Happenings

As you drive in and park in the small church lot, the Communion Liturgy will be provided along with a Bread and Wine set.

Tune your radio to **FM 90.7** in order to hear the service.

Once the sacramental elements are consecrated, open the first seal of your Communion Set. As you hear, “Take, Eat, this is the true Body of our Lord and Savior, Jesus, given into death for all our sins,” commune with the wafer along with Pastor.

Open the second seal, and as you hear, “Take, drink, this is the true blood of our Lord and Savior, Jesus, given into death for our sins,” drink the wine.

After receiving the Benediction, you are invited to return home to worship from the Live-Stream at 11am, or choose a more convenient time later.

**Click for Link to Bethany YouTube Channel**

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**The Church Year Festivals & Colors—January 2021**

**White is the color of purity and completeness and reinforces the message of joy.**

- **January 1:** Circumcision and Name of Jesus
  - Gospel Reading: Luke 2:21
- **January 3:** Second Sunday after Christmas
  - Gospel Reading: Luke 2:40-52
- **January 6:** Epiphany
  - Gospel Reading: Matthew 2:1–12
- **January 10:** The Baptism of Our Lord
  - Gospel Reading: Mark 1:4-28

**Green is is symbolic of growth, emphasizing extending Christ’s kingdom through missions and need to grown and mature as disciples of Jesus Christ.**

- **January 17:** Second Sunday after the Epiphany
  - Gospel Reading: John 1:43—51
- **January 24:** Third Sunday after the Epiphany OR Saint Timothy, Pastor and Confessor Day
  - Gospel Reading: Mark 1:14-20 OR Matthew 24:42-47
- **January 31:** Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany
  - Gospel Reading: Mark 1:21-28
I’ve served several ministries since I graduated from Seminary in 1984. Although each ministry has been unique, due to the advent of a world-wide pandemic and the associated protocols and quarantining, masking and distancing, serving Bethany has been the “most unique” of them all! My first Sunday at Bethany was May 3rd (installed at a “virtual” service!)… and there are still many people I have never seen (again, due to the pandemic); and some of the people I have met, since we’re all wearing masks, I still wouldn’t recognize. Strange and frustrating times!

But on to 2021! Regardless of what might happen with the pandemic, economy, or political landscape, we can be sure that God is in control, His people are blessed, and The Church will be instrumental in making things ultimately right! The Psalmist writes: “One thing God has spoken, two things I have heard: ‘Power belongs to you, God, and with you, Lord, is unfailing love’; and, ‘You reward everyone according to what they have done.’” (Psalm 62:11-12)

In my first article for the new year, I thought I would share some thoughts on our mission and ministry. I have great expectations for Bethany in 2021; and by God’s grace and by His might working in and through each of us, God will work great wonders through His Bethany people!

The goal of the Christian is to enter into a personal and dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ. This relationship begins with God pursuing us, drawing us to Himself. Everything follows from this. The goal of Christian Ministry (The Church) is to provide an environment whereby people will hear God’s call and be encouraged to positively respond to His call, and then be equipped to serve according to God’s call.

The call of God is a call to relationships; first with God Himself, and secondly, with His people, and thirdly, as God’s Ambassadors with those who are not yet His people. Our relationship with God is expressed in three fundamental areas: Faith, Fellowship, and Service.

1. Faith in Jesus Christ that is (by definition) living (active) and growing.
2. Fellowship, is a recognized and expressed kinship with Jesus and other Christians.
3. Service, an intentional participation in the mission of Jesus Christ through His Church on earth.
Regarding 2021, in the great tradition of Bethany, we will continue, in all our programs, plans, and goals, to help people attain maturity in these three general areas (Faith, Fellowship, and Service).

In order to be clear about my leadership plans for 2021, I want to share with you some of my ministry assumptions:

- Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church, we follow His lead in all things.
- Therefore, we recognize that the first function of the Christian and the Church is the **Great Commandment**: To love the Lord our God with our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:37).
- We recognize that the second function of the Christian and the Church centers on the **Great Commission**, to make disciples of all people-groups; to be involved with the process of evangelizing the world (Matthew 28:19-20). Since we are a subset of the Christian Church, we will focus on something somewhat more modest: (only) **winning our community for Christ**.
- The only way any of this is possible is through the calling of God and by the power of His Spirit.
- **Our call is to discipleship**; only disciples can reproduce another disciple.
- God equips individuals and congregations to accomplish His calling (which is the only way His calling can possibly be accomplished). In Ephesians 1, Paul clearly states that God has already provided us with everything we need to accomplish His will! Paul writes: “**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world...**” (Ephesians 1:3-4).
- The expression of Faith, Fellowship, and Service is to be done by everyone in the Church; we believe and seek to fully realize the Priesthood of All Believers. “**But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light**” (1 Peter 2:9).

Therefore, Bethany Lutheran Church will continue to encourage:

- Discipleship over membership. By the grace of God, we live our lives as Jesus would.
  - We seek to create an environment where people can become an apprentice of Jesus: spend time with Him, learn from Him, please Him, be corrected by Him, become like Him in every way.
  - We want an environment where we are **engulfed** in the presence of God.
  - As St. Paul says in Colossians 1:10-14, “**And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom**...” (Colossians 1:10-14).
of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”

- What is a “Disciple”? The great Christian writer Dallas Willard defines “Discipleship” in his book “The Divine Conspiracy,” (p. 282-283): “A disciple, or apprentice, is simply someone who has decided to be with another person, under appropriate conditions, in order to become capable of doing what that person does or to become what that person is… And as a disciple of Jesus I am with him, by choice and by grace, learning from him how to live in the Kingdom of God…” I am learning from Jesus to live my life as he would live my life if he were I.

As we begin a new year, by God’s grace and according to His plan, Bethany is now poised to break new ministry ground, to impact our community for Christ like never before, and be about our Father’s business in new and exciting ways. And that new and exciting way begins with “Discipleship,” each of us learning from Jesus how to live in the Kingdom of God, and in turn, encouraging others to join us as we sit at the feet of Jesus.

I ask for your prayers and your continued support for the mission of Bethany Lutheran Church! Just as the world has been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, so has our ministry. It has been difficult to express our Christian Faith during the pandemic (at least in ways we have traditionally expressed our faith). Fellowship has all but ceased! And Service has been difficult as we remained quarantined and “distanced” from one another.

But that will change! Our mission remains the same; to Love God with the totality of our being (Matthew 22:37) and to win our community for Christ (Matthew 28:19ff). Please earnestly pray for God’s continued guidance as we navigate these current troubled [pandemic] waters. Please also prayerfully consider maintaining your financial support of our vital ministry. As you see in the slides on the Live-Stream:
- You may mail your tithe to the church office
- You may drop your tithe off at the church office
- You may set up an auto transfer to Bethany

Twenty-Twenty-One will be an amazing year for Bethany Ministries! Our fantastically gifted congregation will find new ways to express our Christian faith, re-discover fellowship, and become even more active in serving our community that all will know Jesus, our Lord and Savior, Christ the King!

May God continue to bless each of you in your pursuit of recognizing God’s Divine presence and purpose!

In Christ,
Pastor Phil Pledger
Greetings from Bethany Council

“Today in the town of David, a Savior has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord” Luke 2:11. The angel announcement to the shepherds is just as applicable to the world in 2021.

**Outreach:** Bethany school is reaching families with Jesus love. 134 TK-8, 26 PS children enrolled as of December break. Bethany worship continues on-line due to COVID 19 precautions. LWML Christmas tree lighting at Ulatis campus was a huge success reaching into the community with the Christmas story. Many attended. Outreach Bible based classes: parenting, personal finance, exercise class, Saturday food & craft events need sponsors to organize. Your personal invitation can help friends & school families learn about Jesus love for them. Bethany youth group is resuming at Ulatis on Wednesday afternoons. Talk to Pastor Pledger to help with outreach.

**Congregation:** January congregation meeting will be Sunday Jan 24 live streamed with on line voting allowed after the meeting to accommodate COVID19 restrictions. Watch for agenda.

**Stewardship:** God continues to bless Bethany congregation & keeps His work going forward. $111,024 is matched of the $107K anonymous matching fund! Thanks for putting the work of Christ first in your plans. Bethany mortgage refinance is complete. Reduced expense will give Bethany greater financial flexibility to spread the Gospel. Debt is reduced from the 2007 loan of $7,300,000 with USBANK to $800,000 with LCEF in 2021. God has truly blessed Bethany! Praise the Lord! Talk to Bob Johnston (treasurer) to help with Bethany stewardship efforts.

**Strategic Planning:** Pastor Pledger, working with Bethany leaders is developing strategic plans for Bethany ministry during this time of COVID19 with goal to focus ministry once pandemic restrictions lift. The strategic plan will include worship location options. New construction is on hold awaiting congregation strategic plan decisions.

**Property Maintenance:** Ulatis: Walkway lights have been repaired & changed to LED thanks to help of Shawn Sanborn, Doug Connor & Ron Shively. Repairs needed: Fence, trim trees, parking lot light bulbs (2), classroom & hallway light bulbs. Orchard: Rain gutters need to be cleared again. Contact Mike McCall to help with maintenance.

**Business Management:** Pastor Pledger in cooperation with Council manages Bethany business work flow & records retention: special thanks to Natalie Hart, Diane Irby, Bob & Curt Johnston, Shawn Sanborn, Carole Wilson, & Ron Shively. Pastor Pledger meets regularly with the finance committee to monitor Bethany financials. Bethany PPP loan is fully forgiven by federal Small Business Administration.

Church council reporting:
Ron Shively – President, Shawn Sanborn –VP, Carole Wilson - Secretary
Joshua was a faithful servant to Moses and God for years. Moses had died and Joshua watched as all his contemporaries, except for Caleb, die in the wilderness over a period of forty years. It was a new generation and there was a changing of the guard! Joshua was to take up the mantle of Moses and move God’s people forward into the promised land. The old was fading in the distance and there before him was the door to the future. No doubt fear was present, and questions arose by doubters as to his ability to fill the shoes of Moses. After all, Moses had been used by God to do incredible things; things never seen before such as the plagues of deliverance from bondage, the parting of the Red Sea, healing from the deadly snake bites, manna from the sky, water from a rock, taking a tree and making the bitter waters sweet, constructing the tabernacle, the tent of meeting where God would speak to him face to face, the battles fought and the giving of the Ten Commandments. Who could fill such shoes? What lay in store for him by following God? What new battles lay ahead? Moses had buried his wife during his leadership; along with countless others and he lost the privilege of taking the people into the promised land after wandering with them for forty years. If Moses had paid such a great price just to lead them to the desert, what cost would Joshua pay in the future leading them into battle for the land that God had promised?

As the old comes to a close and the new begins to emerge upon us, waves of doubts filled with fear can overwhelm the heart as it contemplates the unknown of what lies ahead. We look back, often with regret, from the days that have now slipped by at the blink of an eye and pray that the next year will be a better one. We often restrict our decisions based upon our limitations rather than on God’s limitless power. I’m sure Joshua’s first thought could have been; “Where do I begin?” But God made it very simple for Joshua, as He does for us. He told him two things to do, yes only two: arise and cross. Joshua could not remain where he was and fulfill the purpose God had for his life. He could not wallow in self-pity, grief or fear, recite a list of excuses, or wait for a more opportune time to emerge. He had to choose to get up, to stir his heart, to act upon the commands of the Lord going forth to obey all that He had told him to do. Refusing to arise and move forward will defeat the child of God who desires to answer the call of God upon their lives. Courage is not the friend of hesitation.
The second thing Joshua had to do was to cross the Jordan River. This river was the only thing standing between God’s people and the land of Canaan. Stepping out into the waters of faith allowed Joshua and the people of Israel to cross over into their calling of God. He could not allow the Jordan to keep him from obeying God, no matter how impossible it seemed to overcome. He had to leave the "how to" to God. When they stepped out into that water, God dried it up before them. After all, He parted an entire sea for them; surely He could part a river. God takes our Jordan’s and dries them up before us when we move forward in faith with Him. It was the first step of obedience that cleared a path to walk across. If we cannot face the waters of difficulties in the land of comfort, how will we ever face the enemies in the land of war? God will always meet you at your place of obedience.

There are new battles ahead of us, new enemies to face, fears to conquer, new land to tread upon, and walls to bring down. With this New Year before us, beloved, let us say with the apostle Paul, "…One thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead" (Philippians 3:13). Arise, beloved one of God, step out into the waters of faith and behold the power of God to bring you into the land!

Bethany Board of Elders
Are you ready to make some realistic resolutions for 2021?

OK, so guess how many people break their resolutions within a month of making them? Would you be shocked if you knew it is a whopping 80 percent? Yet, just like it would not be Christmas without a tree, somehow most of us fall into the tradition of making a resolution—whether we are going to be successful at keeping it or not.

This year honor tradition but with a twist. Rather than telling yourself that you’re going to lose 25 pounds by Valentine’s Day or pay all of your debts off by summer, take some pressure off by actually making resolutions that are so much easier to keep.

Here are 10 resolution to get you started:

**Resolution 1: Wake up 30 minutes earlier.**
You would be amazed what you can get done if you have 30 extra minutes in the morning.

**Resolution 2: Enroll in a Bible class.**
Ask Pastor to help you find the best class suited for your interests.

**Resolution 3: Become a mentor.**
You may have a great impact in a one-on-one teaching opportunity. Talk to Dr. Smith or Pastor for special opportunities.

**Resolution 4: Create a Discipleship group.**
Talk with Pastor about teaching the basics of Christian growth to others. This is a ministry which people feel unqualified to do, yet disciplining others is also one of the best ways to grow to spiritual maturity.

**Resolution 5: Put an additional 3-5 percent of each check aside for donation.**
Find a box or bank and at the end of each day drop your extra coins into it. It is amazing how quickly the extra coins add up.

**Resolution 6: Visit shut-ins and those in the hospital.**
Find out from Pastor or an Elder who is in the hospital and would like a visit. Try to spend a few minutes just letting people know that their Bethany family cares and is praying for them.

**Resolution 7: Send cards and letters or a thank-you note.**
A timely card can be an encouragement to someone who has done something special or had to be out of church for a while. This may be due to illness, COVID-19, discouragement, or an extended trip. Of course, a phone call or email are appropriate too, even if they are not as long lasting as a handwritten card or letter.

**Resolution 8: Invite others to church.**
We should all be involved in sharing our faith. One of the best ways you can do this and serve Bethany at the same time is simply invite your friends and acquaintances to attend a church service with you. Invite your neighbors and the people you meet in the store to any special activities Bethany may be presenting.

**Resolution 9: Volunteer for maintenance.**
Do not assume that something broken will be noticed and fixed. If you see a need to repair something at church take the initiative and fix the problem. This is an area where you do not necessarily need to get permission to fix something that is broken. However, you should clear any big changes with the leadership.

**Resolution 10: Commit to prayer.**
The ministry of prayer should not be taken lightly. Prayer is never the “least you can do,” but should always be thought of as the most important thing you can do. Pray for the church, its leadership, and those in the church who have needs. Do not just pray for situations to be resolved in a positive way but pray more deeply than that. Pray that people will be changed and become spiritually stronger. Read the first chapter of each of the books that Paul wrote. He prayed less for situations and more for people to become strong in the Lord.

**YOUR SPECIAL INVITATION:** Every Bethany lady is invited to attend and participate in LWML.
We encourage women to seek out and serve the people of their communities and the world.

**MEETING DATE – SUNDAY, January 10**
Put Sunday, January 10 on your calendar. The meeting time will be 12:00 pm. We will hold our meeting in the Fellowship Hall. Be sure to bring your mask.

**OPERATION BEANIE BABIES** – The LWML ladies packaged 161 bags, containing a beanie baby, a Christmas ornament, and a candy cane for each of the children at our school. The beanie babies were donated by Liz Fortin and what a blessing they were! Santa’s helper (Dr. Smith) distributed them to the kids for us.

**COOKIES FOR SHUT-INS** – We put together boxes of cookies and a Christmas card for our shut-ins. Thank you to Don Henrich, elder for helping deliver the goodies!

**THURSDAY NIGHT WOMEN’S BIBLE STUDY** – Restarting as soon as COVID-19 restrictions allow.
Bible study at Terri Denton’s home, 521 Walnut Avenue THURSDAY evenings at 7:00pm. If you would like to zoom with us, contact Carole Wilson at thewilsons1976@gmail.com.

**MITE CHALLENGE** – Bethany’s goal for 2020-2022 is $3800. Please do not forget to fill your mite boxes. COVID has not stopped our mission outreach. You can drop your boxes in the Narthex or leave them in the church office. Praise God for each mite. Let us show God’s wondrous work to others!

**YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE** – If you have an idea for a mission project, please come to one of the LWML meetings. Praise God daily and encourage a fellow sister in Christ through the spoken word, cards, emails, and prayers!

Carole Wilson –
LWML President

Special Thank you!!
To Liz Fortin, for the donation of Beanie Babies
Bethany Youth Ministry Update – Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

The Youth Ministry hopes that everyone in the congregation had a great Christmas and a Happy New Year, and that 2021 brings us back together so we can worship, learn more about Jesus and have some fun. This past year has been a challenge for the youth group, but we continued to get together via Zoom, held our Bible study, and had some events. Hopefully, we will be able to get together in person real soon.

In the meantime, we want to thank the youth that continue to participate in our events. Thank you to Veronica Shaw, Sam Scully, James Quashnick, Dani and Johnson and Paden Duncan.

Our next youth group event will be on Sunday, January 17th at 1 pm – 4 pm. We will be doing a park cleanup at one of Vacaville’s many parks. We hope the youth can come out get some fresh air and help us clean up a local park.

In the meantime, we will continue with a new Bible study commencing on Sunday January 10th at 9:45 am. Please have your youth attend our Youth Bible Studies on Sundays from 9:45 am – 10:45 am on Zoom so we can stay connected. Our youth need to spend time together and be with Jesus during these tough times.

Finally, be safe, wash your hands, practice social distancing, wear a mask, and pray to God and Jesus. We will see you all soon!

Bethany Youth Ministry Event Calendar

- Bible Study - Every Sunday Morning 9:45 am – 10:45 am on ZOOM—please note the new Zoom link: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84605256808?pwd=eXZieUoxWHJqa1JBQGJsL0JzaHQ2dz09
  Meeting ID: 846 0525 6808
  Passcode: Youth
- January 17th – Help the Body Event – Community Clean-up 1 pm – 4 pm
- February 14th – Fellowship Event - Bike Ride meet at Bethany 1 pm – 4 pm
- February 21st – Children’s Sermon
EPIPHANY: Comes from the Greek word for manifestation. It is the term applied to the birth, Baptism, appearance of the star, and similar events in Christ’s life. It is also applied to January 6 in commemoration of the visit of the Magi. Or, it can mean:

- to comprehend the essence or meaning of something
- to experience an “Aha!” moment
- a moment of sudden revelation
- a poignant, sudden, profound understanding of something

Special Thanks

Thank you Mike Dykes and Mark Green for setting up and working on the Nativity scene, to Georgia DeBarr for lighting equipment, to Carol Schmidt for donating the tree, to Carole and Darrol Wilson for donating the star, thank you Keith Kondo, Katy Green, Ron Shively for setting up the speakers and making 90.7 available. Thank you Hew & Cathy Hesterman, Carol Schmidt, and the Shivelys for leading the caroling. Thank you Pastor Pledger and the wonderful Bethany teaching staff for being there to support and welcome everyone to the event. A special thank you to all the LWML ladies who supplied all the cookies. To everyone who made the Christmas Tree Lighting event fun and special—Thank you! Pat Green
### January Birthdays

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Susan Bowley</td>
<td>January 01</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marge Jones</td>
<td>January 01</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leta Kanagaki</td>
<td>January 02</td>
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<td>Julianne Jiminez</td>
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<td>Theo Browne</td>
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<td>Xander Nichols</td>
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<td>Thomas Sawyer</td>
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<td>Michael Lamphear</td>
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<td>Joe Nunes</td>
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<td>John Ganaway</td>
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<td>Dee Burkett</td>
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<td>Kirsten Vitrikas</td>
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<td>Gail Wingard</td>
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### Statistical Report

#### December

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A Prayer for the New Year

Lord, whether I leave behind a year of joy or of trials and difficulties, I pause to give thanks. Thank you for being with me every day of every year. Thank you for making all things new and for giving me the grace of fresh starts and new beginnings.

Remind me of your presence in the days to come, even when I feel pushed and rushed by busyness.

Be glorified in my life this year.

Amen

Heather C. King
## Meet Our Staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Senior Pastor</strong></td>
<td>Dr. Phillip Pledger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Administrative Assistant</strong></td>
<td>Natalie Hart</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>School Principal</strong></td>
<td>Dr. Chris Smith</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Preschool Director</strong></td>
<td>Cindy Miller</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Fellowship Ministry</strong></td>
<td>Cathy Hesterman</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>LWML</strong></td>
<td>Carole Wilson</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Properties</strong></td>
<td>Mike McCall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Youth</strong></td>
<td>Kevin Shaw</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Bethany Church Council
- Hew Hesterman
- Diane Irby
- Bob Johnston
- Karen Loewe
- Mike McCall
- Shawn Sanborn
- Ron Shively
- Carole Wilson

### Bethany Elder Board
- Don Fortin
- Don Henrich
- Bob Johnston
- Rick Martinez
- Jerry Miller
- Jim Witt

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Lutheran Church Missouri Synod
621 S Orchard Ave, Vacaville CA 95688

- 707-451-6675
- mychurch@gobethany.com
- www.gobethany.com