



Annual Report 2024



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COUNCIL OF ELDERS

Paul Delahunt
Elder Chairman

*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.
This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.
On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.*

—Matthew 22:37–40

This has been another year of enjoying God together. When I think about Bethlehem's experience as a church in 2024, what first comes to mind is gathering as saints to worship God week after week in the Sanctuary. He is always good to us, and he has been good to us again this past year. I believe that communing with the Lord at his Table, week in and week out, has been a particular blessing along those lines. I praise God for the many people who are serving to make that happen.

In serving as the *Elder Council Chairman*, I believe one of my key responsibilities is to have an accurate sense for the overall health of the church. To get this sense, I do not look first at finances, nor staff stability, nor attendance, nor things like these. It's not that these are unimportant factors; rather, they are simply not the true gauge of core health.

So, to what do I look? I seek to have a sense for two basic things: our love for the Lord and our love for each other. By God's grace, in my estimation at least, these loves are strong and evident in our midst as we enter 2025.

How can we maintain these loves? How can we foster them? How can we grow in them?

Many might respond, "Read the word and pray." I certainly do not disagree that reading the Scriptures and spending time with God are crucial activities for us as believers. If you want to dry up your soul, develop bad habits of ignoring these disciplines. (Let us be diligent to avoid such habits!)

However, there is a more fundamental project for which Bible reading and prayer are crucial weapons. Our deeper call is to put off the

old self and put on the new one (Ephesians 4:20–24), to crucify the flesh and walk according to the Spirit (Galatians 5:16–26), and to put to death the earthly things in us and put on love (Colossians 3:5–17). We need to be continually transformed by the renewal of our minds (Romans 12:1–2).

So, let each of us resolve all the more firmly that we will ask God, in his grace, to work these things in us in the year ahead, even as we look with gratitude to the graces behind.

The Elder Council is a wonderful group of godly men. I love serving with them, and I continue to learn from each one as we labor together.

We are grateful to be through the key decision points related to the Bethesda property. (Several staff members will continue to be busy with that project, and we thank them for that work!) We are hopeful to focus all the more fully on the task of equipping the saints for the work of ministry in the years and decades to come. One area that needs intentional engagement is the elders' investment in leadership development throughout the church. You can join us in praying that these efforts will bear good fruit in the coming years.

May we all look to Christ for energy and joy as we serve him this year.

In Christ,



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 Steddum
*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

Paul writes these words encouraging the church to remain confident that God will empower us for his glory in the obedience of faith by the power of the gospel of Christ.

As I reflect on this past year, I am filled with gratitude for God’s faithfulness to Bethlehem Baptist Church. His steadfast love and sustaining grace have been evident in every season of ministry, strengthening us for his glory and the obedience of faith.

In God’s Kind Providence

I have had the joy of serving as a pastor at Bethlehem since 1998 and, since 2021, as the *Pastor for Preaching & Vision*. It has been a profound privilege for my wife, Kathy, and I to belong to this church and to serve the Lord alongside you.

Phases of Ministry

As we navigate the three phases of ministry I outlined in last year’s Annual Report—Stabilize, Strengthen, and Transition—God has granted significant progress as we advance in the “Strengthen” phase. Our church’s financial health remains strong, and our average weekly attendance has increased by more than 5%.

Our “Strengthen” phase focuses on four key areas: discipleship, elder/pastoral care, staff leadership, and outreach.

Discipleship: We have deepened our efforts to equip believers through robust biblical and theological teaching for adults in Sunday school classes and seminars, while fostering

small groups and communities for fellowship, prayer, and mutual encouragement.

Elder/Pastoral Care: Our new Member Care system, launched in January 2024, has increased meaningful connections and relationships between elders and members.

Staff Leadership: This year, we were blessed to welcome two key leaders to our team:

- In March 2024, Laurel Eccles became our *Minister for Women*. Laurel brought with her a wealth of experience in women’s ministry and biblical counseling, having served both locally and globally. Her passion for teaching, mentoring, and encouraging women to grow in their relationship with God has already made a significant impact on our congregation. She has a desire to equip women to study and apply Scripture, foster Christ-centered friendships, and develop leaders for women’s ministry. We thank God for bringing Laurel and her husband, Justin, to our church family.
- In January 2025, Daniel Bouchoc joined us as a *Pastoral Resident for Youth & Families*. With several years of ministry experience and a strong theological alignment with our Elder Affirmation of Faith, Daniel is a much-needed gift to our church’s leadership. His vision for youth ministry emphasizes partnering with parents, combining teaching and a relational ministry that nurtures young people toward a biblical worldview and spiritual growth. We praise God for Daniel’s heart for discipleship and his readiness to lead and shepherd the next generation of believers.

We thank God for bringing Daniel and his wife, Addalai, to our church family.

Outreach: In glad collaboration with CityJoy, Campus Outreach, and Bethlehem College and Seminary, we continue refining an integrated outreach strategy that encompasses local evangelism, mercy ministry, global missions, and church planting. I am especially eager for Global Focus 2025 when we will reflect on the theme of “global church planting as a primary strategy to spread a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples through Jesus Christ.”

Bethlehem College and Seminary

Our partnership with Bethlehem College and Seminary continues to thrive. Hosting the school in our building is both a privilege and an opportunity to influence the next generation of Christian leaders. The insights and energy brought by students enrich our church life, much like a teaching hospital benefits from its residents. On a personal note, I’ve continued teaching church planting courses for the seminary. In May, I had the honor of participating in the commencement ceremony of Bethlehem College and Seminary in Cameroon—a reminder of the global reach of theological education.

Global Missions and Treasuring Christ Together Network

In November, Kathy and I traveled with a team to Chad, leading a spiritual life retreat for several Bethlehem global partners. This was a joyful opportunity to encourage those laboring to spread the gospel in difficult places. Additionally, while my involvement with the Treasuring Christ Together Network has decreased, I had the privilege of being a presenter at the TCTN Church Planting Weekender in Washington, D.C.

Looking Ahead

The elders have approved a sabbatical for me in 2025, which will take place July 1–September 30. Just as the Sabbath and the sabbatical year in Scripture (Exodus

20:8–11; Leviticus 25:1–7) reflect God’s design for periodic rest and restoration, the elders hope that this sabbatical will allow for spiritual renewal, physical rest, time spent with my family, and fresh vision for ministry. A sabbatical provides a focused time to deepen prayer, study, and theological reflection while also strengthening personal and family health. The church will benefit as well, as my sabbatical will provide opportunities for other leaders to grow and the congregation to depend more fully on Christ’s leadership. I look forward to returning refreshed and reenergized for the work God has for us together.

Finally...

I want to express my deep gratitude for the pastors, elders, deacons, staff, ministry leaders, volunteers, and every member of our congregation who labors faithfully in the Lord.

And a special thanks to my wife, Kathy, for her steadfast love, her partnership in life and family, and her faithful ministry alongside me at Bethlehem. Above all, thanks be to God, who holds us fast and strengthens us through the gospel for the obedience of faith.

For the advancement and joy of your faith,



Kenny Stokes
Pastor for Preaching & Vision

Our 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

*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

Worship

As the *Pastor for Worship & Ministry Development*, I point to Matthew 5:16 as the big “overarching” theme of last year’s pastoral ministry.

This year saw a very significant addition to our worship services at Bethlehem. In September, under the direction of the elders, we began celebrating The Lord’s Supper on a weekly basis. We believe that culminating our corporate worship with symbols of our blood-bought covenant is strategic for our community of Christ’s disciples in shaping our understanding of the gospel.

My sincere thanks to the volunteers who prepare and serve the Communion elements each week. Over 150 Bethlehem members volunteer in these roles. Thank you. Also a special thanks to those who oversee both the prep and serving teams. This is one of the most significant growth areas for us as a church this year.

In addition to our weekly worship services and seasonal celebrations, we recruited a 40-member choir that traveled ‘across the pond’ to minister at three locations throughout the Republic of Ireland, in conjunction with the Irish Gospel Partnership.

During the 12-day tour, we ministered through music and drama to four church planters and their families—encouraging them personally, serving their local churches, performing in their communities, and doing personal evangelism. Our group performed in schools, Catholic and Baptist churches, nursing homes, and on the street. We saw God work powerfully through dramatic presentations of The Passion, performed by Damian & Anna Leverett and their team.

God worked mightily through several members of our choir in personal street evangelism. This was a “new” grace for us as a choir. Through this experience, Damian & Anna were so encouraged that they felt the call of God to move forward with a new drama ministry they are calling “Scripture Speaks.”

Local Outreach

It was a great joy for me to see Jericho Road Ministries’ new Elliot Park location, under the direction of Kurt Swanson, begin ministry in mid-July. This is a big part of furthering Bethlehem’s vision for the Bethesda property. In addition to providing necessary supplies, canned goods, and fresh produce, Jericho Road offers a wide variety of client services aimed at “leading people from crisis to Christ-centered hope and restoration.” And the demand for this assistance is growing. At this

new site, Jericho Road serves an average of 20 people a day, mostly from the Elliot Park Neighborhood. These are our neighbors, and I am thrilled that we now have this God-given place from which to shine the light of Jesus's love into our community.

In August, we hosted our first "Neighborhood Outreach Month," which focused on the needs of our neighborhood by highlighting CityJoy ministers who are at work spreading gospel light in Minneapolis. The month began with National Night Out on August 1. That evening, in partnership with the Elliot Park Board, over 25 volunteers (mostly from Bethlehem) served more than 400 meals to our near neighbors. This was a powerful testimony to the people of Elliot Park that our church community cares about them.

Throughout August, we heard personal testimonies from CityJoy ministers during Sunday morning worship services. I think the ministers and the church were mutually encouraged by what God is doing around us. The month then finished with a seminar entitled "Who Is My Neighbor?", presented by leaders from Bethlehem's Hispanic, Somali, and Native American outreach ministries. In order to have a relationship with our neighbors, we need to learn *who they are* and *how they communicate*; the goal of the seminar was to equip our congregation for this task. Over 50 people attended and were inspired to reach out to their community in new ways.

The elders graciously allowed me to take a three-month sabbatical from October–December. It was restful, encouraging, and needed; I thank God for this gift. During this time, I believe God met me and our family in powerful, life-giving ways. I also want to offer a heartfelt thanks to Bobby Kunkle, *Ministry Assistant for Worship & Music*, who planned and led worship in my absence. Bobby joined staff in July and will be helping lead worship until his graduation from Bethlehem College and Seminary in May of this year.

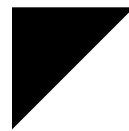
I am delighted to be back, and I look forward

to seeing what God has in store for us at Bethlehem in 2025.

To God be the glory!



Chuck Steddum
Pastor for Worship & Ministry Development



1,345 POUNDS OF
FOOD AND PERSONAL CARE
PRODUCTS COLLECTED
FOR JERICO 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

*... We have our hope set on the living God,
who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.*

—1 Timothy 4:10

Introduction

“[Jesus’s] authority on earth allows us to dare to go to all the nations. His authority in heaven gives us our only hope of success. And his presence with us leaves us no other choice.”
—John Stott

Global Partners

Last year, we began 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. We are their main sending church.

Commended global partners have similarly completed Bethlehem’s Nurture Program and were commissioned by Bethlehem, but they are now sent and financially supported by another church. However, because they feel a strong connection to Bethlehem, they would like to still be tethered to Bethlehem in some way. So the Global Outreach team decided that we will still provide them with prayer support and invite them to all our global partner events. 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 partners’ name. (The commended global partners are on the last five pages of the prayer calendar.)

As we enter 2025, Bethlehem has 47 commissioned global partners and 15 commended global partners. In total, our commissioned global partners number 82 adults and 76 children—35 couples and 12 singles—living in 27 countries of the world. This is a total of 158 individuals! And our commended global partners number 29 adults and 29 kids—14 couples and 1 single. This is a total of 58 individuals!

Alex Sclafani and Daniel Rimmereid are no longer global partners with Bethlehem. Alex got married and moved back to the US, and Daniel changed his membership to another church.

Global Outreach (GO) Team

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

Global Outreach (GO) Staff

In August, Thomas & Madeleine Florestano welcomed their first baby, Joy. Thomas then transitioned from his position as *Administrative Assistant for Global Outreach to Ministry Assistant for Wednesday Programming and Local Outreach*, and Pearl Lundquist was hired to take his 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. They will both transition off our team when they graduate this Spring.

Barnabas Teams

Each global partner has a Barnabas Team that prays for them regularly and supports them relationally, emotionally, spiritually, and practically. At the end of 2024, over 250 faithful servants were providing support to our global partners by serving on Barnabas Teams.

Global Focus

The theme for Global Focus 2024 was “Jesus, Hope of the Nations.” One of our goals for the twelve days of Global Focus (October 16–27) was to help our congregation get to know, and learn how to pray for, our global partners. On Wednesday, October 16, we created a “becoming a global partner” journey through the church building, with various stations that represented different aspects of the missions preparation process. The journey concluded in rooms with internationally-themed displays from our global partners and Bethlehem members who are from other countries.

Following that, The S. Family shared music and stories from Central Asia. On October 23, global partners shared about their ministry and provided the congregation with prayer requests during our Wednesdays Together programming. Our Sunday worship services featured sermons from global partner Dustin S. and Pastor Kenny.

On October 26, we hosted a Men’s Breakfast, where a global partner family shared about their work in the horn of Africa. And, as usual, we closed the week with “Missions in the Manse,” where 40 people gathered to be introduced to the Nurture Program and prayerfully consider long-term missions.

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. 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” who would regularly pray for them. We continue to host Women in Missions monthly, under the leadership of former global partner Pamela Kovacs.

Global Diaconate

The Global Diaconate fund is intended to provide relief for the poorest of the poor around the world. We just started using these funds in 2024, after being on hold for two years. We hope to bless our global partners by providing them with funds to minister to the poor and those in need around them—to be the hands and feet of Christ, with the hope that those served would be introduced to Jesus.

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. Here are some highlights from 2024: we sent a team from the Youth Ministry to the Dominican Republic; Pastor Brad led a tour group to Turkey and the seven churches of Revelation, afterward traveling with elder John Mielke to bless global partners in Georgia, Armenia, and Iraq; we sent a team to Chad, to bless our four global partner units there; and we sent a pastoral visit to Cameroon to encourage Dieudonné & Dominique Tamfu in their ministry at Bethlehem College and Seminary’s extension site and the Eglise Baptiste Bethléem church plant.

Prayer for Global Partners

Every Monday at 7am, a group of church members gathers outside the Prayer Room to pray for our Global Partner of the Week and the nations. When able, we have our Global Partner of the Week join us live; if not, we ask them to join us via Zoom.

Business as Mission (BAM)

We have funds available for global partners who are trying to start a business overseas (known as “Business as Mission” or “Business for Transformation”). We gave out no loans in 2024.

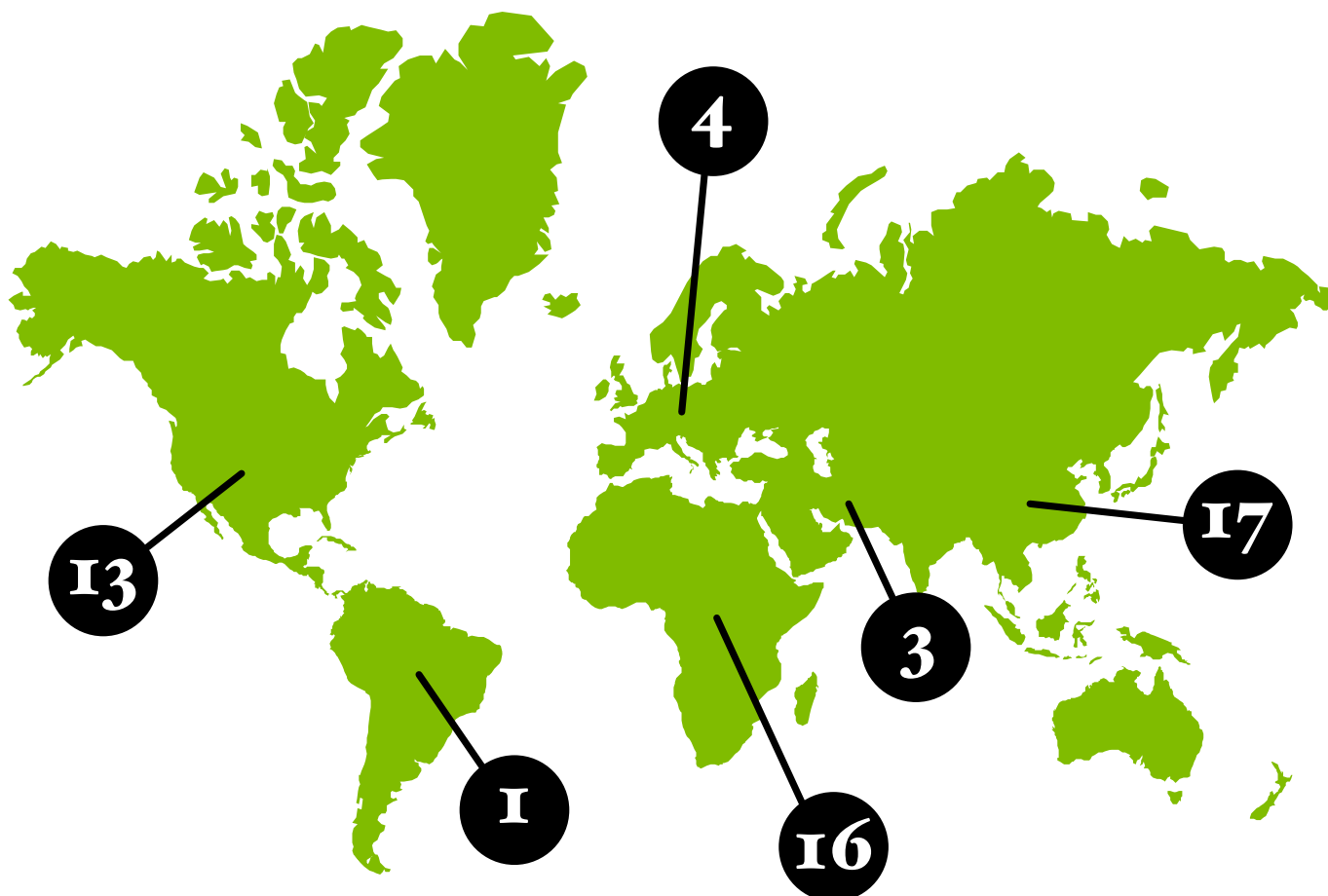
It is a joy to serve at a church with a 153-year legacy of being globally-minded. We praise God for Bethlehem’s mission of “spreading a passion of the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples through Jesus Christ”! Thank you for your partnership in the greatest work in the universe!

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

*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

The Apostle Paul said in Ephesians 4 that believers have the joy and responsibility of being part of God’s wonderful, sanctifying work in each other’s lives. It is my joy to report that, by God’s grace, this took place in 2024 within the Adult Discipleship Department in several ways.

In January, our Young Adult Ministry invited former elder Paul Poteat to be the speaker for their annual retreat. More than 60 young adults attended to hear the word and encourage one another in the faith. They then continued to meet monthly throughout the year—including ministry such as delivering cookies to shut-ins from our church family.

In March, the Lord allowed us to launch our first annual Marriage Retreat. About 40 couples attended, and we had a beautiful time of fellowship and spiritual growth.

Our Men’s Ministry conducted several activities such as the weekly Friday Men’s Group, a Men’s Breakfast on April 6, a cookout on August 10, and a Global Outreach Men’s Breakfast on October 26.

Our Hispanic Ministry continued gathering in the Chapel, and new families have joined our weekly worship time. Spanish-speakers’ participation in Bethlehem’s ESL classes has increased and several of them have become members of the church.

By God’s grace, we ended 2024 with 39 active small groups (440 total adults). We hosted two appreciation dinners to equip and encourage our small group leaders. We saw many church members benefiting from the fellowship, accountability, prayer, and meditation in the word that happened in our small groups week after week.

The Lord helped us to grow in discipleship through Sunday school classes. We were blessed by the following classes: New Testament and Old Testament Survey, Astonished by God, Theological Foundations, Strive to Be More Satisfied in God, Gospel-Centered Marriage, and King’s Friends. Our Wednesdays Together was also a time of fellowship and growing in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ as we began studying the book of Ephesians together.

The Senior Sojourners ministry continued to meet monthly. Some of the highlights from this year included hearing from global partners, the third annual “Day at the Lake,” a visit to the Minnesota State Fair, and a very special Christmas program. Our seniors love Bethlehem very much and serve us well through their prayers for us. My special thanks to Linda Lockman and her team for providing delicious lunches for the 20–30 saints who regularly attend these gatherings.

As a church, we had the joy of witnessing 16 baptisms and welcoming 59 new brothers and sisters into church membership. We also worked for several months on ensuring that our membership rolls were as accurate as possible.

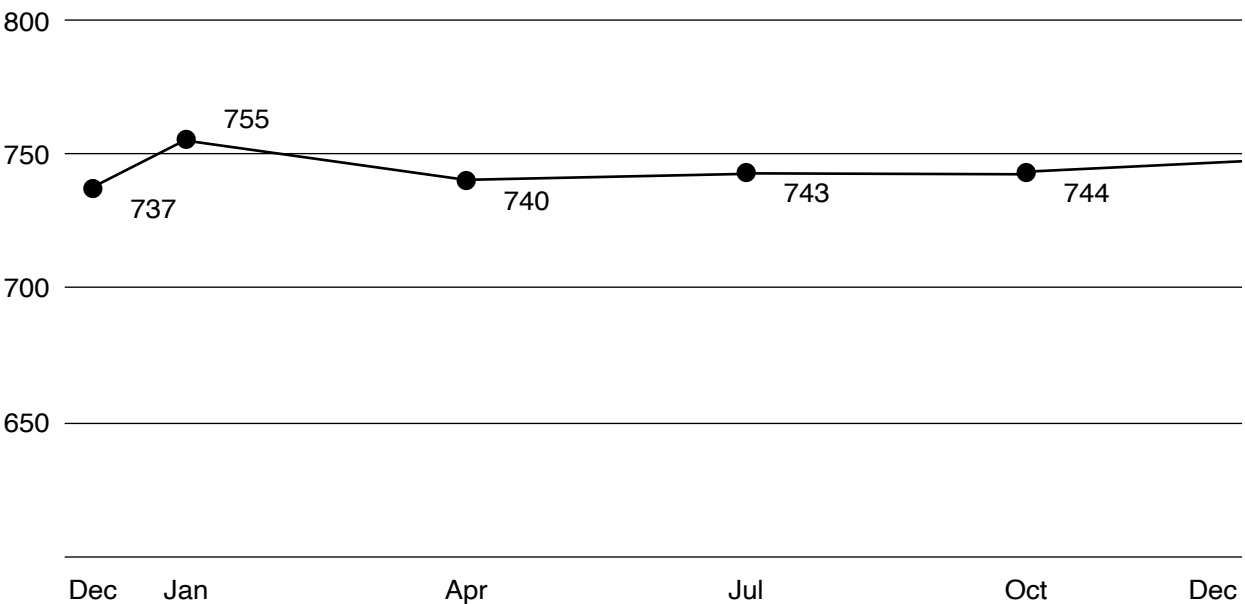
We are thankful for what the Lord has done in 2024. We give him all the glory and pray that he will continue the work of grace in our lives.

In Christ,



René González
Pastor for Adult Discipleship

MEMBERSHIP





WOMEN'S MINISTRY

Laurel Eccles
Minister for Women

*Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him,
rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.*

—2 Colossians 2:6–7

Bethlehem's Women's Ministry exists to support the church's vision of "spreading a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples through Jesus Christ." We long for women to treasure Christ, find ever-increasing joy by knowing more deeply the glorious triune God revealed in scripture, and embracing with assurance the great gospel hope offered us in Christ.

On March 4, I had the privilege of stepping into the role of *Minister for Women* at Bethlehem. It has been an incredible honor to serve alongside the pastors and staff, all of whom share a deep commitment to glorifying God and finding joy in his presence. My first nine months at Bethlehem have been a season of learning, prayer, and building new relationships. I'm deeply grateful for the support and wisdom I've received from the pastors, elders, and staff who have patiently answered my many questions and encouraged me during these initial months. My husband, Justin, and I are especially thankful for the love, encouragement, and prayers we've received from the Bethlehem family as we transitioned from Ecuador to the Twin Cities.

It has been a season of transition for the Women's Ministry. During the first several months I wanted to become acquainted with the women of Bethlehem and hear from them. To that end, I hosted seven well-attended gatherings that included much lively conversation and deep interest in the future of the Women's Ministry. The input from these

gatherings, along with feedback collected through many coffee dates and a survey, produced this year's theme of "Growing Together," which served as the foundation for our entire ministry in 2024.

As I now continue in my role, my heart remains committed to helping women treasure Christ in every season of life, leaning on his grace and truth as we grow together in faith. I look forward to walking alongside you all in this journey, and I'm eager to see how God will work in the years ahead.

Bible Studies

In 2024, the Precept Bible Study on the Gospel of Mark, faithfully led by Tammy Peters, came to a conclusion. Our summer morning and evening inductive Bible studies, entitled *A Summer in the Psalms*, was written and led by Cynthia McGill, Cheryl Lonski, and myself. The time spent growing together in God's Word was meaningful and the fellowship was sweet. This Fall we began a morning and evening, nine-month Bible study of Ephesians by Keri Fulmar—a beautiful study on the incredible gift of grace we have through Jesus Christ. Our Spanish-speaking precept Bible study, led by Magali González and Miriam Serber, continued in the Gospel of Mark. The Lord is at work in the hearts of women, stirring them to come together over the word of God, and participation has grown by 80%. Lisa Burk and her amazing team of volunteers blessed many mothers by lovingly caring for their children so that they could participate in the studies.

MOMS

Bethlehem's MOMS ministry continued to flourish in 2024 under the leadership of Ana Bures and Emily Daniels. Each week, an average of 35 women came together to learn and grow from thoughtful speakers who reminded us of the gift of grace we have through Christ. We covered topics such as parenting, family worship, communication in marriage, anxiety, and persevering faithfully in motherhood. Our MOMS ministry could not exist without the incredible childcare Lisa Burk and her team provide for our bimonthly gatherings. We are thankful for the way they serve this ministry by loving and caring for the children.

White Cross

This creative and faithful group of women, led by MaryAnn Burnes, sews beautiful handmade quilts for newborn children in our church. Meeting twice each month, they thoughtfully constructed and distributed over 25 quilts in 2024.

Summer Book Club

We had over 40 women participate in our five summer book clubs that gathered across the Twin Cities. Books read and discussed included: *Practicing Affirmation*, *The Problem of Pain*, *A Grief Observed*, *Street Smarts*, and *When People are Big and God is Small*. We were delighted to include an additional group of middle and high school young women who gathered to read *The Chronicles of Narnia* together. Our Summer Book Clubs have provided a great way for the women of Bethlehem to grow together and deepen relationships during a season when our regular programming is on pause.

Leadership Development

The Women's Ministry offered a leadership development class called "Growing in Scripture" in the Fall of 2024. The class was based on the "First Principles (Women)" course published by The Charles Simeon Trust; it was designed to help women gain the tools needed

to more accurately interpret Scripture for their own personal growth and to more effectively encourage, mentor, disciple, and teach others from Scripture. The class, taught by Kathy Stokes and myself, was dynamic, challenging, and enjoyable as we dug deep into Scripture, discovering its rich treasures.

Women to Women Mentoring (Formerly Titus 2)

Fall 2024 saw the re-launching of mentoring groups at Bethlehem. Our Women to Women Mentoring Groups aim to support the discipleship ministry of the church by calling women to establish godly mentoring relationships that encourage and equip them to live for God's glory. We are encouraged by the eight groups, representing 15 leaders and over 65 participants, that now meet around the Twin Cities. This year, all the groups read and discussed the same book: *Women and God: Hard Questions, Beautiful Truth* by Kathleen Nielson.

Special Events

The Women's Ministry hosted a Spring Tea on May 4. The title of the event was "New Mercies," based on Lamentations 3:22–23. Over 150 women were in attendance. Robyn Brenner, Adrienne Sharma, and Connie Oman gave beautiful testimonies, and I gave a short devotional. Our Advent gathering, "O Come Let Us Adore Him," was held on December 6, and over 170 women attended. The evening of worship included a spoken word performance from Luke 1–2 by Anna Leverett and Elizabeth Tachick. We also added two group nature hikes to the calendar in 2024. Those who attended enjoyed idyllic Fall walks and good fellowship.

It is a joy to serve the women of Bethlehem. My husband, Justin, and I look forward to worshiping, growing, and ministering side by side with you, our new spiritual family.

I would like to especially thank Cynthia McGill, *Women's Ministry Assistant*, and Andrea Tjarks, *Administrative Assistant for*

Adult Discipleship, who have come alongside me in many practical ways, helping me get established in my new role. And my thanks to the nine women who, without knowing me very well, agreed to serve as my Women's Ministry Council, guiding me through my first year: Kathy Stokes, Ruth Bloomstrom, Ana Bures, Emily Daniels, Adrienne Sharma, Ellie Emley, Beth Lundstrom, and Cheryl Lonski. It has been a joy to get to know them and learn from them. The council's prayer is that the women of Bethlehem would continue to grow together in their love for the Lord and his word.

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!

—Psalm 136:1

Laurel Eccles

Laurel Eccles
Minister for Women



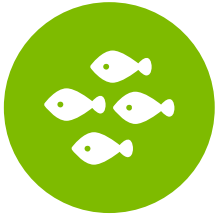
177 LADIES ATTENDED
THE ADVENT GATHERING



5 SUMMER BOOK CLUBS
HOSTED AROUND THE CITIES



20 QUILTS
DISTRIBUTED TO NEW BABIES



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 6:14a

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.”

I am grateful to our faithful Father that, by his grace, I can say the above statement remains current and fresh. What follows is a continuation of his work in 2014, to the praise of his glorious grace in Christ.

In 2024, we had the privilege of serving 122 households, which included 249 children and 29 babies born into our congregation.

Ministry Through Events

I am so grateful for our Father’s provision in our family gatherings. He blessed our annual ‘Jesus Lives’ event, which prepares families for Holy Week, our Summer Days family picnic, the Mother/Son Retreat in April, and the Father/Daughter Retreat in September. At our parent conference in April (titled “Light in the Darkness”) and our parent seminar in

November (titled “Messengers of Mercy and Teachers of Truth”), he was gracious to show us how to involve the children so that, as their parents were encouraged in the gospel, they were being pointed to Jesus Christ. This new lesson was a gift. I am always learning, and our Father is so kind and gracious in leading me. I am glad to report that the resounding theme throughout all these gatherings was Jesus Christ and his good news applied in the home.

Classroom Ministry

Our ministry to children in Nursery–Grade 5 is captured by what I call “the big five”: God’s word, prayer, and song, in an atmosphere of love, pointing to Jesus Christ and the gospel.

Lisa Burk (*Lead Coordinator for Nurseries*), Christina Osburn (*Assistant Coordinator for Nurseries*), and Charles MacDonald (*Assistant Coordinator for Nurseries*), provided faithful leadership in our nursery classrooms. They and a team of glad volunteers served the little ones by the sufficient grace our Lord provides. I’m glad to note that each Sunday, every child is prayed over by name, in Jesus’ name.

Our Kindergarten–Grade 5 Sunday school classes are led by dear people who come alongside parents by faithfully serving their children each week of the school year. They are such a gift. Whether the lesson is from the Old or New Testament, Christ and the gospel are on display. I am also grateful for

staff members Julie Olson (*Ministry Assistant for Classroom Support*) and Debbie Mairet (*Administrative Assistant for Children & Family Discipleship*). We are a glad team.

I close with a memory from our “Wednesdays Together” gathering on December 11 that captures the heartbeat of our ministry. On that evening the classroom for our Kindergarten–Grade 5 gathering, Kids Together, was set up much like a living room. It was lit with soft lamplight, and the children helped us display a nativity set and a Holy Week set. Through Scripture, prayer, and song we recalled to mind the manger and the cross—the incarnation, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. With God’s help, children and adults gazed upon the Son. This honors him and glorifies his Father. It was a very special

evening and is a fitting summary to a report like this. I conclude by saying, “Father, thank you for this grace, and please grant more. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”



Bud Burk
Pastor for Children & Family Discipleship



103

HOUSEHOLDS SERVED



217

CHILDREN



29

BABIES BORN



YOUTH MINISTRY

Andrew Ballard

Interim Coordinator for Youth

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

—1 Peter 4:10-11

Weekly Rhythms

In the Spring, we finished our Sunday school series *Shadows of Grace, Silhouettes of a Savior*. In the Fall, I taught the whole Youth Ministry an introductory series titled *Absolute Discipleship: Living Life Under the Kingly Rule of Christ*. Then, the middle school and high school students split for separate series. I continued to teach the *Absolute Discipleship* series to the high school students, addressing how to bring different areas such as technology, relationships, and work “under the Kingly rule of Christ.” Matthew Harris began taking the middle school students through a series on James. Our average Sunday attendance was 55 students.

At Wednesdays Together, we continued our series on the book of Hebrews, benefiting from the gift of a team of teachers. Our average attendance on Wednesdays was 45 students.

Events

We had a wonderful time at Trout Lake Camp for our annual Winter Retreat in January, where 49 students gathered to play in the snow and hear from James Alexander (youth dad and volunteer) on “God’s Heart in a Magnifying Glass: A 4-Part Slideshow of King David.” Several men were commended for carrying all the luggage across a bridge and down a hill in the snow during the first session. It was about four degrees Fahrenheit.

In the summer, we were blessed with the opportunity to bring 31 students to Lake Beauty Bible Camp for our annual Middle School Summer Camp. Caleb Geary (student at Bethlehem Seminary) led us in worship, Tony Morales spoke to us on “God’s Family,” and Brooke and I dressed up for the daily

“Time to Taco ‘bout the Day” presentation. I got stuck in the salsa jar costume at least once.

I was also privileged to serve (along with Thomas Florestano and other volunteers) the teenagers of global partners who attended the Global Partner Reunion ‘24 in July. We had a field day and picnic, an outing to the Como Zoo, and a game day at Bethlehem’s campus. Zach Tebow and I also got “spanked” (badly beaten) at Pickleball by Zach’s parents, Tom & Joy. (We let them win, obviously. It was on purpose. Anything to encourage our global partners...)

We had our Leaders’ Day Away in August, followed by our Fall Day Away in October. It was a joy to gather with our leaders at Ham Lake Baptist Camp to give updates, share meals, and bond with and encourage one another. I spoke to the leaders on the perennially relevant topic that Good Leaders Come and Go. At the Fall Day Away, we brought 23 students down to Dave & Roxanne Thorson’s farm in Burnsville to play sports, compete in classic field day competitions, and worship God through Word and song as we heard on the theme of “Prayer” from Matthew Harris and Austin Shuck.

This year, we were sad to say goodbye to Connor Riley, our beloved *Ministry Assistant for Middle School*. Connor was an excellent Sunday school teacher and brought us our delightful Danger in Durango Mystery Night. We believe that the Lord has good works for Connor to set his hand to back home in Michigan, and we wish him well.

At the same time, we were glad to say hello to Matthew Harris, the new *Ministry Assistant for Middle School*. Matthew has swiftly become a

dear and reliable companion in the ministry. He brings his whole personality and all his ability to everything he does. Matthew is a man of good integrity, deep mirth, and noble character. I have told him, and now state publicly, that if the Lord had given him as a gift to the ministry for my entire tenure, I could not have been happier. As it is, he was given to us at exactly the right time, and I thank God for it.

Finally, this year has brought a leadership transition for the Youth Ministry. After serving as the *Ministerial Coordinator for Youth Ministry* for three and a half years (I was “Interim” until the last few months of my employment)—and Brooke serving as the *Administrative Assistant for Youth Ministry* for about a year and a half—our chapter in Minnesota came to an end. On December 1, 2024 I was voted in by the congregation of Bull Street Baptist Church in Savannah, GA to join the pastoral staff, with a focus on college and youth ministry. Brooke and I were sent off with more love and commendation than we could have imagined.

So much could be said here. I think it would be best to share with you one of my favorite literary excerpts:

“‘Good morning!’ said Bilbo, and he meant it. The sun was shining, and the grass was very green. But Gandalf looked at him from under long bushy eyebrows that stuck out further than the brim of his shady hat.

“What do you mean?” he said. “Do you wish me a good morning, or mean that it is a good morning whether I want it or not; or that you feel good this morning; or that it is a morning to be good on?”

“All of them at once,” said Bilbo. ...

[Shortly after this, Bilbo repeats his favorite phrase.]

*“Good morning!” he said at last. “We don’t want any adventures here, thank you! You might try over The Hill or across The Water.” By this he meant that the conversation was at an end. (from J. R. R. Tolkien’s *The Hobbit*)*

Some greetings, such as “Good morning!” in *The Hobbit*, can carry many different meanings, and even “all of them at once, I suppose.” On occasion a greeting may even be used to mean “goodbye.” Paul would often

open his letters with some elements of “grace and peace” to his readers. And he would often conclude with some similar sort of statement. Grace and peace at the beginning, grace and peace at the conclusion—and, it is implied, grace and peace all the way through.

This has been our experience at Bethlehem. Three and a half years ago, we entered with grace and peace. Not that there was no mess to speak of! In summer and Fall of 2021, the church had at least a couple of things to attend to. And with an early, emergency c-section for Brooke and some health concerns for me, our minds were also in more than one place. But the Lord still blessed us with grace and peace as we entered this community. He blessed us with grace and peace in the many long weeks and late nights and early mornings, all the way through. It has been our greatest privilege to serve this church in this way—and my favorite job I have ever had. And the Lord has now given us—and, we hope, given *through* us—great grace and peace here at the end.

Thank you for this opportunity to love and serve alongside you, our dear Bethlehem family. Grace and peace to you. Or, in other words...good morning!

Grace and peace,



Andrew Ballard
Ministerial Coordinator for Youth Ministry



76 STUDENTS
INVOLVED ON WEDNESDAYS



91 STUDENTS
INVOLVED ON SUNDAYS



COLLEGE MINISTRY

Ken Currie

Ministerial Director for Campus Outreach

Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

—1 Corinthians 15:1–5

I give thanks to God for the privilege of leading the College Ministry of Bethlehem Baptist Church, and my wife and I praise God for the blessing of participating in the worship and fellowship of our church.

Personal

This year Theresa and I celebrated 34 years of marriage. I must testify to the amazing gift of this life partner. We simply revel in the enjoyment that we find in doing life together. I truly believe that any fruitfulness in my life is enhanced in incalculable ways by the joy that Theresa and I share—and this, of course, only by the grace of God secured in the gospel and poured out moment by moment through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. In addition to the grace of God in marriage, we are thankful for five children and four grandchildren, and the love that we share as a family.

Staff

My responsibility as the *Ministerial Director for Campus Outreach* is to help college students and college-aged folks grow in their relationship with Christ, in the context of Bethlehem, unto living in this world with gospel-informed wisdom and a burden for unbelievers.

For me, a primary means toward this end is leading the Campus Outreach Minneapolis staff team, who primarily serve students at the University of Minnesota and the University

of St. Thomas. We ended 2024 and are entering into 2025 with the following staff:

- Ken Currie, *Downtown Area Director*
- Ellie Emley, *University of St. Thomas Campus Staff*
- Elisa Horning, *Downtown Area Director & Counseling Consultant/University of Minnesota*
- Billy Kor, *University of St. Thomas Campus Director*
- Peter Lane, *Contingent Staff (University of Minnesota)*
- Ethan Panchyshyn, *University of Minnesota Campus Director*
- Stephanie Pohl, *University of St. Thomas Campus Staff*

In addition to these full-time staff, Michael Zhang, a Bethlehem Seminary student, has served as a part-time intern. He is helping us as we seek to integrate students that attend Bethlehem College and Seminary with students from the U of M, St. Thomas, and elsewhere. Although we are targeting specific colleges in the Twin Cities, we are encouraged and grateful to have students from other campuses connected to us as well.

Ministry

Our strategy for ministry has several components. On the relational or 'grass roots' level, we are seeking to evangelize

and disciple students. Our prayer is that students will come to saving faith in Jesus, and, growing in grace, gain a burden to evangelize those around them. This year has been an encouraging year as we have seen growth in conversions and student participation in discipleship. One of the highlights of the year was six students being baptized at Bethlehem!

In order to support and strengthen interpersonal discipleship, we had a number of opportunities for students throughout the year:

- College Connection: this takes place each Sunday after the 9am worship service. In the Fall, we studied “the attributes of God.”
- Missions Night: in conjunction with Global Focus, this is a gathering to hear from missionaries and gain understanding of how to pursue missions as a calling.
- Women’s Retreat for the U of M students.
- Real Talk: a weekly evangelistic meeting at the University of St. Thomas.
- New Year’s Conference: this took place in Indianapolis and was a partnership of Campus Outreach ministries throughout the upper Midwest.
- Summer Bible Study: this past summer, in partnership with The North Church, we held a weekly Bible study for college students from various campuses across the metro area.
- Summer Training Project in South Carolina: an eight-week intensive discipleship experience.
- Cross-Cultural Project in New Zealand: a summer-long missions experience.
- Spring Break Trips to South Carolina: provided fruitful evangelistic opportunities.

An ongoing encouragement has been the connection between Bethlehem’s College Ministry and Young Adult Ministry, in terms of a landing place for students upon graduation. Campus Outreach’s vision is that our students would have a high view of the local church as the primary place for Christian growth, community, and ministry. I praise God that a large number of men and women currently in the Young Adults Ministry were previous

participants in Bethlehem’s College Ministry.

All of this is just a taste of what the Lord is doing through the College Ministry at Bethlehem. Please join me in praising him for his faithfulness, and let us look together with anticipation for what he may do, by the power of his Spirit, in the coming year.

With privilege and joy,



Ken Currie
Ministerial Director for Campus Outreach



9 STUDENTS BAPTIZED



30 STUDENTS IN
COLLEGE CONNECTION CLASS



50 STUDENTS IN
ONGOING DISCIPLESHIP

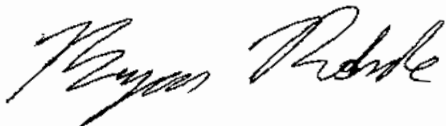
OPERATIONS & FINANCE

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.
—Ephesians 3:20-21

To recap finances for Bethlehem, giving of \$2.90M covered our expenses for the year and also allowed for a small portion to be set aside for future projects and repairs. We closed the year in a strong cash position with \$461K in general operating reserves (greater than 10% of the annual budget) and \$790K in designated funds across a variety of categories - helping hand, capital projects, etc. Outstanding debt was \$2.94M, which includes the outstanding obligation for the Bethesda property.

I'm incredibly thankful for the stewardship of the ministry and operations team to manage expenses and initiatives according to God's provision, and so grateful for the faithfulness and generosity of the congregation. For 2025, my prayer and hope is that the reality of God's abounding grace, faithfulness, steadfastness, and love would spur us to greater generosity, cheerfulness, and good works in the coming year.

Join me in giving thanks for the Lord's blessings and financial provision to Bethlehem in 2024!



Bryan Rohde
Treasurer

Contributions to Bethlehem's general fund in '24 totaled \$2,902,069. \$714,494 was received 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:

- 1,174 donors contributed to one or more of Bethlehem's ministry funds.
- 633 of the aforementioned donors contributed to Bethlehem's general fund.
- 71% of these contributions were given online.
- 29% of these contributions were given by paper checks or cash.

Remembering God's provision in 2024, 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
Financial Secretary



71%
ONLINE GIVING



1,174
GIVING UNITS

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

Mikaela Choi
Assistant for Media Ministries

Lyndsey Cords
Coordinator for Kitchen Ministries

Ken Currie
Ministerial Director for Campus Outreach

Laurel Eccles
Minister for Women

Thomas Florestano
Administrative Assistant for Global Outreach

Scott Hayse
Coordinator for Facilities

Christian Hunt
Administrator for Operations

Paul Johnson
Financial Secretary

Daewon Kim
Bookkeeper

Bobby Kunkle
Ministry Assistant for Worship & Music

Andrew Lang
Director for Systems

Pearl Lundquist
Administrative Assistant for Global Outreach

Debbie Mairet
Administrative Assistant for Children & Family Discipleship

Charles MacDonald
Assistant Coordinator for Nurseries

Cynthia McGill
Administrative Assistant for Women's Ministry

Rob Meysembourg
Coordinator for Facility Infrastructure

Matt Moore
Ministerial Director for Operations

Caleece Myhre
Administrator for Human Resources

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

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



Bethlehem
Baptist Church