

BETHESDA LUTHERAN

NEWSLETTER

September 2026

Volume 26 | Number 7

BETHESDA
LUTHERAN
CHURCH

Annual kickball game during Vacation Bible School week

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

LIVING VOICE OF CREATION: A LITURGY FOR THE FEAST OF CREATION IN CHRIST

During this year's Season of Creation, our worship will sound a little different. Alongside familiar hymns and the rhythms of Word and Sacrament, we will be singing portions of a new liturgical setting called *Living Voice of Creation: A Liturgy for the Feast of Creation in Christ*. The music was composed by Minnesota-based church musicians Carol Meier and Hans Peterson and comes to us through the Nourishing Vocation with Children project at the Lutheran Center for Faith, Values, and Community at St. Olaf College.

This liturgy was created at a particularly significant moment in the life of the wider church. In 2026, the Consultation on Common Texts—the ecumenical body responsible for the Revised Common Lectionary—commended a three-year trial of a new **Festival of Creation in Christ**, sometimes called the Feast of Creation. *Living Voice of Creation* was developed as one response to that invitation: as a way for

congregations to worship not simply **in** creation or **about** creation, but as part of creation itself.

That distinction is important.

The theology underneath this music begins with the biblical conviction that creation has a voice. The heavens declare the glory of God. Rivers clap their hands. Trees sing for joy. Mountains rejoice. And, as Paul writes in Romans, the whole creation groans in hope for redemption. We human beings do not stand apart from that chorus. We are creatures too—formed from the dust of the earth and filled with the breath of God. Our calling is therefore not domination, but relationship: gratitude, stewardship, wonder, and praise.

Meier and Peterson composed **eight pieces of music** specifically for this liturgy, carrying worship from gathering through Word and Meal and finally into Sending. Among them are *Good Creation*, *The Whole Universe Speaks*, *Let All Creation Sing*, *Living Voice of*

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WWW.BETHESDAMHD.ORG

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Creation, Broken, and God Is Doing a New Thing. The songs are more than musical decoration between the “important” parts of worship. Together they tell a theological story: creation is good and beloved; creation is also wounded and groaning; God meets that broken creation in Christ; and the Holy Spirit continues to breathe reconciliation, healing, and new life into the world. The resource describes the music itself as a kind of “musical theology,” moving us from wonder to lament, to Eucharist, and finally to sending.

There is another beautiful dimension to its origins. *Living Voice of Creation* was commissioned by **Nourishing Vocation with Children**, which was the program that created Wonders of Worship (WOW), of which we were a participating congregation in 2025-2026, and so it was deliberately shaped for intergenerational worship. Children are not treated as people waiting someday to become the church. By baptism, they already belong fully to the Body of Christ, and their curiosity, imagination, movement, creativity, and wonder are gifts to the entire worshipping community.

We will be led by Tyler Pyle on piano, Andrew Sternhagen Schwenk on guitar, and Mara Wenaas as cantor/song leader. The liturgy invites young and old alike to sing, listen, move, create, wonder, pray, and encounter God together.

Perhaps that is the invitation before us during this Season of Creation: **to listen again.**

To hear the wind in the trees and the voices beside us in the pew. To receive bread, wine, water, soil, sunlight, bird song, neighbor, and breath as gifts rather than possessions.

And then to discover that creation is not merely the scenery surrounding the story of salvation. Creation itself is caught up in God’s great work of redemption.

As we learn these new melodies together, some of them may take a Sunday or two to become familiar. That, too, can be part of our prayer. We will learn them together—children and elders, confident singers and hesitant ones—until these new songs become our songs.

And perhaps, through them, we will hear more clearly what has been singing around us all along: **the living voice of creation, praising the God who made us, loves us, feeds us, restores us, and is even now making all things new.**

Peace,





The Fargo-Moorhead Pride event celebrated its 25th anniversary this year with a strong showing of community support, drawing thousands of attendees throughout the celebration. Bethesda members and friends shared how our church community is “A Sacred Space for Every Story” – as one of 160 booths at Saturday’s “Pride in the Park” event (a total of 8 churches had booth spaces), and as one of 60 parade entries on Sunday. Estimated attendance in downtown Fargo along the route was between 3,000 and 4,000 spectators.

Thanks to everyone that attended, gathered, cheered, prayed, shared their story, gave a hug, prepped giveaway items, donated candy + water, and hauled stuff back and forth. Bethesda is truly a sacred space for every story - and we're so glad to be in this together.



VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

OPERATION RESTORATION: MENDING GOD'S WORLD

Each evening of this year's Vacation Bible School kicked off with a family-focused meal, prepared and served by volunteers, coordinated by Sandy Retzlaff. Pastor Grant then taught the kids and parent-helpers to learn how to "Feed, Heal, Forgive, Pray and Rest" through songs, cheers, story time, science/nature and arts/crafts.

Our "storytellers," Terrie Wold & Julie Phillips shared the Bible through re-enactments and conversation. Songs were led by Andrew Sternhagen Schwenk. The kids and adults learned and gave a "Mender Cheer" at the beginning and end of storytime, reminding them of the ways God is teaching us to mend our world. (The "Mender Cheer" became louder and more enthusiastic as the week progressed.)

Cindy Larson-Casselton and Jane Johnson led science/nature using hands-on activities like planting seeds and making compost jars, to related to one of the five way to be "Menders." Themed crafts were led by Shannon Vanderford, Sharon Olson, and Kristine Olson-Johnson. **A big thank you to volunteers, families and kids who helped make this year's VBS a big success!**





COUNCIL MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

AUGUST 2026

CALL TO ORDER:

Meeting called to order by Marty Ohren.

Devotions: Devotion led by Pr. Grant on “What does and does not defile”

Approval of Agenda: Changes to agenda - Remove July financials as they’ve not yet been received. Motion to approve agenda as amended (Joel/Aaron/approved).

June Reports: Motion to approve June reports (Drew/Nancy/approved)

SECRETARY’S REPORT

No additions and corrections. Motion to approve the June minutes. (Nancy/Sharon/approved).

TREASURER’S REPORT

June financials were submitted; July financials are not yet available. Almost \$1,595 in noisy offering has been raised; this is available for Lifelong Learning to spend in coordination with the church youth. Budget is otherwise on track (small deficit). BAS is several thousand ahead of budget for the year. (June report approved en masse with other June reports).

PASTOR’S REPORT

Motion to approve the pastor’s written report (Aaron/Joel/approved).

MINISTRY TEAM REPORTS

Parish Life: Written report submitted.

Worship & Music: Written report submitted. Worship (how it looks) and music (how it sounds) will be divided into sub-committees to facilitate scheduling for involved people but maintain continuity with Heath and Pastor Grant present for both.

Outreach:

- Will be at Fargo South gym on 8/12/26 – online signup to assist with setup would be welcome.
- LWR packets will be assembled on 9/13/26 for God’s Work Our Hands Sunday.
- Rocks are being collected to add to Gwen’s Garden.
- Youthworks will be repairing their parking lot and will be gathering materials for the job. Volunteers are needed to complete the work
- Pride needs to be added as an Ad Hoc committee with volunteers and council accountability.

Outreach: Planning to have a speaker from Lutheran Social Service (LSS) come to BLC and talk about their Senior Companion program. Volunteers would then be recruited .

Property: Written report submitted. Repaired a bathroom door handle; installed a doorbell camera for BAS. Window replacement for Building on Faith is scheduled; a ‘test’ window will be installed in mid-August.

Lifelong Learning: Written report submitted.

Stewardship: No written report submitted. No actions taken in July.

BAS: Next meeting is Thursday 8/13/2026. Provided input on window replacement – operable windows are not required in their classrooms.

Cemetery: No written report submitted – no meeting held. Next meeting scheduled for 8/26/2026. Verbally recapped report submitted for June.

Ministry Team Reports: Motion to approve committee reports en mass. (Aaron/Sharon/approved)

OLD BUSINESS

Sanctuary Tech: A new sanctuary computer was purchased; it is now in use on Sunday.

Music Camp: Music camp was held the week of July 13th. 26 kids participated, including the 21 from BAS. Motion to approve compensation to the camp leader \$250, and to each of the two student assistants of \$125, for a total of \$500 to be taken from the worship and music dedicated funds. (Heath/Joel/approved).

Bethesda @ Buffalo River: Several families camped for the full weekend, and more individuals joined for an evening or afternoon. Pastor Grant lead a campfire worship and Eucharist.

NEW BUSINESS

Sanctuary Tech: A new camera(s) is still needed. This is tasked to the Property and Worship & Music committees.

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Fundraiser Meal: Approval - Motion to dedicate funds raised at the upcoming fundraiser meal event, to be split evenly between the Moorhead High School Homeless Youth program, Youthworks, and Lutheran World Relief World Hunger program. (Drew/Sharon/approved).

Elimination of Helping Hands dedicated account: Motion to eliminate the Helping Hands dedicated account, and to donate the fund balance of approximately \$3,000 to Churches United's homeless ministry. (Nancy/Sharon/approved).

FUTURE BUSINESS

Fundraising for Reconciling in Christ: Determine if this will be done, and if so how.

Minnesota RETAP: Professional energy audit through the Minnesota Retiree Environmental Technical Assistance Program (RETAP) program. Libby will provide a link to Aaron for the property committee to pursue.

CONTINUING BUSINESS

Organ Blower: Additional funds are still needed for organ repair. \$7,200 has been raised.

Child Abuse Prevention Policy: This policy is in development by the Safe Sanctuary ad hoc team, which includes Pr. Grant, Ruth Denton Graber,

Matthew Benson-Tuff, Sharon Olson. This is to be prepared for ad hoc committee review; timeline unknown.

Vision 2030 Task Force / Strategic Planning: Marty agreed to be a leader in this. Grant has several ideas regarding this, which need to be run by others in the congregation. Deb Fogel has agreed to be a part of the 'anniversary' part of the planning. Work schedule pending.

Major Gifts and Donation Policy: This policy is in development by Stewardship and the Treasurer.

Pastor Sabbatical Policy: The Mutual Ministry team has begun the process of forming this policy. The last meeting was at the end of July, during which questions were raised about whether this is a policy the Mutual Ministry Team should be crafting; MMT has requested that this be taken up by Council.

Membership Audit / 'Time and Talents': To be engaged by the Stewardship team in August.

Constitution Review: Ad hoc committee met twice in June and once in July. Work is progressing.

ADJOURN WITH LORD'S PRAYER: Motion to adjourn (Joel/Aaron/approved)

JUNE 2026

	MTD			YTD		
	Actual	Budget	over Budget	Actual	Budget	over Budget
Total Income	\$26,158	\$24,367	\$1,791	\$147,251	\$147,500	(\$249)
Total Expenses	\$21,461	\$23,170	(\$1,709)	\$148,160	\$151,800	(\$3,640)
Net Income	\$4,697	\$1,197	\$3,500	(\$909)	(\$4,300)	\$3,391

JULY 2026

	MTD			YTD		
	Actual	Budget	over Budget	Actual	Budget	over Budget
Total Income	\$18,875	\$24,366	(\$5,491)	\$166,127	\$171,866	(\$5,739)
Total Expenses	\$21,668	\$24,355	(\$2,687)	\$169,828	\$176,155	(\$6,327)
Net Income	(\$2,793)	\$11	(\$2,804)	(\$3,701)	(\$4,289)	\$588

LIFELONG LEARNING

JUNE 6, 2026 MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

Members Present: Terrie Jo Wold, Cindy Casselton, Sharon Olson

Adult forum: adult forums on third Sunday of each month beginning in September. We also have the Grief Counseling session scheduled for 11/1/2026 (All Saints Day). Interest was expressed to Shelly Carlson returning to talk about Elder Abuse, perhaps in 2027.

Based on discussion it was decided to focus on four major religions: Islam/Muslim, Hindu, Mormon, Jewish using the book "Honor Our Neighbor's Faith". [From last ministry team meeting, Pastor Grant agreed that those interested in ordering the book from Augsburg should order through the church to keep the editions the same]. The proposed focus corresponds to the following chapters:

- Chapter 9 is Mormon religion on September 20.
- Chapter 17 is the Hindu religion October 18.
- Chapter 18 is Muslim/Islam religion. November 15.
- Chapter 20 is Jewish religion. January 10, 2027.

Notes regarding Double Portion program:

Last year we had 4 gatherings for the mentor/mentee that focused on education or a chance to talk about your experience. We would like to continue with this. Pastor Grant has outlined some ideas that we could do together. And I will quote him here, "The theme for the program year for all the ministry teams at Bethesda is the catchphrase we used at Pride: "a sacred space for every story." For our quarterly gatherings we focus on these sub-themes with corresponding activities: 1) September 27th - Creation's Story 2) November 22nd - God's Story 3) February 14th - Love's Story 4) May 2nd - Our Story. Corresponding activity ideas included visiting an orchard, Advent/Christmas decorating party, making and delivering valentines, and May Day party, making paper flower to deliver.

Remember we are a small church with big ideas.
Lifelong Learning Ministry Team

Sharon Olson, Terri Jo Wold, Cindy Larson Casselton, and Pastor Grant Vanderford

SPAGHETTI SUPPER

SECOND ANNUAL ITALIAN MEAL & RAFFLE
PROCEEDS SUPPORT COMMUNITY OUTREACH

FRIDAY OCTOBER 2 • 5:00-7:00 PM

TICKETS AVAILABLE ONLINE AT BETHESDAMHD.ORG
BY CALLING 218.236.1420 OR AT THE DOOR
\$20/ADULT AND \$10/CHILD

TO-GO ORDERS AVAILABLE
\$5 RAFFLE TICKETS AT THE EVENT

BETHESDA LUTHERAN CHURCH
401 40TH AVE S, MOORHEAD





August 05, 2026

Bethesda Lutheran Church
c/o Pastor Grant Vanderford
401 40th Ave S
Moorhead, MN 56560-5658

RE: Donation to Youthworks

Dear Pastor Grant,

On behalf of Youthworks, I am writing to thank you for your donation of **\$1,110.00**. With support from you and others like you, Youthworks will continue to work towards fulfilling our mission of **helping ensure that all youth have a safe place to belong and be heard**.

Your donation to Youthworks has a powerful impact for North Dakota youth, as we remain committed to helping youth be safe in their homes, schools, and communities. Youthworks continues to value equity and inclusion, providing services to *all youth* in need. Young people receive emergency shelter, transitional housing, counseling, case management, food, clothing, and other basic needs, mentoring and more. Our staff will continue to provide the support and encouragement needed to help youth succeed.

Thank you again, we truly appreciate your support!

Please keep this written acknowledgment of your donation for your tax records.

Sincerely,

Mark Heinert, LBSW
Executive Director

Dear Pastor Grant,

8-17-26

We want to express our heartfelt gratitude for your recent gift to Youthworks. Your support help us to ensure youth have a safe place to belong and be heard, and for that we are truly thankful. Please pass our thanks on to your congregation!

Sincerely,

Emily Vanish
Community Engagement
Officer

ANNUAL OUT OF THE DARKNESS WALK

by Mary Wenaas

This past year, Bethesda was fortunate enough to serve as a host venue for local theatre company Theater B's performance of "Every Brilliant Thing" - a true engagement in art and a discussion on suicide.

We at Bethesda remain committed to being a safe space for healing not only within our church walls, but also among the larger community. We want to invite you to join Team Bethesda Lutheran by participating in this year's American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's **Fargo/Moorhead Area Out of the Darkness Walk** on **September 20, 2026 at Scheels Arena**, starting at 2 p.m.

You are encouraged to bring friends and family to join us. In my experience of participating in the walk, it has been amazing to see just how many people show up to remember those we have lost to suicide, to celebrate life and surviving, and to hope for a better future with less stigma around mental health challenges. It is always comforting to know that we are truly never alone.

Reach out to me to join Team Bethesda Lutheran (at msandness007@hotmail.com or 701-320-2007) and to meet up at the walk. I'll be wearing a light blue Bethesda shirt that says "You are loved just as you are."

To join the team or donate online to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, visit afspwalks.donordrive.com and search for "Bethesda."

To learn more about the Out of the Darkness Walk, go to afspwalks.donordrive.com/Fargo

Suicide and mental health challenges likely touch all of us and we don't want anyone to be or feel alone. Please reach out to any of your Soul Shop Team members or call 988 if you need support:

Mary Wenaas | 701-320-2007
Tammy Costin | 218-790-0400
Pastor Grant | 218-849-0907



In case you are curious about why we at Bethesda and your Soul Shop-trained members choose to continue to be a space of healing, here is some data from a 2024 national research study conducted by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention & the Trevor Project.

MENTAL HEALTH OF LGBTQ+ YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE UNITED STATES

- **48,824** Americans died by suicide in 2024 - making it the 10th leading cause of death
 - 2nd leading cause of death for ages 15-34
 - 4th leading cause of death for ages 35-44
 - 5th leading cause of death for ages 45-54
- **37%** of people who died by suicide were 55+
- **39%** of LGBTQ+ young people considered attempting suicide in the past year
- **14%** of transgender and nonbinary young people attempted suicide in the last year.



SECOND SUNDAY OF THE MONTH

NOISY OFFERING



NEXT DATE: SEPTEMBER 13

THIRD TUESDAY OF THE MONTH
9:30 AM IN THE LOUNGE

Women's Bible Study

AUGUST 18
SEPTEMBER 15
OCTOBER 20
NOVEMBER 17

Fargo-Moorhead Area Walk

OUT OF THE DARKNESS

Presented by the American
Foundation for Suicide Prevention



**Walk with the
Bethesda team!**

Sunday,
September 20
at 2 p.m.
SCHEELS Arena

Contact Mary Wenaas
with questions

*Afternoon of fun
& fellowship*

Where: The Linden (1500 7th St S, Moorhead)

When: Fourth Tuesday of the month

Time: 1-4 p.m.

**August 25
September 22
October 27**



ROCKS WANTED!



Please bring fist-size or larger rocks to the SW corner of the Bethesda courtyard area.

We will be painting them during God's Work Our Hands Sunday on September 13, then using them to complete Gwen's Garden and to add to the new native garden at Evergreen Cemetery.

 LUTHERAN
WORLD RELIEF
GOD'S WORK.
OUR HANDS.

**SUNDAY,
SEPTEMBER 13**
FOLLOWING
WORSHIP

**ASSEMBLY OF
SCHOOL
SUPPLY KITS**



BLOOD DRIVE
at Bethesda



**WEDNESDAY,
DECEMBER 9**
3 - 6:30 P.M.

SIGN UP AT
BETHESDAMHD.ORG/EVENTS

**SIGN UP TO
VOLUNTEER**

ONLINE



**WORSHIP
ASSISTANTS
NEEDED!**

BETHESDAMHD.ORG/WORSHIP

RECIPE FOR SWEDISH SUGAR COOKIES

From Mrs. Gust Euren
*Submitted by Clara Furcht
(BLC 1880-1980 Cookbook)

Quantity: 5-6 doz.

Time: 10 min

Temp: 350-375°

Ingredients:

3 C flour
1 C butter
½ tsp baking soda
½ tsp baking power
Shake of salt

Mix together like pie crust, then add:

1 C sugar
3 eggs - beaten
1 tsp vanilla

Roll and bake. Be sure to use butter!



OUTREACH

& YOUTHWORKS DOROTHY DAY

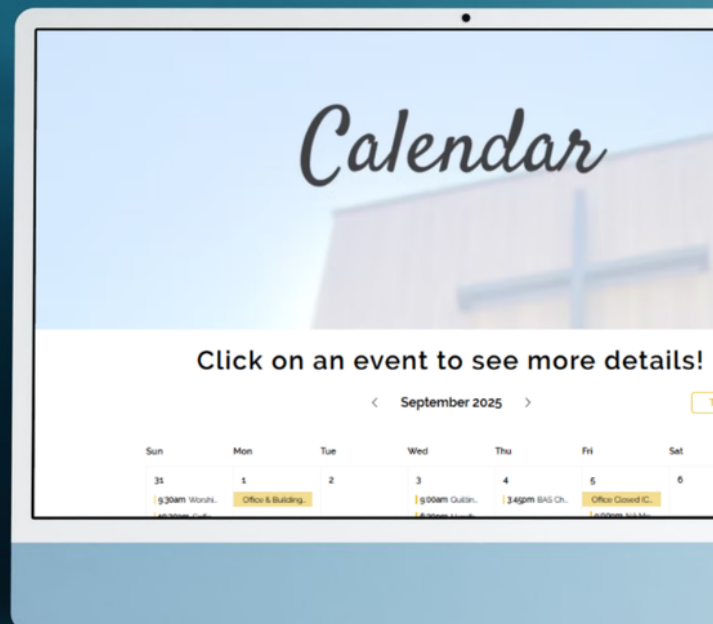
The need at local missions is constant. Please continue to **bring non-perishable food items** to support these programs. (i.e. canned vegetables, soup, beans, boxed cereal, pasta, etc.)

CHURCHES UNITED MICAHA'S MISSION

Volunteers **set up & serve the evening meal** on the fourth Monday of every month from 5-7 p.m. Contact the office or talk to Sandy Retzlaff or Joel Westby for more info!

*Remember to check
out the calendar!*

bethesdamhd.org/calendar



BETHESDA ALL STARS CHILDCARE CENTER

WE'RE HIRING

PART TIME LEAD TEACHER/SUB

- ✓ EARNED SAFE AND SICK TIME
- ✓ FLEXIBLE HOURS
- ✓ NO NIGHTS OR WEEKENDS
- ✓ POSITIVE, FUN WORK ENVIRONMENT

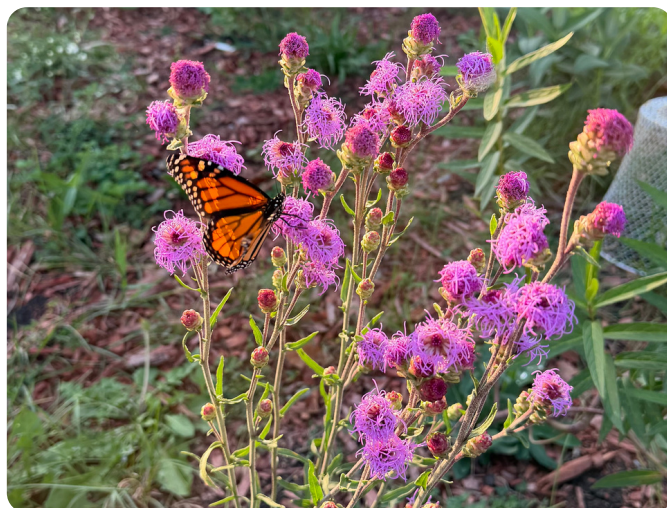
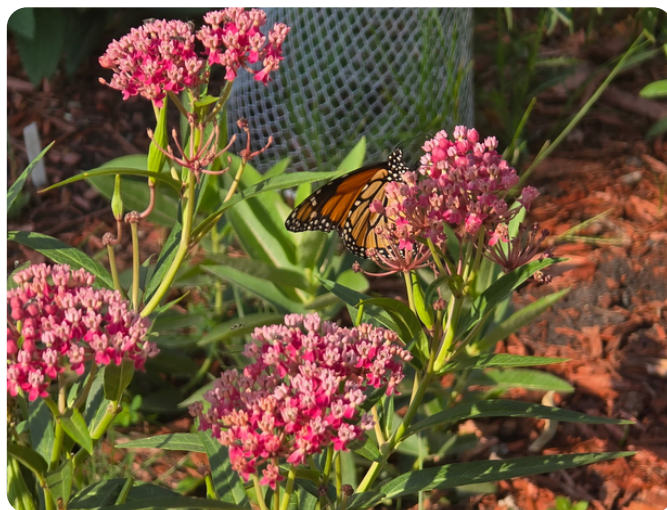
APPLY TODAY!

Requirements:

- Early Childhood, Child Development, or Education Degree Preferred
- Experience in an early childhood setting
- Must pass a background check
- Must complete required training including cpr and 1st aid
- Must be caring, reliable, flexible, and patient

BETHESDA LUTHERAN CHURCH
401 40TH AVE. SO. MOORHEAD

KARI.PENAS@BETHESDAALLSTARS.COM
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CHURCH STAFF

Pr. Grant Vanderford
Jane Johnson
Tyler Pyle
Jillian Jaros
Tammy Costin
Billi Jo Townsend

Pastor
Office Administrator
Pianist
Choir & Handbell Director
Health Ministry
Financials

OFFICERS

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