

**Please Note:**

This newsletter was written when BLDM was still known as Bethesda Auxiliary and the newsletter was posted to the AbleLight website. Going forward, the newsletter is the sole property of Bethesda Lutheran Disability Ministries and will be posted on our website (www.BethesdaLDM.org).

Shepherd's News – April 2024

From the President

Dear Auxiliary Friends and Donors,

I am excited to share with you about the Auxiliary's Governing Board meeting held via zoom in March, 2024. Your board is a wonderful group of Christian men and women with great concern "for the least of the brothers" as shared by Christ in Matthew 25:40 "The King will reply, I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."

The board was pleased to have both the AbleLight CEO, Keith Jones, and Vice President of Faith Integration, Shelley Bobb, join our meeting. AbleLight and the Auxiliary Governing Board are hoping to come together in a closer relationship for the future.

At the September, 2023, Governing Board meeting, \$10,000 was approved as scholarship money for the AbleLight college students

for the 2023-2024 school year. The students and families were overwhelmed with joy for these scholarships.

Scholarships for the 2024-2025 school year will again be available for upper class college and seminary students who are planning a career in a disability related field. Please look for information in this newsletter if you know someone who could apply for this scholarship.

The Auxiliary will be looking for Cross and Bell recipients for 2024. Additional information and a form to return are found in the newsletter.

The future leaders school program “Changing Lives One Heart at a Time” is available for the 2024-2025 school year. Upon completion of the program, a grant of \$1,500 is available for the school for participation in the program. Please email me @ craigail@yahoo.com if you would like more information about the program. Forest Hills Lutheran Christian School in Cornelius, Oregon, is currently using the program. I look forward to hearing about their experiences as they complete the program.

Nominations were submitted for the offices of President, Vice-President, and Treasurer for 2024-2026. Karen Carter from Whitehall, Wisconsin, who served as the Governing Board President from 2016-2020 will serve as President, Reuben

Schmitz from Watertown, Wisconsin, will serve as Vice-President, Kenetha Mann from Lakewood, Colorado, will serve as Treasurer and Rev. Dr. Nathan Meador from Saukville, Wisconsin, will serve as Parliamentarian for the Board. These new board members will begin serving in their respective positions at the close of the September, 2024, zoom meeting. Praise God for these wonderful people who have agreed to continue the work of the Bethesda Auxiliary.

Prayers are very welcome for the people served by AbleLight and their caregivers (staff and direct support professionals) as they work together each day; for the Bethesda Executive Team that their decisions will be reflective of God's love and mercy; and for the Bethesda Auxiliary as they seek to do God's will and share their love and concern with persons with IDD.

Reaching forward in faith and serving Christ in love,

Gail Nicolaus, President

**From our Pastoral Counselor: Rev. Dr.
Martin Koeller**

“The Last Offering” vs. “The Love Goes On”

They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. “Sir,” they said, “we would like to see Jesus.”

John 12:21

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Matthew 28:19

Back in 2006, my mother-in-law, Betty Harm (my wife, Linda's, mom) passed away just before Mother's Day. While going through her belongings, we came upon a blue can with a white cross on it. We recognized it as her LWML Mite Box can. Linda said she would take it to our next LWML meeting and put in her mom's last mites for the Lord. But it wasn't! You see, even 18 years later, mites are still being collected, now through Linda (the next generation of "Women in Mission")! Plus, we do not know how many others her mom inspired personally, as well as indirectly through her prayers and mission projects she supported through the years.

Jesus told his disciples to go out and "make disciples". By sharing God's life-giving Word, the Holy Spirit would work in the hearts of listeners so others could not only be saved, but also carry on the tasks of sharing God's Word to others and the next generations. To God be the glory!

While Jesus was here on earth during His ministry, He spent much time sharing God's Word, but also dealing with the needs of the people especially those with special needs of all kinds). Most of His miracles were aimed at them. He gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, healing to the crippled, etc. They were not overlooked! God gave us hearts of love not to let them be ignored either. WE serve the Lord with gladness to bring Jesus to those with disabilities because they, too, would love to "see Jesus" and experience the love He has for them.

Keep it up, good and faithful servants! By our words and actions of love, may God raise up the next generations to be workers in His harvest fields for ALL His children. May the Love never stop! May the Love always go on!

Praise God!

Rev.Dr. Martin Koeller

Update from AbleLight

In the light of Easter and living in the promises of the resurrection of Jesus, AbleLight is embracing the reality of the Risen Lord. We find this presence quickened in the faith forming activities we provide for our staff and those who are placed in our care.

Through these programs, we seek to strengthen the faith of new

and old disciples of Christ and teach and support their Christian faith. We are continually grateful for these opportunities to witness to the Love of Christ.

From our staff:

We offer a weekly on-line virtual prayer service called “Pause for Prayer.” People are invited to join and prayer together for thirty minutes each Wednesday at noon for 30 minutes with Shelley Bobb, Vice President of Faith Integration. We encourage those who need to pray outside of this time to reach out to Shelley if they desire a prayer partner at another time as well.

In the season of Lent and now continuing in the liturgical season of Easter, we are inviting staff to virtual Bible study twice a week, offering the same pericope each week and two separate times to accommodate staff schedules. In Lent, we explored various Lenten disciplines such as prayer, almsgiving and charity, reading scripture, living in community, fasting and service. This Easter season, we are studying the post-resurrection stories of Jesus together. These sessions are led by Shelley Bobb and Pastor Jeff Siegel.

Both sessions offer an opportunity for staff to be together to pray and to spend time discussing scriptural themes and what these mean for their lives and our world – and their work.

Weekly devotions are also offered as a way for staff to go on our AbleLight website and experience the Word.

Weekly prayers (written) are also provided on the AbleLight website for staff.

For those we serve

We are organizing a new initiative to provide virtual Bible Study in our home-sites. We are inviting members of the Bethesda Auxiliary to help launch this effort. Karen Carter is lending a big hand to support and guide this effort. Linda Koeller is the first person to volunteer! We are in the midst of recruiting volunteers and setting up this program in Minnesota first and then progressing to other AbleLight regions. We are using the strong resources that the Bethesda Auxiliary has provided. These resources will be distributed in the homes of the people we serve. We are grateful to those who have the opportunity offer their time and share their faith in this witness to the Word of God with those whom we serve.

AbleLight College celebrates graduation day at Concordia College on May 4, 2024. We are grateful for the generous scholarships the Auxiliary provided and know they had tremendous impact on our students, both supporting them financially and affirming their

gifts and good work to further their studies. We are proud of them – and know you are as well!

Bethesda Lutheran Communities Auxiliary Scholarships

The Bethesda Auxiliary, in partnership with AbleLight, is offering students up to \$3,000/person in scholarships for the 2024-2025 school year. Scholarships will be awarded to junior and senior college students and seminarians displaying interest in service to people with developmental disabilities in a congregational setting (e.g. pastor, pre-seminary and deaconess studies, deaconess, director of Christian education, or special education teacher). It will provide an opportunity for them to share Jesus' love and the gospel message with people living with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Please direct any questions regarding the scholarship to jenna.wegner@ablelight.org

Bethesda Auxiliary News from State Chapters

Oregon

Greetings Faithful Bethesda Auxiliary members from the Oregon unit.



Oregon LCMS Congregations' Ministries with the Disabled

Changing Lives One Heart at a Time. The 170 students at Forest Hills Lutheran School in Cornelius, Oregon, love having Lindy Tysor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Hillsboro come and give them opportunities to share Jesus' love with people living with Intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). The students from Pre-school through 8th grade have level appropriate projects to learn about disabilities and to do projects to share with the

people with IDD on Portland's west side. A final "fair" displaying the projects will be held later this Spring. For participating in this Bethesda Auxiliary project, Forest Hills Lutheran School will receive a \$1500 grant. May all involved be blessed.

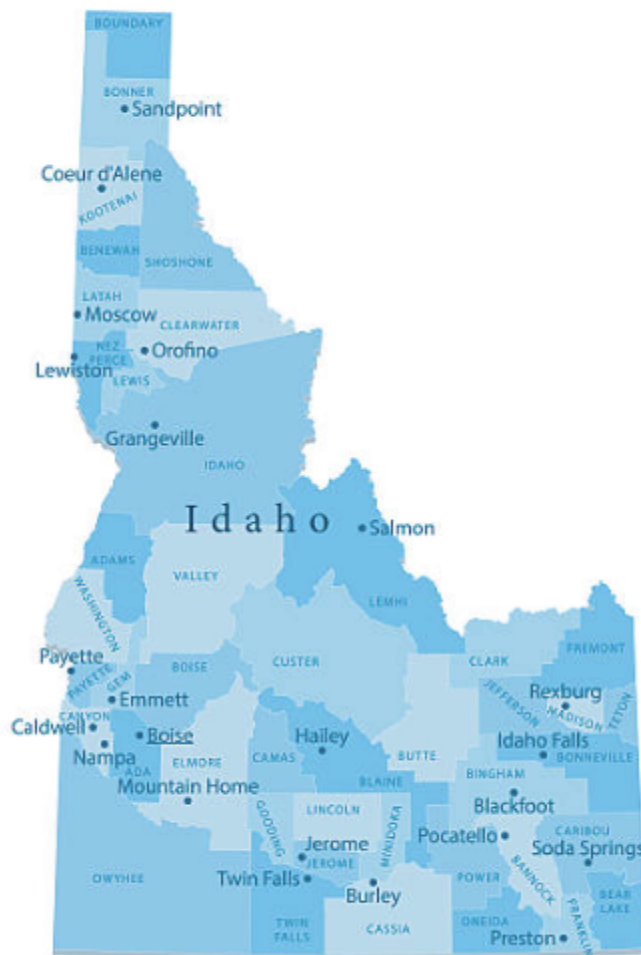
On April 10, 2024, Living Savior Lutheran Church congregation in Tualatin held their "Spring Fling" for people in the community living with IDD and for the residents of the four AbleLight group homes in Tualatin. It was a grand time for the people, their support staff, family members, and the congregations' members, who with much laughter and visiting enjoyed the music, pizza, and dancing. Music was provided by much loved D. J. Lamar, who arrived in his wheelchair, with his turntable, and favorite tunes. Kathy Greene and her crew at Living Savior L.C. arrange seasonal gatherings as well as ministering weekly to their friends in the group homes. Could your congregation establish a similar ministry with a group home near you?

LWML members in Oregon and Southwest Washington will be attending the Oregon District LWML convention at Living Savior Lutheran Church in Tualatin on June 21-22, 2024. Bethesda Auxiliary will have a display booth with resources and ministry opportunities available. The attendees will bring art and craft supplies for the in-gathering for the 126 people in the AbleLight homes in Oregon to enjoy.

Saturday morning servant events will be taking place at the church. Kathy Greene and Terry Putnam have asked for two events to benefit people with IDD and the LWML ladies in attendance.

1. This will be a time to interact and become friends with people living with IDD, as they have a devotion, play Bible Picture Bingo together, and have manicures, before enjoying refreshments.

2. A workshop, "What is the Body of Christ like in your congregation?" will encourage LWML members to help start outreach and ministry to people with disabilities in their community and/or a group home nearby. Mona Fuerstenau and Kathy Greene will share their years of experience and give ideas and encouragement. Your prayers are appreciated.



Idaho

Greetings Faithful Bethesda Auxiliary members from the Idaho unit.

Not much has been happening in the Idaho Unit. By the end of March, we submitted \$2,632. These funds are from a bake/craft sale following our annual meeting, memberships and donations, and a bake sale in Nampa. We ask that our members continue to support the residents and staff with your prayers.

Marilyn co-president

Colorado

Greetings Faithful Bethesda Auxiliary members from the Colorado unit.



Congratulations and thank you to all of you who worked so hard to exceed our goal by raising \$16,426 over the past year. Projects included: craft sales in the Denver area, and various sales from individual church projects in Northeast Colorado. Our faithful members continue to find ways to support Bethesda Auxiliary

including Christmas Eve loose change donations. Due to faithful individuals, our membership is strong. I want to personally THANK everyone for their continued membership and donations. It is greatly appreciated and needed.

Kenetha Mann, President

Prayer Request for LWML Convention Mission Grants

Please pray for the delegates to 16 District LWML conventions to which grants supporting the group home and disability ministry in the Dominican Republic have been submitted, that they will see the on-going value in this ministry. Over \$166,000 per biennium is needed to support the first group home in the Dominican Republic and their outreach to families with a member with IDD in the communities surrounding the five Dominican Lutheran congregations. Since 2011, Bethesda Auxiliary has been a major support of the disability ministry in the Dominican Republic. Thank you, Governing Board members, past and present. The Lord is blessing your work!