

# BETHEL NEWSLETTER

July 2009

Reaching Out – Praying, Caring, Sharing

Holdrege, Nebraska

## Be a Light

[Jesus said] *“You are the light of the world. A city build on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lamp stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.”* Matthew 5:14-16

At the June Parish Planning Council meeting I challenged those present to think about ways they were a light of God’s love to those around them. One way to do this was to think about how others were a light to them, particularly when there was darkness of some sort in their lives. Who touched them in a way that uplifted and encouraged them? I asked them to be a light in the days following the meeting. I would like to share with you a response I received. This is from Christy Drews and shared with her permission.

*“I sent a card to a co-worker, telling her that I care, that I’m sorry that her burdens must feel so heavy right now, and that I’m praying for her. I hope that she will feel cared for.”*

*“I sent an email to a friend and former co-worker, telling her that I care for her and that I’m sorry that things are so difficult for her right now. I hope she will feel less marginalized.”*

Christy also indicated she is praying for me during a stressful time of caring for members of the congregation.

Christy also shared how others were a bright light to her surrounding her participation in the two-mile run during Swedish Days. She had not participated in a run like this before. In the last nine years *“God was wondrously restored my health to the point of even thinking about doing this.”* The lights in her life surrounding this new adventure included a smile and wishing her luck from her pastor before the race; Judy Wissmann’s words of encouragement at the turn-around point; and hearing people *“cheer for ME”* at different points of the race.

The fact is Christy and all the other participants and volunteers were a light to all who will receive the proceeds of this race through the

Christian Charity Fund. I wish you all could have seen the spirit of light that was present around that event during Swedish Days. There is a wonderful story about what happened at the end of the race. Ask me about it.

I would like for this to be more than Christy’s account. I would like for each of you to think about how you are a light of Christ to someone else. How are you meaningfully touching others during the dark time in their lives? How have others done that for you? What a better life and world we would have if we spent more time intentionally bringing light instead of darkness into one another’s lives. That is the command of our Lord. Let him guide you in being light bearers in the world.

Live in Light,  
Pastor David Sites

PS – What a light the CAMP NOAH team must have been to the children who went through the darkness of a flood last year in Iowa.

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What happened to winter, spring and now we are gearing up to celebrate our Nation’s Birthday, the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. I am trying to make a better effort of keeping up with each day and month, but it seems the more hurried I go, the slower I become.

Freedom! It seems we are taking it more for granted all the time in each of our lives. In reading from Colossians 1: 9-14, we probably should be reading God’s word more closely. We know that Paul was an apostle “chosen by the will of God.” The word “apostle” means “one sent out by God to preach the gospel.” “Chosen by the will of God” means that he was appointed; this was not just a matter of his own personal aspirations. Verse 9: So we have not stopped praying to you since we first heard about you. We ask God to give you complete knowledge of his will and to give you spiritual wisdom and understanding. Verse 10: Then the way you live will always honor and please the Lord, and your lives will produce every kind of good fruit.

All the while, you will grow as you learn to know God better and better. Verse 11: We also pray that you will be strengthened with all his glorious power so you will have all the endurance and patience you need. May you be filled with joy, Verse 12: Always thanking the Father. He has enabled you to share in the inheritance that belongs to his people who live in the light. Verse 13: For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear son, Verse 14: who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins.

I think the men that put together and signed the Declaration of Independence were probably or could be called “Apostles.” Did you know that the Declaration of Independence is America’s great religious document? The Declaration of Independence is the official and unequivocal affirmation by the American people, their belief and faith in God. It affirms God’s existence as a “self-evident” truth that requires no further discussion or debate. The nation that created the great Declaration is God’s country. The rights it defines are God-Given. The actions of its signers were God-inspired. The Declaration contains five references to God – God as supreme lawmaker; God as Creator of all men; God as the source of all rights; God as the world’s supreme judge; and God as our Protector on whom we can rely.

The Declaration of Independence declares that each of us is created. If we were created, we must have a creator. The Declaration of Independence declares that each of us is created equal. This means equally endowed with unalienable rights. It does not mean that all are born with equal capabilities. The Declaration of Independence proclaims that life and liberty are the unalienable gifts of God—not rights—which no person or government can rightfully take away.

God’s prayer for the Colossians was that their lives would produce every kind of good fruit, and to give each person direction for living. In the Declaration of Independence God wants us to learn more about him, and also to put belief into practice by helping others.

God Bless,  
Darrel Wissmann, PMA

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The end of my year as part of the Bethel community is almost over. It has passed much too quickly. Spending this year with you, learning *about* you, and learning *from* you has truly been a blessing for me. Last year, as I prepared to move to Holdrege, I must admit I was a bit apprehensive; I had envisioned spending my internship year in a small congregation similar to my North Dakota church home—a congregation of about 150 members with Sunday morning attendance averaging 60-70. When I heard I was coming to a church with over 500 confirmed members, and learned of the variety of ministries with which Bethel was involved, I found myself asking, “God, are you sure that you know what you’re doing? You got the rural part right, but this is a large congregation, and there are a lot of things going on here that I don’t know much about—God are you sure!?”

As I look back, I should have known better than to question God. I perhaps would have gotten more sleep last summer, and the butterflies in my stomach could have found a more appropriate habitat if I had worried a little less and trusted God a little more. God often calls us to areas beyond our comfort zone in order to do the work God would have us do. This is not a new thing. Remember Moses? When God spoke to him out of the burning bush, Moses doubted the Israelites would listen to him, and he worried because he was slow of speech; but God promised to be with Moses and sent Aaron to accompany him. Moses followed God’s call and was empowered to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. The same with Jeremiah; when the Lord called him, Jeremiah responded, “Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy,” (Jer 1:6). God responded saying, “...you shall speak whatever I command you. Do not be afraid...for I am with you to deliver you. For each of us there are tasks to which we are called for which we do not feel prepared—tasks which are definitely outside our comfort zone and appear to be beyond our capabilities. However, as children of God we can step out boldly, despite the apprehension and/or the butterflies in our stomachs, knowing “The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge,” (Ps 46:7), and “[We] can do all things through him who strengthens [us],” (Phil 4:13).

Thank you for all that you have given me.  
May God continue to richly bless this congregation  
so that you may continue to step forth boldly,  
empowered by God for leadership and service.

Intern Margaret Jacobus

## July Ushers

### 10:00 a.m.

Todd Veal  
Franklin Carlson  
Robert Drews  
Darrin Swanson  
Dean Sievers  
Erick Titus  
Gregg Ericksen

### 6:30 p.m. Monday Night Ushers

July 6      Randy Aldrich  
July 13     Phil Hinrichs  
July 20     Kent Person  
July 27     Richard Ohrt



## GOLD STAR AWARD

As of the end of June we now have a new sound and video system at Bethel. This came about as the result of a number of members working directly to assess the needs and plan for the response to those needs. This includes members of the task force, Worship and Music and Property Committees. Efforts were made to inform the congregation regarding the proposal that came about. A decision was made to move forward and the Finance Committee was involved with raising funds. As a result there has been a good response by members to cover the cost of the new system. We are truly blessed to have so many working together to provide the wonderful system that is in place. To each and everyone involved we say **“Thank You”** for the part you have played in making this happen.

AS A PLACE OF GRACE WE **PRAY** for each other as members and friends of this congregation:

### July 5, 2009

Ronald & Carole Ivey  
Larry & Connie Jacobson  
Alyssa & Danielle Jacobson

### July 12, 2009

Seth & Leigh Ivey  
Kenneth Peterson  
Drew & Irina Peterson

### July 19, 2009

Kent & Sylvia Person  
Ingrid Person  
Clark Person

### July 26, 2009

Daniel & Hulda Peterson  
Alisha Jensen  
Quinten Peterson

## Building Your Bethel Evangelical Lutheran Church Foundation

Did you know that an estimated 70% of all people who die do not have a Will or Living Trust? Without proper estate planning, no charity can receive gifts from your estate. Be sure your estate planning is up to date. Do you know who your heirs will be? Is the **Bethel Evangelical Lutheran Church Foundation** a beneficiary of your estate?

### Five steps to a friendlier church

1. Speak to the other person first. Don't wait for him or her to take the initiative.
2. If there is someone you don't know, introduce yourself to him or her.
3. Be pleasant in your words and expressions. A great church cannot be built with frowns.
4. Invite newcomers to a worship service or to a church event and introduce them to other members.
5. Encourage people to participate in those church activities that interest them.



## Worship & Music

The new Bose sound/audio system at Bethel Lutheran Church was installed the week of June 15<sup>th</sup>, with a training session the afternoon of Friday, June 19<sup>th</sup>. The project began with meetings in January 2009, and involved committees, task forces, studies, and a decision to engage Pallas Music Inc. of Kearney to install the system. The recommendation was presented to the congregation. The congregation approved the project, agreeing to the approximate cost of \$50,000.

The new sound/video board is immediately obvious, in the southwest corner of the sanctuary. The location allows personnel to have a direct view of what is going on throughout the service. The previous sound room was behind the altar and allowed no view other than through cameras.

Karen Daffer said the new system will be much easier to operate and will make it possible for everyone in the pews to hear everything clearly. She said that anyone interested in learning how to operate the new system is welcome to sign up and help share the workload. There will be a dedication of the new sound/video system.

To date, memorials, gifts, and donations have raised a good share of the monies needed. Anyone interested in making a donation can direct it to Bethel Lutheran Church "SOUND SYSTEM".

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Worship & Music Committee

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## Community Care Project for July

### Sewing Kits

- Three yards of 44" or 45" cotton or a cotton blend fabric; four yards if 36"
- One package of needles for hand sewing
- One spool of matching thread
- One card of buttons

Thank you for your contributions.

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**FAIR TRADE COFFEE**, a Lutheran World Relief Project, is available for purchase in the Bethel lounge. Through the LWR Coffee Project you can enjoy delicious coffee while helping small-scale farmers in Latin America, Africa, Asia, and the U.S. as they build a better future for themselves and their families. Through the project, farmers earn a fair price for their products, have access to affordable credit, and gain a long-term trading partner they can trust, a Fair Trade organization called Equal Exchange. With our support, these communities invest in education, health care, and agricultural improvements. In addition, for each pound of coffee, tea, or cocoa purchased by Lutheran churches through the project, Equal Exchange makes a contribution to the LSR "Small Farmer Fund" for projects supporting small farmers and their families. 100% of Equal Exchange's coffee, tea and chocolate products are fairly traded.

At this time, Bethel offers five types of coffee. Prices are for a 12 oz. bag. **TANZANIAN JUBILEE** is a regular drip grind coffee from Tanzania at the cost of \$ 5.75. Three flavored coffees are offered: **HAZELNUT CRÈME**, **FRENCH VANILLA**, and **TOFFEE CARAMEL** priced at \$ 6.50 and an **ORGANIC DECAF** for \$ 6.75.

**Thank you for supporting this  
Lutheran World Relief Project**

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## Grace is a gift

When we work an eight-hour day and receive eight hour's pay for our efforts, that is a **WAGE**.

When we compete with an opponent and receive a trophy for our superior performance, that is a **PRIZE**.

When we receive something in recognition for our service or achievement, that is an **AWARD**.

But when we can earn no wage, can win no prize and deserve no award — yet we receive such a gift — that is unmerited favor. That is undeserved kindness. That is **GRACE**.

## “Thank you!”

For your stewardship at Bethel

**Stewardship?** What is that? When asked, most people tend to give an answer that has something only to do with money. The Stewardship Committee discussed ways of identifying the great amount of stewardship at Bethel that focuses on the giving of our “Time and Talents”. We want to take the time to recognize all the wonderful stewards at Bethel, and hopefully introduce and invite others to offer stewardship in one of these areas.

This month we would like to spotlight all the areas of stewardship that the Bethel Women are responsible for at Bethel. Thank you to all who give in these areas:

### **BETHEL WOMEN SUPPORT STEWARDSHIP**

Circle Chairpersons  
College Student Greeting Cards  
Kitchen Laundry  
Kitchen Committee  
Church Lounge  
Serving Groups  
Special Serving  
Nursing Homes Visitations  
Retirees’ Luncheon  
Bethel Workunit  
Sunday AM Coffee  
Prayer Chain  
Volunteer Groups Coordinators  
Altar Flower Delivery



Recycling is the process of taking a product at the end of its useful life and using all or part of it to make another product. The internationally recognized symbol for recycling includes three arrows moving in a

triangle. Each arrow represents a different part of the recycling process, from collection to remanufacture to resale. Recycling reduces our waste sent to landfills, and making new products

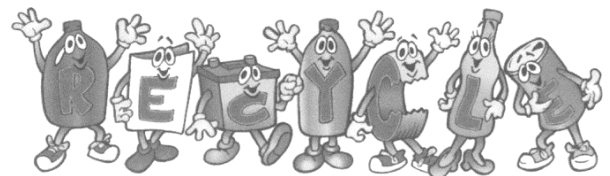
out of recycled ones reduces the amount of energy needed in production. The U.S. EPA estimates that 75 percent of our waste is recyclable.

Did you know that. . . ?

- If you recycle just two gallons of used oil, it can generate enough electricity to run an average household for almost 24 hours.
- At least 39.9% of the waste stream in the U.S. is paper.
- Five recycled soda bottles make enough fiberfill for one ski jacket.
- Every year, we make enough plastic film to shrink wrap Texas.
- If you stacked the aluminum cans that people sent to the landfills, in just five weeks they would reach the moon!!

“Stuff” that can go into the recycle trailer or to the center:

- Plastic cups and containers – soda bottles, detergent bottles, milk jugs, yogurt/plastic containers, margarine tubs, disposable plastic cups, etc.
- Glass – food and beverage containers like mayonnaise and jelly jars.
- Paper – white and colored, computer, printer and writing paper.
- Cardboard and paperboard – packing boxes and your favorite cereal boxes.
- Aluminum and metal cans – food and soda cans.
- Newspaper – including inserts.
- Magazines – soft cover magazine and catalogs; no hard back books.
- Telephone books.



A summary of the 2009 Nebraska Synod Assembly events is posted on the bulletin board across from the office.

## My Faith Story - The voice of God

I have spent considerable time in Bible Study this past year. A couple of our Sunday night studies have included Honors Reward and The Bait of Satan. In each of these studies, the minister conducting the study spoke of his continual listening and hearing God's voice. I remember thinking how much I wished I would recognize when God was directly speaking to me. The minister of our studies, always seemed like he knew exactly what God was telling him, and I admit, I believed him. You could feel the sincerity in his faith stories. I really longed for that feeling. I do believe that God speaks to me, through events and people, but never have I been able to say, "God spoke right to me, and I heard his voice and I had no doubt it was him". Well, that changed for me one day.

As you know, I work at PMHC. I feel blessed to be surrounded by continual opportunity to serve the Lord, if I listen and pay attention. In fact, I can hardly think of a day, when I couldn't say that I met the one God intended for me to meet that day. But this day was different. There was a young adolescent that was scheduled for a test that day. I remember seeing the name on our schedule and remember the connection I had made with him a couple weeks earlier. He had come in for a test that at his age was very uncomfortable and difficult for him. On this day, he was returning for a follow up of the exact exam as before. I wasn't scheduled in that room, and in fact wasn't scheduled to be at work, when he came for his appointment. I had worked the weekend (unplanned), and had made arrangements to leave early. So, because I knew his special circumstance, I spoke to the one who was scheduled to perform his test, and asked that they pay special attention to his modesty and comfort. I left it at that, and prepared to leave for the day.

On my way out, I saw him and his Mom in the lobby, and decided to say hello. I asked how he was doing and was happy to hear that things were going well. I asked if they had any questions about the test scheduled for that day. The young man

looked at me and said, "Are you leaving?" I explained that I was, but that I had spoken to his technologist about his test, and the technologist was a wonderful lady. He still looked a little distressed, so I did go ahead and asked, "Do you want me to stay?" His mother promptly said, "Oh, no, you go home, you've worked all day." I offered again, and the young man told me "No, its okay". I knew I was leaving him in excellent care so, I decided to go. I said goodbye and proceeded to walk down the hall and leave. I made it quite a ways, and then suddenly, I stopped, and I couldn't go any further. I even tried to make myself move, and nothing happened. I felt this amazing feeling sweep over me, and I actually heard "Go back". It wasn't a loud demanding voice, just a whisper, I didn't have to ask myself where it came from, I just knew. God was talking to me. Actually talking to me! I couldn't move forward, but I could turn around, and walk back the way I came. So that is what I did. I walked back to the young man, and as I approached, I saw this look of relief spread across his young face. I said "Let's go, I have time if you do". His Mom tried to object, but I told her that I didn't have a choice. She looked puzzled, but didn't ask any questions.

Well, I did that exam. The best part was that when I took him back, I hadn't realized that he was going to be alone, without his mom. See, Mom had scheduled herself for an exam, so her son would not have her company. Had I not done the test, he would not only have had to go through the embarrassing procedure with a new technologist, he would have been without the comfort of his Mom. I instantly knew why God insisted that I stay.

I have not seen the young man since that day, but I will never forget his face, and the way he looked so grateful for my presence. There really is no greater reward for my work than that.

I haven't heard another "whisper" from God, so clear lately, but he is still continually placing people and situations in front of me. I listen hard, and I ask for his voice to reach me, but I am content, knowing that he is always there, whether in spoken work or

not. He will speak to me in words again. In this I have faith.

Paula Keffeler

Senior Flierl Seminary  
PMB Logaweng  
Finschhafen, Morobe Province  
Papua New Guinea

June 16, 2009

Hello Friends,

The first semester is almost finished; this is the last week. Today I gave my last quiz and figured the last grades! The rest of this week I'm not planning to teach much. Instead, I've planned a number of activities that are more fun---I hope.

In the public schools in this country, religious education is required. Our second year students provide about half of it in one of the local schools, as part of their training. Three of us teachers each supervise 4 or 5 of our students each as they teach. It was my choice to be a supervisor again this year, and I'm glad; this is probably the best group of students I've ever supervised. Religious education is held on Thursday afternoon in the public school down the mountain. So, every Thursday afternoon the year 2 students and we three supervisors get in the big school truck and go down the mountain to the public school where our students teach & we observe. Then, my students usually meet with me yet that afternoon or evening to discuss the lessons they taught and begin planning the next lesson. Please meet the four students I supervise. Alfred is a single person who is from Siassi; that is a smaller island we can sometimes see from here. At the beginning of the year, I thought it looked like teaching was one of his weak points. However, I visited his class a few minutes last week and was really pleased! He was using some of his own ideas and having a good class! Alfred is also one of my student library assistants; I appreciate his good work in the library too. He is just a very reliable person, often doing more than is required or expected. Something else that I think is interesting--For English class, I ask the students to each write in a dialogue journal, which I collect each week. Very often, Alfred will write questions which he

wants me to answer, rather than a story like most of the students. Alfred is not a shy person. Perhaps he can't think of something else to write, or he simply prefers to ask me these questions in writing.

Anton is from the Madang district. Madang is one of the major cities on another part of the coast. He and his wife have a little boy who's about 2 ½ years old. Anton's enthusiasm is shown so clearly in his teaching. He is a very sensitive, respectful and polite person. One time he asked me what would happen when my cat dies; he had noticed that I love my cat very much. So we had a good conversation after that. Another week, when he had not been able to finish the school work expected of him, he apologized several times, saying it would not happen again. That's the neat kind of person Anton is; he will make one beautiful pastor.

Maipa is also from the Madang district. He and his wife have 4 children. His family is back home in Madang where his wife teaches school. Maipa is one of our second-career students; he worked in construction 13 years before coming to seminary! Maipa is a little different kind of person. When I taught him last year, I thought, "Maipa doesn't like change." When I asked him to do something different, he would do it, but it would take him a little while. My students are teaching grades 7 and 8 in religious education. When he learned that, Maipa said, "Have to keep them busy." --- and he did! He kept his class going from one activity to another, sometimes not even giving the students time to finish one activity before starting another! However, Maipa's teaching has improved also. Last week I observed his class and was really happy at what I saw! In addition to having a more relaxed class, it looked like Maipa was having fun! He told me later that before he hadn't enjoyed teaching, but last week he enjoyed it!

Last but not least, is Robert. Robert is from Goroka, up in the highlands, in other words, inland and up in the mountains. Robert and his wife have 2 children--a little boy who is about 1½ and a little girl, about 4 years old, who is with her grandparents. Robert too is a little different than most of our students. He is a very soft-spoken and a very serious person. When Robert has a responsibility, he can be depended upon to do his part, and more. He is another of my library assistants and has proven to

be a very good, reliable person in there. Robert is more of a puzzle to me than the others. His health is very fragile; he is often not well. I know that is the reason for his failure to do what he says sometimes. Robert's teaching is more "preaching" than I like, but he also has some good ways of working with the students.

As you can probably tell, these are four of my favorite students! In general, they are very dependable, and really fine young men. When we do have problems, I often find that it is because of the differences in our cultures. For example, we usually meet after they teach on Thursday afternoon. A couple times they did not come, and had not said anything to me. The second time this happened I talked to them about it. Why had they not come? They were hungry; they hadn't eaten anything since that morning, & did not think they were able to come back up the hill and meet with me. They were not being inconsiderate; they just had not thought to tell me. It would have been just commonplace for us, but they did not think about it--a difference in cultures. So, we agreed that from then on they would tell me if they were not coming on Thursday afternoon & we would then decide on a different time to meet. It's interesting, & sometimes very frustrating. But in spite of our differences, I still think Alfred, Anton, Maipa and Robert are four of the finest students in their class! I hope you have enjoyed meeting them.

I thank you for your support. I hope you feel that you are a part of this ministry, because you are. May God bless each one of you.

Your Friend in Jesus,  
Sister Ruth Ellen

"If my face looks happy ..."

Farmer Solange Séneque proudly shows off the crops he's been able to grow with the help of Lutheran World Relief and partners.

"If my face looks happy, it's because of this program," says Solange Séneque, a farmer in rural Haiti. "I'm working my land better and getting better results with my crops. My children can go to school and I have good food to eat at home."

It wasn't long ago that Séneque and his neighbors had little to smile about. In the span of just a few

weeks in August and September of 2008, this tiny island nation, the poorest in the Western hemisphere, was ravaged by four major hurricanes in a row. The storms destroyed homes, crops, livestock and infrastructure. The devastation is still apparent: even now, close to a year later, vehicles flooded and ruined by the storms still line the roadside in Gonaives, one of the worst-hit areas. With the support of LWR and local partner World Neighbors, though, farmers like Séneque are on their way to recovery. LWR and World Neighbors are working with farmers in hurricane-affected areas to restore their farms and to make them less vulnerable to future disasters.

"My house was almost destroyed by the hurricanes," says Manius Simon, another farmer from Séneque's village. "I lost my chickens and pigs, and my bananas were crushed. I'm now replacing my bananas and cassava and using the techniques I learned to recover my farm."

The hurricane recovery project is a continuation of an ongoing partnership between LWR and World Neighbors to improve the lives of rural Haitians, focusing on improved farming techniques, access to clean water, and disaster risk reduction. For farmers who had already been working with LWR and World Neighbors, the violent hurricane season of 2008 was not as devastating as it might have been.

"We used to work very hard but wouldn't harvest much," said farmer Pierrelaine Saintiva. "But they did a tremendous job in teaching us techniques to improve the soil. Now we know how to grow crops better, and we're getting better results. Last year the hurricanes hit us hard, but the situation would have been even worse if we hadn't already done work in soil conservation. By using new cropping and soil conservation techniques, we are producing better. I feel better and even look better than before!"

Proudly displaying their cassava, bananas, mangoes and other fruits of their labors, these farmers have a message for the people whose gifts are making such a difference in their lives.

"I thank all of you," Séneque says, "because even though you didn't know our faces or our community, you agreed to send us your support."

WHO IS LWR? Lutheran World Relief, an international nonprofit organization, works to end poverty and injustice by empowering some of the world's most impoverished communities to help themselves. With partners in 35 countries, LWR seeks to promote sustainable development with justice and dignity by helping communities bring about change for healthy, safe and secure lives; engage in Fair Trade; promote peace and reconciliation; and respond to emergencies. LWR is headquartered in Baltimore, Md. and has worked in international development and relief since 1945. Lutheran World Relief is a ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS), individuals and parish groups in international relief, development, advocacy and social responsibility.



**Have you visited Bethel's web site?** If not, please check it out. It is being updated and kept current by our web master, Sylvia Person. If there is something you would like on the web site, please contact Sylvia at 995-6488.

[www.bethel-lutheran-church.com](http://www.bethel-lutheran-church.com)