide one on one counseling (that will have a cost connected to it – her rate iw 175.00 per session- she can allow for a sliding scale and can also provide a superbill which will allow for a possibility of reimbursement from your insurance).

She will be providing workshops in the new year that will be at no cost to those who attend. Please stay tuned for what those workshops will be and when they will be.

If you have any questions, please contact Amanda Laughlin and or anyone from the Mental Health Task Force.

FINANCE AND HUMAN RESOURCES – FARA BROCK, DIRECTOR

As usual 2025 was a busy year for Bethel’s Finance and HR departments. Notable projects with significant cost savings or income include:

- Installation of a new phone system
- Moved from QuickBooks desktop to the online version
- Applied and became exempt from property taxes on the Parsonage
- Signed a Lease with an elementary school for part of Zoar Hall, adding income needed for Bethel’s budget.

Throughout 2025, the church continued to address the needs of our community by donating to many local and international relief agencies. Bethel gave almost \$102,000 in Benevolence and Outreach funds, a 10% increase from 2024. Top recipients were Lutheran World Relief, Lutheran Disaster Response, Esperanza, Mt. Cross, West Valley Community Services, Habitat for Humanity, Second Harvest Food Bank, Help One Child and the Synod for churchwide mission support. Bethel also continued to fund scholarships for 2 students at MaaSAE Girls school in Tanzania through Operation Bootstrap.

Bethel has two schools that lease parts of its campus. Villa Montessori School occupies Bethel’s preschool building and 2 classrooms in Torvend Hall. On August 1st, 2025, Rossinca Heritage School moved into Zoar Hall classrooms 4, 6, 7 and 8 for their K – 5 elementary school. Bethel is also a popular summer camp location for elementary school aged children. TechKnowHow and Adventures in Writing held camps at Bethel in summer 2025.

I am blessed to work with volunteers who work diligently “behind the scenes” to keep Bethel’s infrastructure running smoothly:

- Bethel’s Finance Committee: Dave Tribby, Ann Marie Kenitzer, Kristin Lui, Ellen Aist, Dave Larsen and Pastor Ben;
- Dave Tribby, Bethel’s Fiscal Officer, for budgeting and financial reporting;
- Liz Tribby for office IT and membership records;

- Janice Martinon and Mark Evashenk for keeping member giving records current
- Ann Marie Kenitzer for lease agreements
- Mark Evashenk for Benevolence and Outreach giving planning
- Brad Martinson for computers, internet and telephone network;
- Brian Schuette for troubleshooting and optimizing Bethel's wireless network and
- Dave Larsen for updating Bethel's Capital Assets and Accumulated Depreciation schedules.

I look forward to another productive and inspiring year with Bethel's amazing staff and volunteers!

TECHNOLOGY & ADMINISTRATION

WEB MINISTRY – Dave Arnold

We maintain the web site for Bethel Lutheran Church at <https://www.bethelcupertino.org/>. This provides a comprehensive and current view of the activities at Bethel for visitors and members alike. It is Bethel's virtual front door to the community. The most popular pages are the sermons podcast feed, the home page and the church calendar. The most common downloads are the Annual Report and the Ministry Guide.

207 new events were submitted to the Bethel calendar in 2025.

635 updates were applied to the web site in 2025, including web, pubs and council.

Google Analytics reports 192 page views per week to our home page. 43% of views are from mobile devices.

Google Search reports 75 clicks per week to our site.

Each week, there were on average 139 user views of Bethel's YouTube channel, <https://www.youtube.com/user/BethelCupertino>, in 2025. The highest views were for the Celebration of Life services for Manfred Trogisch and Victor Chinn; also the Labor Day Retreat livestream. The most-watched worship services were 8:45 Aug 17, Nov 2, and 9pm Christmas Eve.

TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT - Liz Tribby, Brad Martinson, Brian Schuette

This year, the tech team helped move Bethel to an IP Telephone system that offers Bethel more features and better pricing. We worked closely with Comcast to iron out a service issue mid-year, and we've been busy updating Ethernet wiring in Torvend Hall and the youth room in preparation for construction.

A/V TEAM

We replaced our dated Bethel media computer that runs slides and videos during worship, successfully moving from Windows to a Mac Studio.

Thank you to all the Ministry Leaders and staff that contributed to our 2025 Annual Report!

