



# Annual Report 2023

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# COUNCIL OF ELDERS

Paul Delahunt  
*Elder Chairman*

*The eternal God is your dwelling place,  
and underneath are the everlasting arms.*  
—Deuteronomy 33:27a

As I reflect on this past year, I praise God for his goodness to our church. While we were never without the weakness and loss in which Christ's strength is made perfect, it was a glad year of partnership among the elders. We enjoyed warmth and candor, fellowship and deliberation, laughter and partnership. I count it a great privilege and delight to serve with these men.

Following the launch of South Cities Church and The North Church early in the year, the elders were able to devote our attention to the needs of this flock that gathers—from around the metro area—in downtown Minneapolis. It is a gift from the Lord, particularly as we now turn from the work of 'stabilizing' the church to that of 'strengthening' the body.

Why did God give elders to the church? There are many reasons, but here is one key purpose: "...to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12–13). Do you notice the language having to do with building strength and maturity? When a church is strong, its saints are equipped and working. They are laying the bricks and mortar of the church, building on the foundation already laid. There is an attentiveness to gaps in the wall, accompanied not by a negative or complaining spirit but rather by a Nehemiah-like attitude of getting on with the labor. When a church is strong, we see the joy and unity of the Spirit of Christ that springs from industrious service for the sake of the Name. We see growth in knowing Christ Jesus our Lord. We see

maturity and a certain kind of Christ-fullness. I see that in so many places at our church! My desire for each member of this church, and for us collectively, is that this increases more and more, so that we all might "grow up in every way into him who is the head" (Ephesians 4:15).

This is what the elders desire for Bethlehem. We want to build up the work of local outreach, with the new Bethesda property serving as one catalyst on that front. We hope to improve the connectivity of our men, who in the modern world often lack time and capacity to build and sustain relationships. It has been refreshing for us to have bandwidth to begin the work of improving elder care and connectivity to members. And the work of sending and supporting gospel laborers who serve around the globe continues on.

There are many more things that could be said. In it all, the elders' hope and prayer is that as we lead, Christ would be magnified in the hearts of these people. We are imperfect under-shepherds who want the congregation to know, as the Psalmist says, the comfort that comes from the rod and staff of the Great Shepherd. So we say with the apostle Paul, imitate us as we imitate Christ this year. "Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might" (Ephesians 6:10).

God bless you,



Paul Delahunt  
*Elder Chairman*





Glen Bloomstrom



Darin Brink



Bud Burk  
*Pastor for Children &  
Family Discipleship*



Paul Delahunt  
*Chair*



Chad Geyen



René González  
*Pastor for Adult  
Discipleship*



Charles Kim



Mike Lane



John Mielke



Brad Nelson  
*Pastor for  
Global Outreach*



Chuck Steddom  
*Pastor for Worship &  
Ministry Development*



Kenny Stokes  
*Pastor for  
Preaching & Vision*



Rod Takata

# PREACHING & VISION

Kenny Stokes

*Pastor for Preaching & Vision*

*Now to him who is able to strengthen you  
according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ...  
to bring about the obedience of faith—  
to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.  
—Romans 16:25–27*

These concluding words in Paul's letter to the Romans give God glory for his wisdom and power to strengthen his church in faith by the power of the gospel. We, too, praise God for the power of the gospel at work among us, enabling our perseverance in faith, growth in grace, rejoicing in sorrow, and our love for one another. Our hope as individuals, families, and as a church rests in God and his faithfulness to us in and through the gospel of Christ.

By God's providence, I have gladly served as a pastor at Bethlehem for over 25 years, and the last 26 months as the *Pastor for Preaching & Vision*. It has been burned into my awareness so deeply over the last few years that Bethlehem is 'my church.' She is 'our church.' Not that the church is my possession, because the church belongs to Christ. Rather, it is 'our church' in the sense that we belong to Bethlehem. The people of the congregation of Bethlehem are 'our people.' And, since what holds us together is our union with Christ and our deep theological unity, the challenges of church life have not had the power to dampen or destroy that sense of belonging to Bethlehem as our local church family.

Thank you for the honor of serving as your pastor. It is sobering and humbling. Yet, I serve with a confidence that God is for us and not against us. Nothing can separate us from his love. Christ will provide his all-sufficient grace for our weaknesses, and his well-timed help right when we need it most. He will meet all our needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. By the power of the gospel, Christ has been building his church among us and through us, and will continue to do so. All this and more, for the glory of his name.

## Three Phases

For over 150 years, God has faithfully brought Bethlehem Baptist Church through many different seasons of mission and ministry. By God's providence, each chapter or phase of church life has been built upon the preceding, year after year bringing us to where we are today.

At the present time, I have been thinking of our ministry as elders in terms of leading the church through three phases: Stabilize, Strengthen, and Transition.

## Phase One: Stabilize

*November 2021–December 2023  
(26 months)*

Beginning my role as the Pastor for Preaching & Vision in 2021, and in the aftermath of church conflict, our first priority was to “Stabilize” the church. Bethlehem had experienced an extremely high level of disruption personally and organizationally. Since 2013 we have come through at least four identifiable and significant destabilizing events or periods:

- The retirement of Pastor John Piper as *Pastor for Preaching & Vision* (2013)
- COVID-19 (March 2020–March 2021)
- Church Conflict (January 2021–November 2021)
- The Transition to Three Separate Churches (December 2022–January 2023)

In different ways, and for different reasons, each of these events has had a destabilizing impact on the church. Each has required us to rely on God to steady the church, which of course, he has faithfully done many times before throughout our long church history.

Presently, our assessment is that our church is now coming to a place where we have, once again, a healthy level of stabilization. God is working in new ways among us. Commitment, new ministry initiatives, and levels of volunteer serving have all shown evidence of increasing. In addition, there are subjective indicators such as relational harmony, unity of the leaders, a buoyant morale, a genuine camaraderie, sense of community with one another and strengthening partnership with Bethlehem College and Seminary. Some of the feedback I have received regarding the present state of the church include the words “Godward,” “Bible-grounded,” “hopeful,” “connected,” “caring,” and “unified.”

## Phase Two: Strengthen

*July 2023–December 2026 (42 months)*

Together with the elders, we have identified four primary areas we are targeting for building up and strengthening our church.

1. Discipleship: We aim to strengthen our discipleship efforts at Bethlehem. In addition to our Sunday morning gatherings for worship and preaching of the Word, we aim to strengthen and further develop an intentional discipleship plan that takes advantage of robust biblical and theological learning in classes and seminars, while also preserving our life together in various kinds of smaller groups for biblical application, care, prayer, and community. As the Apostle Paul says, *“Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ”* (Colossians 1:28).
2. Elder/Pastoral Care: In January 2024, we launched a new system in which each elder is assigned specific members of the church for prayer and oversight, and each member knows their assigned elder. This has already yielded an increase in meaningful contact, prayer requests, questions, and stronger, healthier relationships between the members and leaders of the church.
3. Staff and Leadership: The transition of our campuses to separate churches was finalized one year ago on February 1, 2023. Since that time, we have been working to solidify our pastors and staff in optimal roles for fulfilling our mission in accordance with their God-given graces, gifts, and calling (1 Corinthians 12; Romans 12:3–8). Our aim is a strong, stable, resilient team of pastors and elders, deacons/deaconesses, and support staff. Please pray with us that the Lord would provide a Minister for Women and a Pastor for Youth this year. May God grant our leadership and staff grace to serve the congregation with gladness,

in the strength God supplies such that we are always abounding in the work of the Lord knowing our labors are never in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58). And in all our work, may it all be to the glory of God.

4. Outreach: Given our church mission, our location, and the gifts God has entrusted to us, we believe it is essential to develop an integrated outreach strategy that encompasses the city, the neighborhoods in which we live, our nation, and our world. This strategy would incorporate the key aspects of evangelism, mercy ministries, church planting and church strengthening—and working in concert with our own outreach partners of CityJoy, Campus Outreach, and Bethlehem College and Seminary.

### **Phase Three: Transition**

*January 2027–June 2028 (18 months)*

Planning for my retirement as Pastor for Preaching & Vision is crucial. The Lord perfectly knows the future, and our plans rest in his fatherly wisdom and oversight. With that in mind, we are humbly pursuing a model that has been called a “Seamless Pastoral Transition,” involving an overlap of the outgoing and incoming pastor to avoid a vacancy. Key essentials for this model include prayer, staff collaboration, a planned and phased transition process, public communication, and financial planning.

It has seemed good to target my transition from the Pastor for Preaching & Vision role to be completed on June 30, 2028. Lord willing, at that time, I expect Christ to redeploy me into another area of ministry with the blessing of the church.

Given the present age of several of our staff pastors, Lord willing, this process will serve us well as other pastors retire. Pray that our approach to my transition, and the transitions of other staff pastors when the time comes,

would be as seamless as possible and that the ministry and mission of our church might advance all the more, for the glory of Christ.

### **In Closing**

I do want to thank you all for your love and engagement in our church. Also, thank you to all the elders, deacons, those who serve children and youth, teachers and small group leaders, and volunteers. I must express a special thank you to my wife Kathy. She loves Bethlehem as I do and labors with me on your behalf. And of course, thanks be to God through our Lord Jesus Christ who, now and always, holds us fast.

We are utterly dependent upon God, who is able to strengthen us by the gospel for the obedience of faith that we might “...spread a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples through Jesus Christ.”

For the advancement and joy of your faith,



Kenny Stokes  
*Pastor for Preaching & Vision*

*A New Strategy*

## FIVE DISCIPLESHIP PRIORITIES



### Worship

Since God, by his grace, has given us new life to see his glory and know him through faith in Christ, let us devote ourselves to joyfully worship him in all of life, individually and corporately.



### Belong

Since God has chosen us and united us by faith into one body in Christ, let us devote ourselves to love one another in covenant community.



### Grow

Since God has given us his Spirit to understand the Scriptures, let us devote ourselves to grow in the grace and knowledge of God, that we might mature in Christlikeness.



### Serve

Since Christ came to serve and lay down his life for us in love, let us, enabled by his grace, devote ourselves to serving one another in sacrificial love.



### Go

Since the Lord Jesus Christ has commissioned us to make disciples, let us, in confident reliance on his enabling presence, devote ourselves as a church to go in compassion to the peoples in our neighborhoods and the nations.





# WORSHIP & MINISTRY DEVELOPMENT

Chuck Steddom

*Pastor for Worship & Ministry Development*

*"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a 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 who is in heaven."*  
—Matthew 5:14-15

## Corporate Worship

This was a year of transition for the Worship Department. Midway through the year, René González transitioned from *Pastor for Worship & Hispanic Ministries* to *Pastor for Adult Discipleship*, and Briana Morales (our previous *Administrative Assistant for Worship*) moved to a new role as a music teacher at Hope Academy. We hired Devin Schmidt (a recent graduate from Bethlehem College and Seminary) as our *Ministry Assistant for Worship & Music* to help cover some of René and Briana's responsibilities. Devin assists me in worship tasks and leading corporate worship on Sundays. We say a hearty "welcome aboard, Devin" and "all the best, René and Briana"—we are glad that you'll still be involved with the worship ministry!

A special thanks to Carol Steddom, our *Pianist & Worship Assistant*, and the 50 gifted worship volunteers that led us in God-centered corporate worship each week. In addition to our regular adult choir, this year we added string and brass groups to Sunday services, particularly for seasonal celebrations. Thank you to you all.

## Diaconal Care, Counseling, and Helping Hand

The current deacon team is composed of the following members: Jeff Noyed, Laurie McRostie, Kelvin & Jonell Kluver, Marty & Cheryl Lonski, Joey Bures, and Keith Anderson. The deacons have provided for a variety of personal and physical needs throughout the church, including household repairs, automotive work, and meals for people in crisis. The Helping Hand Fund also continues to be a significant arm of our mercy ministry care.

A special thanks to Kirsten Christianson, who serves as our *Ministerial Coordinator for Care & Counseling*. She is the frontline intake for church members in need of professional, Spirit-filled listening and guidance.

## Neighborhood Outreach

This has been an exciting year for Neighborhood Outreach. Our *Wednesdays at Wabun* gatherings in 2022 were so well-received that we continued them again in 2023. Each week, over 100 congregants gathered to eat, fellowship, hear the Word, and sing. A special thanks to Nate & Jackie Thorne's family who oversaw the grill.

Early in the year, the elders felt led by God to consider purchasing the Bethesda Missionary Baptist Church property adjacent to Bethlehem. Our vision was to open an outreach ministry center in the church building, offer Bethlehem College and Seminary student housing in the apartment building, and increase our parking inventory by 50 additional spaces. This vision was confirmed by an affirmative vote from the membership on August 13, and \$1.1 million dollars was raised toward the purchase. This was a giant step of faith for the church. We closed on the property on January 8, 2024. Please pray with us as we begin to develop this property and materialize our dreams for outreach.

### CityJoy

This was an incredible year of growth for CityJoy. First, we were able to sell the 16/33 property to Jubilee Community Church. Second, we praise God for Heather Elting-Ballard, who is serving as CityJoy's *Interim Executive Director*. Heather was instrumental in rewriting CityJoy's constitution, bylaws, and employee handbook, as well as organizing detailed budgets for all the CityJoy ministers. She began monthly prayer meetings for CityJoy staff and added three new board members. She led the board through a visioning process with an outside consultant, which was strategic for CityJoy as it seeks to build its donor base and marketing plans. As we look ahead into 2024, we are anticipating Heather becoming CityJoy's permanent *Executive Director*. Aslan is on the move!

### Bethlehem College and Seminary

It has been my joy for the last 24 years to teach and mentor future worship leaders and pastors at Bethlehem College and Seminary. It was particularly enjoyable and rewarding this year to have 10 of those current and former worship leaders join me in leading worship at Bethlehem College and Seminary's *Serious Joy Conference for Pastors*. We love the partnership between the school and the church.

And who knows? Maybe one of my former students will one day replace me as *Pastor for Worship* at Bethlehem.

My prayer is that many will see our good works as a church body and glorify our Father in heaven. God has given Bethlehem an opportunity to be a light in the city. May we shine forth the light of God's truth and compassion on our neighborhoods and the nations.



Chuck Steddum  
*Pastor for Worship & Ministry Development*



**2120.9** POUNDS OF  
FOOD AND PERSONAL CARE  
PRODUCTS COLLECTED  
FOR JERICHO ROAD AT  
THANKSGIVING

### DEACONS

Keith Anderson

Joey Bures

Jonell Kluver

Kelvin Kluver

Cheryl Lonski

Marty Lonski

Cynthia McGill

Laurie McRostie

Jeff Noyed

Bryan Rohde



# GLOBAL OUTREACH

Brad Nelson

*Pastor for Global Outreach*

*And he said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.  
Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.  
Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves."  
—Luke 10:2-3*

## Introduction

There are 3.3 billion people in the world who do not know the name of Jesus. The needs are great and the harvest is plentiful, but the task is hard—which is why the workers are few. But, although it is difficult, we must send workers into the field. And once we send them, we must care for them well. Eternity will confirm for us that even though the task was difficult, it was worth it! For we know that Jesus will be with us always, even to the ends of the earth. And one day, every knee will bow and tongue confess that Jesus is Lord of all.

## Global Partners

As we enter 2024, Bethlehem has 49 commissioned—and nine commended—global partners. In total, our commissioned global partners number 82 adults and 93 children—33 couples and 16 singles—living in 28 countries of the world. This is a total of 175 individuals!

In 2023, we commissioned five new global partners: Josiah, Timothée & Abigail Davi, The F. Family, Gloria Obeng-Amoako, and JP. Daniel Rimmereid and Andrew & Sophia were moved from being “commissioned” to “commended.” Aaron & Meg Brown came off the field this year as well.

This year, we are beginning a new designation for global partners. Our global partners now fall into two categories: *commissioned* and *commended*. Commissioned global partners are men and women who have completed Bethlehem’s Nurture Program, were commissioned by Bethlehem, and are currently sent and supported by Bethlehem. Commended global partners have similarly completed Bethlehem’s Nurture Program and were commissioned by Bethlehem, but they are now sent and financially supported by one of our sister churches. However, because they feel a strong connection to Bethlehem, we would still like to provide them with prayer support! If you’re curious to know which global partners fall into which category, this year’s global partner prayer calendar includes “commissioned” and “commended” under each global partner’s name.

## Global Outreach (GO) Team

The Global Outreach (GO) Team consists of the following incredible volunteers: Scott & Shara Aatsap, Darin & Cristy Brink, David & Faith Jaeger, Morris & Wendy Johnson, Daewon & Youngin Kim, Burt & Trish Koppendrayner, John & Pamela Kovacs, Amy Miller, and Jeff & Gayle Sprinkel.

### Global Outreach (GO) Staff

In March, Krista Smith transitioned from her position as *Administrative Assistant for Global Outreach* to *Receptionist* at Bethlehem. In May, Thomas Florestano was hired to take her position.

Ken Morse continues serving as the *Volunteer Coordinator for Short-Term Ministry*. Bethlehem College and Seminary students Benjamin Brenner and Eddie DSouza continue providing oversight for the Nurture Program.

### Barnabas Teams

Each global partner has a team of supporters who pray for them regularly and support them relationally, emotionally, spiritually, and practically. At the end of 2023, over 750 faithful servants were providing support to our global partners by serving on Barnabas Teams.

### Global Focus

The theme for Global Focus 2023 was “The Harvest is Plentiful.” Our goal for the eight days of Global Focus (October 29–November 1) was to help our congregation get to know, and learn how to pray for, their global partners. During *Wednesdays Together* on November 1, global partners shared about their work and provided the congregation with prayer requests. On November 3, we hosted an *Prayer Night for the Nations*. On the second Sunday of Global Focus, Pastor John Piper preached, and at the end of his message, he asked all who were sensing God’s call to long-term vocational global missions to come forward and be prayed over by the congregation. About 30 people came forward and were invited to join the Nurture Program.

### Nurture Program

We prepare people for long-term vocational global missions through our Nurture Program,

which provides a combination of strategies and resources for global ministry. As we begin 2024, we will be kicking off a new, simpler format for the program. There are currently 23 individuals enrolled in the program.

### Women In Missions

Over 25 years ago, Bethlehem member Char Ransom started *Women in Missions* as an effort to bless our women missionaries. Char wanted to give the women of Bethlehem opportunities to meet women serving on the field, hear their stories, build relationships, and form a team of “rope holders” to regularly pray for them. We continue to host *Women in Missions* monthly and are so thankful that former Global Partner Pamela Kovacs has taken over the leadership of this ministry. (And many thanks to Global Partner Amy Miller for her years of service in the role!)

### Global Diaconate

In the process of transitioning back to a single-location church, the GO Team has absorbed the responsibility of approving and distributing Global Diaconate funds. These funds are intended to provide relief for the poorest of the poor around the world. We will begin 2024 by providing a grant for structural improvements to a mercy ministry in Ethiopia. This will be the first grant approved by the new GO Team committee, and we hope to continue using this fund to care for those in need.

### Short-Term Ministry Trips

We primarily send short-term teams to bless, encourage, and help our global partners. We also send a few ministry trips each year to our “trusted partners” whose ministries are significant and with whom we want to partner. In 2023, we sent a team of youth to El Salvador, Pastor Brad led a trip to Morocco, Spain, and Moldova, and individuals went to Senegal, Red Lake, and Thailand.



### Prayer for Global Partners

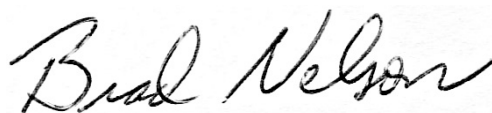
Every Monday morning at 7am, a group of church members gathers outside the Prayer Room to pray for our global partners and the nations. Occasionally, we have global partners join us via Zoom to share and receive prayer. All are welcome to join us!

### Business as Mission (BAM)

We have funds available that we can loan to our global partners who are trying to start a business for transformation (B4T). We are in the process of updating our policies to transition from three campuses to only Bethlehem.

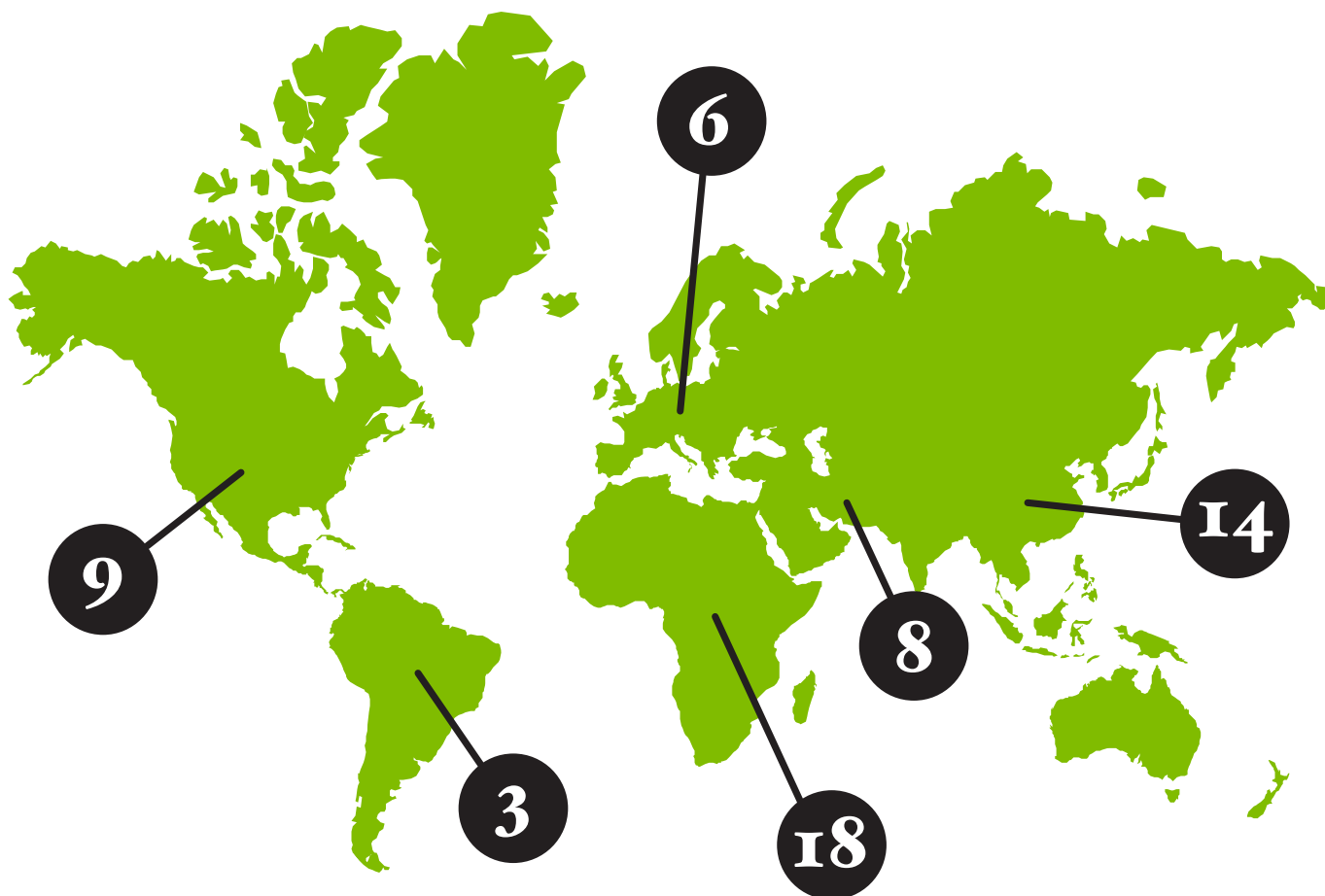
It is a joy to serve at a church with a 152-year legacy of being globally-minded. We praise God for our mission of “spreading a passion of the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples through Jesus Christ”! Thank you for your partnership in the greatest work in the Universe!

Reaching the nations with you in the Name above all names,



Brad Nelson  
*Pastor for Global Outreach*

## GLOBAL PARTNERS





# ADULT DISCIPLESHIP

René González  
*Pastor for Adult Discipleship*

*So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.*  
—Ephesians 2:19–22

As a local church, we aim to make disciples whose lives are devoted to five key aspects of obedience to Jesus Christ that can be summed up in these five words: Worship, Belong, Grow, Serve, and Go.

With this in mind—and by God’s grace—in 2023, we broadened the scope of our Adult Discipleship ministry to refocus on Small Groups and Affinity Groups, launch new Adult Classes and Retreats, and plan new initiatives for Seminars, Wednesdays Together, and Membership Care.

## Small Groups

Currently, we have 35 active small groups. We hosted two Small Group Leader Dinners to equip and encourage our small group leaders. Group Connect took place in the Spring (20 attendees) and Fall (8 attendees), and Lead Table took place in the Spring (6 attendees).

## Sunday School and Wednesdays Together

In 2023, the Lord helped us to grow in discipleship through Sunday School classes. A total of 258 adults participated in our 11am classes last Fall—38 in the Marriage class, 62 in the God’s Global Glory class, 26 in the Old Testament class, 33 in All Nations Fellowship, and close to 100 in King’s Friends and Senior

Sojourners. Wednesdays Together remained an encouraging weekly rhythm of fellowship and growth in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## Hispanic Ministry

Our Hispanic Ministry moved from Room 111 to the Chapel (Room 203), and new families have joined the weekly gathering. A highlight of the year was our Christmas Party where more than 60 brothers and sisters were edified from the Word and enjoyed fellowship with one another.

## Young Adults Ministry

Another fresh way in which we experienced God’s favor was by the establishment and growth of our Young Adults Ministry. In 2023, they gathered each month and volunteered for different initiatives at our church (e.g. partnering with the King’s Friends Sunday School class in delivering cookies and Christmas cards to shut-ins). Early in the year, they hosted a winter retreat where 46 attendees enjoyed worship, fellowship, and sitting under the Word together.

## Baptism & Membership

As a church, we had the joy of witnessing 17 baptisms and 40 new members joining our fellowship in 2023. We also worked for several months on right-sizing our membership roster

and launching a new Elder Care initiative that will help us to better pray for and shepherd the flock.

### Thankfulness to God

We are very thankful for Pastor Jared Wass and his years of faithful ministry at Bethlehem; we pray for him and his family as they transition into their next chapter in ministry. I thank God for the addition of Andrea Tjarks, Administrative Assistant for Adult Discipleship, to our staff team. She loves the Lord and our church and has been a great help in organizing and supporting the work of the Adult Discipleship ministry.

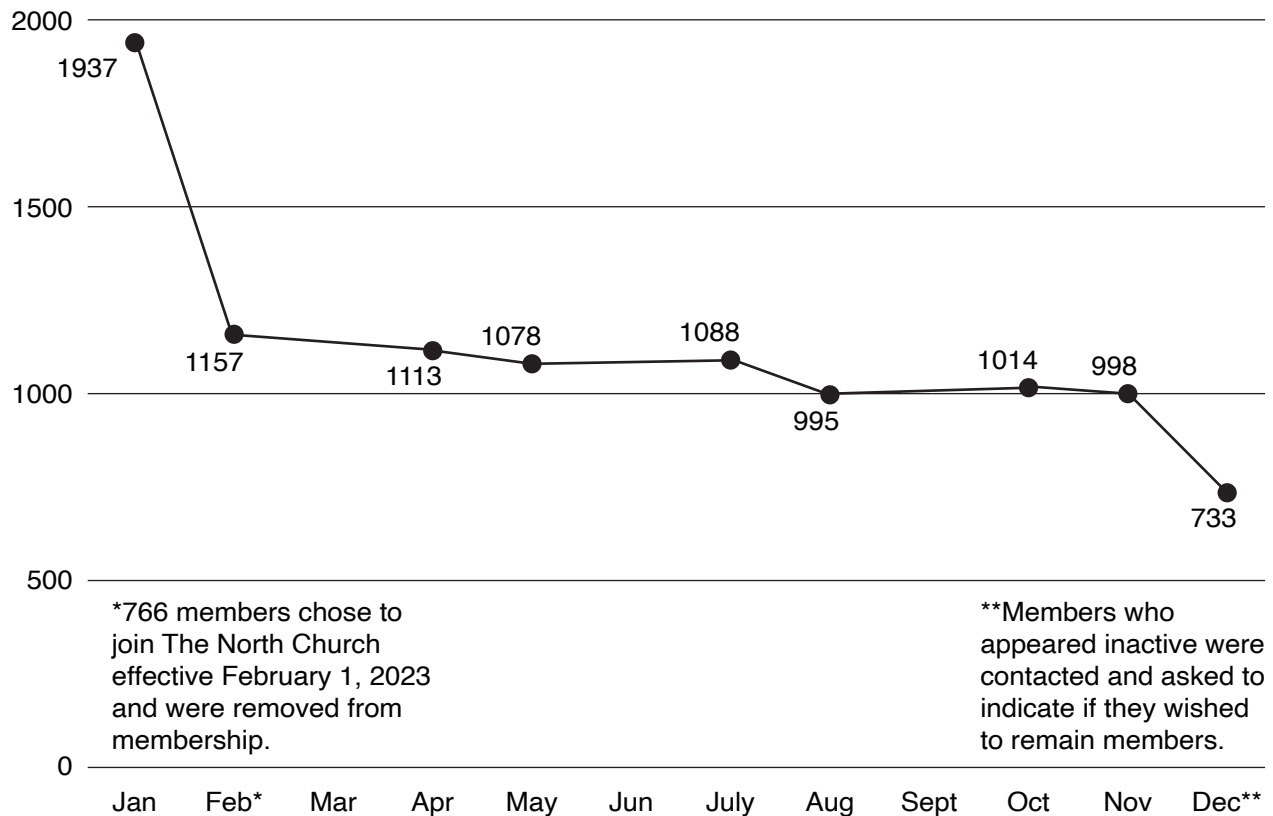
Finally, I would like to thank the congregation for voting to change my job title to Pastor for Adult Discipleship. I am honored and excited to serve in this capacity, trusting in the grace that God supplies.

In Christ,



René González  
Pastor for Adult Discipleship

## MEMBERSHIP



*Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think,  
according to the power at work within us,  
to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations,  
forever and ever. Amen.*  
—Ephesians 3:20-21



# WOMEN'S MINISTRY

Cynthia McGill

*Administrative Assistant for Women's Ministry*

*But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you,  
for my power is made perfect in weakness."  
Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses  
so that the works of Christ may rest upon me.  
—2 Corinthians 12:9*

*[D]o not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let  
your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding,  
will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.  
—Philippians 4:6–7*

## MOMS

In 2023, our MOMS ministry was guided by the theme verses listed above. We heard from many gifted speakers and teachers, who reminded us to rely on Christ's sufficient work on the cross and how we can learn to rest in the peaceful comfort of Jesus, no matter what comes our way. Thirty-one mothers and their children attended these biweekly meetings.

## White Cross

This creative and faithful community of women create beautiful handmade quilts for newborn children in our church. They also roll bandages for medical missions and much, much more.

## Bible Studies

In January, we started a Precept Bible study on Mark 1–6, titled *Experiencing His Touch*, which focused on Jesus' teachings and miracles. It was followed by a study on Mark 7–13 titled *Listening to His Voice*, which centers on his words of life and truth. Each week, 20–30

women gathered to study. Thankfully, the Lord provided childcare for this class.

The Spanish language Bible study completed the book of Philippians and then dug into the Precept Bible study on Mark 1–6 titled *Experiencing His Touch*. The class gathered monthly, and 15 women enjoyed this time of study, prayer, and fellowship with one another.

On Tuesday evenings during the summer, a class on 1–3 John was offered. The group was guided through the text using the "Abide" Bible study by Jen Wilkin, which included a video and workbook on "how to overcome." About 25 women attended this 10-lesson class.

In the Fall, we were led through another 10-lesson study by Jen Wilkin on the book of Hebrews—titled *Better*—which taught us how God provided something better for us in the person of Jesus Christ. Another 25 women attended this class, and Lord willing, the class will continue into 2024.



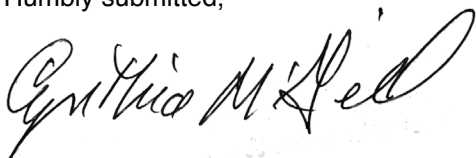
### Summer Studies

During the summer, we gathered at church on Wednesday mornings to watch and study videos on Biblical theology from the *TGCW22 Conference*. In addition, each week, we enjoyed a presentation from each of the ministries at Bethlehem. We also welcomed two satellite groups that completed this study in members' homes.

### News Flash!

During the summer of 2023, we launched a test series of four book clubs across the city. Forty women read *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *Jesus Through the Eyes of Women*, *Respectable Sins*, and *Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold*. All participants reported that the book clubs were a hit, so we might try another series in the future.

Humbly submitted,



Cynthia McGill

*Administrative Assistant for Women's Ministry*



**167** LADIES ATTENDED  
THE ADVENT GATHERING



**5** SUMMER BOOK CLUBS  
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# CHILDREN & FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

Bud Burk

*Pastor for Children & Family Discipleship*

*But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

—Galatians 6:14

## Overview

In the conclusion of my 2014 annual report, I said, “The glory of Christ and the grace he brings has risen more fully to the surface this year, and I believe it is just beginning to blossom and will do so even more by God’s faithful grace in 2015 and following. *I look forward to giving annual reports in the years to come* of this unfolding story of God’s grace in Christ to undeserving sinners at Bethlehem among families which brings both salvation and sanctification for our joy. This glorious theme can be summed up in a word—the name of Jesus.”

## Ministry to Parents & Families

In 2023, we had the privilege of serving 134 households, which included 290 children and 22 babies born into our congregation.

Our Father granted us grace to provide ministry to families centered on the identity of his beloved Son Jesus Christ and the hope of his gospel. For example, I am grateful for his faithful help during *Jesus Lives*, an event that prepares families for Holy Week. I am especially moved by his kindness to us during our first ever *Mother/Daughter Retreat*, and how he continues to help us refine events like these while always keeping his Son and his good news as the point of it all.

## Ministry to Parents Through Personal Contact

One of the primary ways we seek to provide gospel-encouragement to families is through personal contact, and God continues to bless these efforts. The joy that is shared in the context of letter-writing and home-visitation continues to receive particular favor from our Father. Through these spiritual practices, the Spirit sharpens my understanding of the gospel and how to share it with households.

## Ministry to Children

Our *Lead Coordinator for Nurseries*, Lisa Burk, and *Assistant Coordinator for Nurseries*, Christina Osburn, again provided faithful leadership week after week. They, alongside a dear volunteer team, continued to create a safe place for young children that is marked by God’s Word, prayer, song, and love in Jesus’ name. The nursery remains an out-of-the-spotlight ministry where ministry partners join Jesus in welcoming the little ones.

Our Sunday morning and Wednesday evening ministry to K–5 children was sustained and moved forward by our Father for another year. One of the particular ways he did this was through an increase of young adult partners in ministry. Their presence is an expression of his faithful love and provision upon Bethlehem Baptist Church, which I am so glad to highlight.

## Staff

The office team are dear saints who faithfully serve our volunteers and households. I am grateful for my wife, Lisa Burk (*Lead Coordinator for Nurseries*), Christina Osburn (*Assistant Coordinator for Nurseries*), Julie Olson (*Ministry Assistant for Classroom Support*), and Debbie Mairet (*Administrative Assistant for Children & Family Discipleship*). This is a happy team that is pleasing to our Father. He is providing us growth in our relationship with each other as well as insight into the ministry he has given us.

I have witnessed another year of Christ's grace upon—and through—our parents and ministry partners. I relate wholeheartedly to Barnabas's experience in Acts 11:23: "When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose." I have seen, I am glad, and with gratitude to our Father, I ask for more this coming year.

All of this to the praise of God's glorious grace upon us in Christ,



Bud Burk  
*Pastor for Children & Family Discipleship*



**I34**  
HOUSEHOLDS SERVED



**290**  
CHILDREN



**22**  
BABIES BORN



# YOUTH MINISTRY

Andrew Ballard

*Interim Coordinator for Youth*

*Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect,  
that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.*

—2 Timothy 2:10

## Introduction

I can hardly say that I endure “everything” Paul did, or even that whatever I *do* endure I do with a good attitude and motive. But I love this verse and long to grow into it. What an incredible foundation for endurance in ministry: God has chosen his children and written their names in the book of life. Surely there is no discomfort—no cold wind from opening the door of heaven, no daunting darkness as we walk the streets of earth—that can prevent us from pursuing our Lord’s elect. It has been my privilege to proclaim the gospel to these students this year, to invite guests to enter the banquet, and to strengthen sons and daughters as they persevere toward their inheritance.

## Ministry Through Teaching

In the Spring of 2023, we studied the majority of the New City Catechism on Sundays and explored 1 Peter together. Recently, in the Fall semester, we began the book of Hebrews on Wednesdays, complemented by our Sunday School curriculum, *Shadows of Grace*, *Silhouettes of a Savior*.

During our Winter Retreat, Ken Currie spoke to us on the theme of being *Welcomed in Christ*. At our Summer Camp, Andrew Eves (from The North Church) exhorted our students about the *Two Paths* we can take in this life—the path of the world or the path of Christ. And at our Fall

Retreat, Connor Riley, and Damian Leverett, and I spoke to our High School students about *Knowing God*—through his creation, through his Word, and through his Son.

## Ministry Through Mentoring

Our small group volunteers serve energetically on both Sundays and Wednesdays, in addition to joining us for events and retreats. Relationship-building can be a slow and often challenging process, but mentorship is perhaps the most important aspect of our ministry. “Wins” in this area take a thousand different forms: a fruitful small group discussion, a (legal) graffiti competition, a student being baptized, a cup of coffee with the high school girls, or a small group attending one student’s performance. Whether it’s through weekly programming, organized events and retreats, or the conversations in between, our leaders diligently redeem the time in pursuit of building their students to maturity.

## Ministry Through Events/Community

“Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well” (1 Thessalonians 2:8, NIV). This verse could also describe the way our leaders serve their students every week, but even more so when it comes to ministering through events and retreats. I have mentioned our Winter Retreat, Summer Camp,



and Fall Retreat already. This year, we have also started the practice of a “Small Group Get-Together” once per semester, where small groups plan their own gathering together.

Brooke and I try to share our lives by showing hospitality every week, especially to our partners in ministry. Personally, I try to connect with and encourage fellow workers in ministry outside of Bethlehem. I had the privilege of leading a breakout gathering for youth ministry workers at Bethlehem College and Seminary’s *Serious Joy Conference for Pastors* at the beginning of the year—a wonderful opportunity for twenty-five youth ministers to encourage and pray with one another.

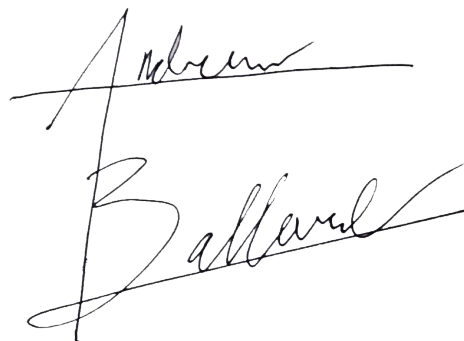
#### Staff and Leaders

Over the summer, Allison Steddom, Benjamin Brenner, and Pearl Gaspar resigned from staff. It was sad to see them depart, but the transition could be more happily titled as “re-deployment.” All are still members at Bethlehem and serving joyfully in other areas. Thank you, each, for your partnership over the last two years. This Fall semester, the Lord has seen to our needs by providing a full new team. My wife, Brooke Ballard, joined as the *Administrative Assistant for Youth*, and she helps me in everything I do, in more ways than I could ever acknowledge.

Connor Riley (first year seminarian at Bethlehem Seminary) joined as our *Ministry Assistant for Youth*; he leads the Junior High Sunday School. Kyu Sik Choi (senior at Bethlehem College) is interning with us this year; he facilitates the Senior High Sunday School. Austin Shuck (third year seminarian) is also apprenticing with the Youth Ministry this year, serving with the 9th grade boys’ small group. We are grateful to Jesse Augsberger, who helped with the youth worship team for his internship in the Spring semester.

Thank you to all the leaders who have served this year. We thank the Lord for his provision of leaders and volunteers, and especially for a greater involvement of youth parents in the ministry this year. On Wednesdays, we averaged 35–40 by the end of the year; on Sundays, we hit peaks of 55–60. It would not be possible to minister to so many souls without a group of deeply committed partners in ministry. I thank God for those God has already appointed, and mention that our church is in search of just one more. Please join me in asking the Father to help us find a suitable *Pastor for Youth*—a man who will be able to share the gospel and his very self, in service of bringing these students to maturity in Christ, for many years to come.

So that we may present everyone mature in Christ,

The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink. The top signature is 'Andrew' and the bottom signature is 'Ballard', both written in a cursive style.


Andrew Ballard  
*Interim Coordinator for Youth*



**35–40** STUDENTS  
INVOLVED ON WEDNESDAYS



**55–60** STUDENTS  
INVOLVED ON SUNDAYS



**34** STUDENTS & LEADERS  
ATTENDED WINTER RETREAT



# COLLEGE MINISTRY

Ken Currie

*Ministerial Director for Campus Outreach*

*God is faithful,  
by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son,  
Jesus Christ our Lord.  
—1 Corinthians 1:9*

## Introduction

I am full of gratitude to the Lord for the privilege of serving in leadership at Bethlehem. After 20 years of serving as a pastor/elder, I transitioned to the role of “minister” in 2023, with the responsibility of leading Bethlehem’s college ministry. It has truly been a joy to engage with our Campus Outreach staff, provide leadership and discipleship for students, and participate in the pastoral/staff leadership team of the church.

## Personal

This year, Theresa and I celebrated 33 years of God’s faithfulness to us in the form of our covenant marriage. We stand amazed that in a sea of brokenness in our culture, and in the legacy of our own families, he has shown us such favor. Not only are we convinced and committed to continue on in faithfulness to each other, we truly enjoy life together! This stage of parenting our five children and three grandchildren has its particular joys and challenges, but overall we are loving the rich opportunities to love, pray for, support, and point our family to the hope of the gospel.

## College Ministry

I am responsible for ministry to college-aged adults at Bethlehem, with a specific emphasis on leading the *Campus Outreach Minneapolis* ministry team. One of our goals for this year was to integrate the various aspects of college ministry through our College Connection

Sunday School Class and other ministry events. Overall, I have been encouraged at the progress in this area. College Connection has averaged 20–25 participants, with students from numerous local campuses. In addition, several Bethlehem College students have participated in outreach opportunities at the University of Minnesota. One particular blessing has been working alongside, and mentoring, Bethlehem Seminary student Michael Zhang as he sows a personal ministry of evangelism and discipleship among Bethlehem College and Seminary students.

## Campus Outreach Minneapolis

We are seeking to fulfill the mission of Bethlehem Baptist Church (“spreading a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples through Jesus Christ”) by building laborers on the campus for the lost world. To accomplish this goal, we have staff who raise their support and seek to reach students on local campuses. This is our current staff team:

University of St. Thomas: Billy (Hannah) Kor, Ellie (Jake) Emley, Stephanie Pohl

University of Minnesota: Ethan Panchyshyn, Riley Johnson

Leadership: Elisa Horning (Women’s Ministry Area Director and U of M), Ken (Theresa) Currie

The campus ministry world seems to still be recovering from the pandemic—and, in our context, controversy and leadership transition. However, I can report encouraging progress in evangelistic outreach and discipleship. This past Fall, several hundred students were engaged with a goal to share the gospel, and over 40 students are involved in ongoing discipleship through our staff team; many of the students are attending Bethlehem and moving towards church membership, which is a core part of our vision.

### Summary

The Lord is faithful. We know this by the gift of faith. By grace, we also sometimes know this by visible fruit; and this year, we have seen encouraging fruit. We trust God that this fruit will endure through graduates who have been saturated with biblical, Gospel-centered discipleship, and who will live their post-college days committed to satisfaction in Christ above all, bearing witness in word and deed to the superior beauty of the gospel, and worship, fellowship, and partner in ministry with God's people through his local church.

Thank you, Bethlehem, for the privilege of serving,



Ken Currie

*Ministerial Director for Campus Outreach*



**20-25** STUDENTS IN  
COLLEGE CONNECTION CLASS



**40** STUDENTS IN  
ONGOING DISCIPLESHIP

# OPERATIONS & FINANCE

*And God is able to make all grace abound to you,  
so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times,  
you may abound in every good work.*  
—2 Corinthians 9:8

## Operations

2023 was a year of major transition for all of Bethlehem, including our Operations Department. We praise God for sustaining and strengthening us in the operational spheres of Finance, Media, Human Resources, Building & Properties, Communications, and Information Technology. We praise him for giving us several new staff members whose gifts and talents have so wonderfully met our needs. We praise him for financial health. We praise him for a successful close on the purchase of the Bethesda properties. We praise him for the faithful work of our *Financial Secretary*, Paul Johnson, and *Treasurer*, Bryan Rohde. We praise him for the Financial and Property Administrators' careful and attentive oversight of Bethlehem's resources.

For these things and so many more, we give thanks to our kind and generous God who continually provides all that we need.

Trusting Christ for another year of his sufficient grace,



Matt Moore  
*Ministerial Director for Operations*

## Finances

2023 giving (\$2.92M) exceeded expenses (\$2.78M) by about \$140,000, which allowed for a special allocation of the surplus to global and local outreach for the upcoming year. We ended 2023 with \$476K in general operating reserves and over \$1.9M in designated funds across a variety of categories, including the Bethesda property which settled in January. Outstanding debt was \$2.06M with an interest rate of 3.2%.

Join me in giving thanks to God for his grace and provision in 2023. He has shown his favor in numerous ways: a strong close to the financial year, an amazing group of pastors, elders, and staff who lead with joy and faithfulness, and a congregation who gives generously to the mission of the church.

Praise God for this goodness to us as we enter 2024,



Bryan Rohde  
*Treasurer*



Contributions to Bethlehem's general fund in 2023 totaled \$2,923,151. An additional \$977,049 was received for the purchase of the Bethesda property, and \$816,616 for designated funds such as Campus Outreach, short-term ministry trips, and the Helping Hand ministry.

We praise God for the following evidences of grace over the past year:

1,914 donors contributed to one or more of Bethlehem's ministry funds

1,103 of the aforementioned donors contributed to Bethlehem's general fund

66% of these contributions were given online

34% of these contributions were given by paper checks or cash

Remembering God's provision in 2023, please join us in praying for his blessing over our ministries this coming year, and consider how you may partake financially to serve others—near and far—for the glory of his great name.

In Christ,

*Paul Johnson*

Paul Johnson  
*Financial Secretary*



**1,914**  
GIVING UNITS



**\$140,000**  
GIVING SURPLUS



**66%**  
ONLINE CONTRIBUTIONS

# THE PURCHASE OF THE BETHESDA PROPERTY

Matt Moore, *Ministerial Director for Operations*



Bethesda Missionary Baptist Church, our longtime neighbor, listed their 8th Street property for sale in June of 2022. Listed were three adjacent lots that include a sanctuary building and a 15-unit residential apartment building. In the Spring of 2023, the council of elders decided to prayerfully explore the possibility of purchasing Bethesda's property, wondering if the Lord might be pleased for us to house local outreach ministries in the sanctuary building and rent the apartment units to students of Bethlehem College and Seminary.

After a season of prayer and due diligence, the elders recommended to the congregation

that we move forward in acquiring the property. The congregation approved the purchase on August 13, 2023, and we closed on the sale on January 8, 2024.

We praise God for unifying our church in the desire to purchase this property, and for providing the resources needed to execute the purchase. We are asking him to bring himself much glory through the future ministry that takes place on the property. We are also asking him to abundantly bless the congregation of Bethesda Missionary Baptist Church as they continue their ministry in a new location.

# STAFF

Andrew Ballard

*Interim Coordinator for Youth*

Brooke Ballard

*Administrative Assistant for Youth*

Erika Booth

*Coordinator for Database Management & Help Desk*

Joey Bures

*Ministry Assistant for Hispanic Ministries*

Lisa Burk

*Lead Coordinator for Nurseries*

Kirsten Christianson

*Ministerial Coordinator for Care & Counseling*

Lyndsey Cords

*Coordinator for Kitchen Ministries*

Ken Currie

*Ministerial Director for Campus Outreach*

Thomas Florestano

*Administrative Assistant for Global Outreach*

Scott Hayse

*Coordinator for Facilities*

Christian Hunt

*Administrator for Operations*

Paul Johnson

*Financial Secretary*

Daewon Kim

*Bookkeeper*

Andrew Lang

*Director for Systems*

Debbie Mairat

*Administrative Assistant for Children & Family Discipleship*

Cynthia McGill

*Administrative Assistant for Women's Ministry*

Rob Meysembourg

*Coordinator for Facility Infrastructure*

Matt Moore

*Ministerial Director for Operations*

Julie Olson

*Ministry Assistant for Classroom Support*

Christina Osburn

*Assistant Coordinator for Nurseries*

Dan Rebney

*Administrator for Systems*

Connor Riley

*Ministry Assistant for Youth*

Devin Schmidt

*Ministry Assistant for Worship & Music*

Krista Smith

*Receptionist*

Carol Steddom

*Pianist & Worship Assistant*

Dane Styczynski

*Director for Media Ministries*

Andrea Tjarks

*Administrative Assistant for Adult Discipleship & Operations*

Jake Wood

*Director for Human Resources*

*Spreading a passion  
for the supremacy of  
God in all things for  
the joy of all peoples  
through Jesus Christ*



**Bethlehem**  
Baptist Church