

Pews News

May 2025

The Newsletter for Bethany Lutheran Church
5303 Madison Avenue
Bethel Park, PA 15102
(412) 835-9221

To email messages to the office: bethanylutheranbp@gmail.com
(Please note that the Church office email address has changed)



SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE TIME

The Sunday Worship Service will begin at 10:30 A.M. WE will return to the summer schedule on June 1st beginning at 10:00

God's Blessings,
Pastor Liz

UPCOMING DATES TO REMEMBER AT BETHANY



Sunday, May 11th

*Happy Mother's Day to all Moms and the women who have
been a motherly influence in our lives!*

STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING

Next Meeting is Scheduled for May 13th at 7:00 P.M.

COUNCIL MEETING

Church Council will meet Wednesday, May 28th.



LEMONADE ON THE LAWN AND FIRST RESPONDER'S SERVICE OF RECONGNITION

Sunday, May 18th immediately following the Worship Service



Dear Friends and Members of Bethany,

As the world awaits the results of the Roman Catholic Conclave to elect a new Pope, I came across an interesting article as to how the ELCA will nominate and vote on a new Bishop in July. It is written by current (2007-present) Bishop Michael Rinehart, Texas Synod-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod , ELCA. He writes:

"This summer at the ELCA Churchwide Assembly we will be electing our next Presiding Bishop. Like many synods electing bishops, the ELCA Churchwide Organization is going through a pre-identification process. This is to lift up names and give ample time for prayerful discernment and conversation.

When the Churchwide Assembly begins, the actual nominees will be those who receive votes in the first ballot. Any ELCA pastor is eligible. Those pre-identified will likely receive nominations. There will also be others not pre-identified who will also be nominated at that point.

This is a critical time in the life of our church. It is time for some significant changes in how we organize as a church. [I have previously written about this](#), as have others. I hope we elect a reformer.

Recently, I received the pre-identification letter below.

Dear Bishop Rinehart,

One of the many important decisions to be made by the 2025 Churchwide Assembly will be the election to a six-year term of the next presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). A list of the responsibilities of the presiding bishop can be found [here](#).

The Church Council adopted a continuing resolution that allowed each Churchwide Assembly voting member to identify up to three rostered ministers of Word and Sacrament whom they believe should be considered for this office.

You have been pre-identified as a potential nominee for presiding bishop. If you discern that you would like to be publicly identified as a potential nominee, you are invited to complete a

biographical information form. Biographical forms returned by **Thursday, May 1**, will be distributed electronically to all voting members the week of June 16, following synod assembly season. The biographical information will remain available online until the Churchwide Assembly convenes on Monday, July 28, but will be taken down as soon as the assembly begins. **Please note that the pre-identification process is not a nomination.** The first ballot for presiding bishop will be an ecclesiastical ballot on which the name of any eligible individual may be submitted for nomination by a voting member of the assembly. Only those whose names are entered by voting members on the first ballot will be nominated, regardless of whether they were pre-identified.

As part of your discernment process, we share the following information:

- a. Members of the administrative team, including full-time salaried officers and executive directors of churchwide units, are expected to reside in the Chicago area.
- b. The minimum salary for the presiding bishop is \$206,710.

To submit biographical information, complete the form at this link by Thursday, May 1.

Please limit your response to each prompt to 200 words. If you do not intend to complete a biographical information form, please let me know at this email address so that I can update my records.

All those who complete biographical forms will be asked to complete a Disclosure Form and a Background Check Release Form as well, in accord with ELCA Continuing Resolution 19.01.B09. Information on completing these forms will be made available at the appropriate time.

Thank you for your prayerful discernment.

All the best,

Dan Eppley

Manager for Official Documentation

Over the last 18 years I have always removed my name from consideration, for various reasons. Well I am grateful for those pre-nominated me, I have not sensed an internal call to the work of presiding bishop.

To be honest, I have a decidedly different perspective on the organizational structure of the denomination. We are too top-heavy organizationally, with multiple layers of redundant

management, and a lack of clarity on the roles of the various expressions of the church. We are desperately in need of a more streamlined organization, but there has always been significant opposition to that model. Understandably so. It would require quite disruptive overhaul, with job changes, job losses, and a likely move in the Churchwide Offices altogether. I hope this happens, but I don't think I'm the one to ~~do~~ do it.

One of the people who has urged me to leave my name in suggested that I fill out the biographical information form they sent. "You don't have to send it in," he said. "Just fill it out as a part of your discernment." I did and felt a heaviness while doing it, for many of the same reasons that I am stepping down as synod bishop. Although I have loved the work the last 18 years and continue to do so, I feel another six years would not be good for me. And it would not be good for synod. The synod is ready for fresh new leadership and I am ready for a different challenge. One bishop colleague told me she thought I was tailor made for the work, but I just don't see it.

So, I am not filling out the biographical information form. I know that often God calls people to do things they don't want to do. Perhaps I will be swallowed by a whale and thrown up on the beach, but short of that or a personal theophany, I am pursuing a couple of the many other ways to serve the church. ~~do~~

In the meantime, I will pray, and invite you to pray for the election, and for the 2025 Churchwide Assembly at the end of July".

how very interesting indeed....

Pastor Liz

By Bishop Michael Rinehart

This summer, the ELCA Churchwide Assembly will elect the next Presiding Bishop of the ELCA. The relatively young Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the result of the merger in 1988, has had four presiding Bishops: Herbert W. Chilstrom (1987-1995), H. George Anderson (1995-2001), Mark Hanson (2001-2013), and Elizabeth Eaton (2013-2025).

2025 is a time for prayerful discernment. The church is at a crossroads. Worship attendance in the US has been falling since the 1960s. The pandemic accelerated this. There are more people who claim no religious affiliation on the census than ever before. The influence of the church has waned. Of course, congregations often point to one very large church in their community and say, "If they can do it, why can't we?" but it quickly becomes clear their theology is not ours. Some do not accept women in ministry. Some are enamored with Christian nationalism. Some preach a prosperity gospel that claims wealth as a sign of God's approval and blessing, and poverty as a sign of faithlessness. Others define Christianity as a pure religion. Although Americans tend to think bigger is better, we recognize that we are not this expression of the church of Jesus Christ, nor do we aspire to be.

We have a rich theological heritage, but a stodgy denominational operating system that is the byproduct of merger negotiations, with a dash of 1980s corporate philosophy. Our structures need a tune-up, an update to more streamlined ways of doing things. This is not a proclamation *ex cathedra*, but merely my viewpoint. Consider this an opinion piece to spark discussion. I invite every one of our bishops to write their own. Why not every pastor, deacon, and all the baptized?

Neither the scriptures nor the reformers offer organizational blueprints for the church. There is no divinely ordained structure for the church. We are free to organize any way we need in order to accomplish the mission to which we are called: proclaiming the gospel, administering the sacraments, and equipping the saints for the work of ministry. Effective organizational structures in our modern world are flatter, less hierarchical, more networky (my made-up word).

Our current system of governance consists of 65 synods, with 65 bishops, and one presiding bishop. The churchwide organization (the ELCA's home office, if you will) has offices in Chicago with 300+ employees. Many work from an 11-story building near O'Hare airport, although many now work from home since the pandemic. It is my understanding that several floors are now rented out to other organizations.

Congregations send mission support (or mission share) to synods and send 50% of that to the churchwide organization, although that percentage has been shifting recently. These financial resources help fund missionaries, seminaries, global companions, staffing, and much more. In short, this is how we are organized. Is this the most effective structure for mission in the 21st century? Do we still need 65 synods? Does our economic model still make sense? Is this the best way to organize for the proclamation of the gospel? How might we organize the church most effectively for this next season of ministry, and what kind of leadership do we need to get there? All bishops are not created equal. No two bishops are alike. They are as varied in gifts and abilities as pastors, or any human being for that matter. Some are fantastic scholars. Some are theologians. Some know the Scriptures like the back of their hand. Others are great administrators and organizers. Some are born to be evangelists. Still others are excellent at pastoral care or preaching. No one has all the gifts. What gifts do we need going forward? What follows are just my ruminations:

- **Faith:** It's probably a truism to say it, but the presiding bishop needs to be a person of deep faith and prayer. I hope this is obvious. The bishop must be committed to the faith and to the church, because the work is incredibly hard, and deep spiritual resources will be essential when the going gets rough.
- **Hope:** Our next presiding bishop needs to have vision, hope, and strong convictions, but also an awareness of and openness to the wide expanse of perspectives in this church. The

willingness to listen, collaborate, change course, and bring the many strengths of this church together will be crucial.

- **Love:** Our bishop will need to have the ability to articulate a compelling argument for the gospel of the unconditional love of God in Christ that stirs the hearts of the people and unites the church. There is a common heartfelt thread that runs through our churches that begs for clear proclamation.

- **Reform:** This next presiding bishop will need to be a reformer with a capacity to make change happen. This is not reform of our theological center of justification by grace through faith, but rather our ecclesiastical structures. Perpetuating existing structures is a certain pathway to decline. How will the churchwide organization be staffed? How big will that staff be? Does a smaller churchwide staff, with specific strategic focus make sense? Are we prepared to make difficult strategic choices about what we need the churchwide organization and synods to do (and not do)? What will we let go of in this new environment and what is essential?

- **Vision:** There is a nebulous quality of leadership that allows one to discern the moment and cast a vision for the future. This would be a tremendous asset. Where might we go together? Wither calleth the Holy Spirit? What infrastructure will we need to support that movement? The next presiding bishop will need to deal with the building. Do we need an 11-story building? Is it a helpful tool for mission, or is it in the way? Are we going to commit to a new deployed reality? What makes the most sense from a mission standpoint? What makes the most sense from an economic standpoint?

- **Encouragement:** Someone once said all politics is local. Faith is local, too. The church rests or falls on local ministries. Without congregations, there would be no synods or churchwide organization. Can the ship be turned towards revitalizing ministry in local contexts, to reach the younger, diverse, spiritually hungry, but institutionally suspicious generations? There is of course much more to the work of the Presiding Bishop than these few itemized priorities, but these are gifts that I would love to see in our next presiding bishop. These thoughts are in no way designed to critique any of our former Presiding Bishops, each of whom have faithfully applied their unique gifts and strengths to the work of the gospel and the church in the world. These things are written that we might discern and deliberate the leadership we must now choose for the future.

This we know: The Holy Spirit has provided leadership for the church for the last 2,000 years and will continue to do so for the next 2,000. Let us be in deep prayer together about these things.

Pastor Liz



Bethany Lutheran Church

May 2025



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1  7:00pm: Choir Practice	2	3
4 9:00am: Adult Sunday School  10:30am: Worship	5	6	7	8 <i>SHIM Shop-Thru Food Pantry</i>  7:00pm: Choir Practice	9 <i>SHIM Shop-Thru Food Pantry</i>	10
11 <i>Mother's Day</i>  10:30am: Worship	12	13 7:00pm: Stewardship Meeting 	14	15  7:00pm: Choir Practice	16	17
18  10:30am: Worship Honoring First Responders  <i>Lemonade On The Lawn</i>	19	20	21	22 <i>SHIM Shop-Thru Food Pantry</i>  7:00pm: Choir Practice	23 <i>SHIM Shop-Thru Food Pantry</i>	24
25  10:30am: Worship	26 <i>Memorial Day</i>  OFFICE CLOSED	27	28 7:00pm: Council Meeting	29	30	



OFFICE CLOSURE FOR MEMORIAL DAY

The Church office will be closed Monday, May 26th in observance of Memorial Day

THOSE WHO SERVE THIS MONTH

WORSHIP SERVICES SUNDAY SCHEDULE

Date	Assisting Minister	Lector	Acolyte
5/4/2025	Andrew Parker	James Palmer	Drew Benigni
5/11/2025	Kris Volpatti	Karen Housam	Katie Hartos
5/18/2025	Jane Scheeser	Ruth Lipinski	Summer Parker
5/25/2025	Cathy Irwin	Beverly Mueller	Colt Wigand

USHER SCHEDULE FOR MAY

Auggie Burns will serve as Usher for the month of May

OFFERING COUNTERS' SCHEDULE FOR MAY

The Offering Counters for the month of May are Sydney Litzenburger and Sandy Lutz



WEEKLY PRAYER REQUEST

If you have a specific prayer request, there is a Prayer Petition form in the Narthex. Please note your petition and it will be mentioned by Pastor each week.



The Evangelism Committee is seeking one or two persons who would be willing to share the duties of filming our worship services for broadcast on the YouTube Channel.

We would like to begin with worship services on holidays or special events.

If you have an interest, please speak with Ruth Lipinski or Pastor Mayforth for details.



Some things are never new... Like scam artists, con artists, or confidence tricksters. While the Bible doesn't explicitly use the term "scam artist," it does depict characters who engage in deceptive or fraudulent activities, such as Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus for money, and Ananias and Sapphira, who lied about their gifts to the church, which resulted in their death. Yes, every day we are subject to false promises and the exploitation of vulnerable individuals, including those sitting in the pews at Church. Investment Scams, Charity Scams, and Online Scams are just the tip of the iceberg. Join us on **Sunday, May 4th at 9:00 a.m.** for our monthly Adult Sunday led by Mr. Peter Dibble, who is a subject matter expert in the field (in a good way as a Guardian).

Refreshments will be provided and we will meet in the upper Classroom.

Thank You!
Pastor Elizabeth Mayforth



LIBRARY NEWS

We are looking for gently read and used books as we begin to reestablish and restock the Church Library. Fiction, Non-Fiction, Biographies, and Children's books, too, are all welcome. If you have books to donate, please place them in the adult meeting room, next to the Church office.

Thank You



CHOIR PRACTICE

Choir Practice is every Thursday at 7:00 P.M. Come join us!!!

PLEASE JOIN US FOR THE
CLASS OF 2025



SETON LASALLE
CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

BACCALAUREATE & COMMENCEMENT

5:00 pm
May 23, 2025
St. Thomas More Church
Resurrection Parish
126 Fort Couch Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15241



PLEASE JOIN US FOR A


Graduation
PARTY

— IN HONOR OF —

Diamond Dibble

SETON LASALLE
- CLASS OF 2025 -

Saturday | June 14th | 2:00 pm

Dibble's
1443 Stoltz Road
Bethel Park, PA 15102
Kindly RSVP by June 10th
to Diamond 412-510-9808

