

By the time you read this article, we will be wrapping up our community vacation Bible school for 2024. This year the United Methodist Church were our gracious hosts. Last year Bethlehem Lutheran Church had the privilege to host as VBS rotates between the United Methodist Church, Congregational Church, First Reformed Church and Bethlehem Lutheran Church. This ecumenical cooperation is a strength in this community as each congregation brings their unique gifts to the table to help raise our children in the faith. Each site is unique with their particular strengths and thus each year is a new experience for the kids, and not just because the program focus changes every year. Each year loving adults give of their time to make preparations for the week and many more give of their time to teach, lead crafts and games, and many other responsibilities. There are so many logistics and details to put together, and this is all done by various individuals from among the congregations throughout the year. Planning for the VBS week begins shortly after VBS ends as the torch is passed to the next church. What a joy it is to work with these congregations and look forward to VBS every year.

You all know the phrase, *"It takes a village to raise a child"* and this is lived out here in Buffalo Center as the Church does what the Church is supposed to do. Earlier this year, Community Chapel held its VBS. My kids participated even though we are using the same curriculum. But as my children say, the experience is always different and therefore my children have never been bored attending both VBS programs. But here is where the Church thing comes in. The area churches share their decorations and resources because, well, they also believe in the church. Curriculum and supplies are expensive, especially for us small churches, so what a blessing that we can share resources to help advance the Kingdom we all love.

***20 "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, 21 that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, 23 I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. (John 17:20-23)***

I pray that through this ecumenical cooperation you may see that oneness, for there is one God and one salvation through Jesus Christ, God's only son. There

is one hope and one Life. There is one family of God. And therefore, as an extension of that family, we live and serve together, as one, to the glory of God. Amen.