

Life Together



**Bethany Lutheran Church's
e-newsletter
The Season of Easter, 2023**

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Who we are:

Bethany is a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and is Reconciling in Christ, open and affirming.



Where to find us:

We are at 7968 Finch Road NE,
Bainbridge Island, WA 98110.

Worship:

Saturdays, 5 p.m. followed by wine and cheese fellowship.

Sundays, 10 a.m followed by coffee fellowship (Sunday School & Adult Ed)

Website:

bethanyofbainbridge.org

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PASTOR'S ADDRESS

A Welcome Interruption

By Pastor Paul Stumme-Diers



Dear Bethanians,

The season of Lent has throughout my ministry been a season of irregular regularity, un-routine routines, a sense of discipline unlike disciplines during the “ordinary” time of the church year (Epiphany + Pentecost seasons), but with a constant rhythm all its own. Think “theme” (Accompaniment), think worship services (mid-week), think scheduled simple meals (soup and bread), think “praying at all times” (prayer station in the sanctuary). Perhaps your Lenten routine involves daily considerations in addition to prayer – fasting, exercise, thanksgiving, quiet. Lent is a time for such discipline, such a sense of routine, even if a markedly different routine than usual...until Covid-19 hit.

Covid-19 created a sense of perpetual Lent, beginning roughly on Ash Wednesday of 2020, forcing us into a new irregular regularity with parking lot worship, zoom choir, pastoral phone visits, streaming worship. The required adaptations assumed a new pattern for our lives, new disciplines which almost seemed like a two year Lent (less than “ordinary” time).

(Continues next page)

Council leaders



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A Welcome Interruption: *Continued*

So 2023 felt at its beginning like a Lent of old, recovering the sense of focus and routine. An old friend had returned. Ah, but then enter the interruptions, those things that wreak havoc on our best planned schedules. For me it was influenza A, then a (welcomed) interruption in a visit from Fritz, a CHA board meeting coinciding with mid-week soup and worship, and then a bout with Covid (is it still “19”?) laid me low, and even disrupted Bethany’s “routine”. Lent itself seems an interruption, but now we have interruptions to our interruption.

Welcome to the Jesus Journey, with our last five Gospel stories describing “interruptions” in Jesus’ ministry that gave shape to his mission: Wilderness temptations, Nicodemus, the Woman at the Well, the Man Born Blind, the Death of Lazarus (the ultimate interruption). We come to recognize that it is such interruptions that is the stuff of life, and where we glimpse new life, both in the Jesus story and our own, for they are held together by the gift of faith. We discover the depth and breadth of this gift on Good Friday, and the persistence of God’s love and victory at Easter. The resurrection is the most profound interruption of all, barging in on our fears, disrupting the power of death, and insisting that love eternal wins.

Come and join the Bethany community for the welcome interruption that is Holy Week!

Pastor Paul



PASTOR FOR FAITH FORMATION

The Hope of Easter

By Pastor Erin Grayson



Dear Bethanians,

During the transition when Lent draws to a close and Easter morning is in our mind's eye, there is a heaviness in my heart about the reality of these days, and at the same time, a persistent--if not exhausted--call to look ahead and scan the horizon for hope.

I'm writing just one day after another school shooting in the United States, this time in Nashville, TN, in which six innocent lives were taken--three of whom were nine-year-old children. I lament the reality in which children whom Jesus so dearly loved are victims of gun violence in the name of freedom. Nothing about that makes sense to me. I imagine, like Poet Malcolm Guite wrote, "Jesus comes near, and he beholds [our cities], and looks on us with tears in his eyes, and wells of mercy, streams of love and pity flow from the fountain whence all things arise..."^[1]

I wonder if the crowds gathered long ago at the gates of Jerusalem felt a mix of conflicted emotions when they caught sight of Jesus, gentle and riding on a donkey, an unlikely king who promised that things can change. Jesus invites us to fix our gaze on him and follow along. We, like the crowd that day, lay down our own expectations about how it will be achieved like cloaks on the road, and make way for God's desires. Exhausted and hopeful just like him, we trust Jesus to show us the way to a life of peace and mercy and compassion and grace.

Guite's poem goes on to describe Jesus calling us to him like a careful mother to meet him face to face--to look him in the eye with our "fatigued compassion already sleeping while [our] worst nightmares stalk the light of day..." There at the gates of our own hearts, we see him weeping and through his tears, Guite concludes, we see ourselves. We see each other. There we find hope. And the invitation to follow along the Way to realizing God's kingdom in the here and now where Jesus welcomes little children to come to him unhindered, "for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these (Mark 10:13-16)."

May the grace of God be with us all during this Holy week and may the hope of Easter dawn anew in our hearts.

Pastor Erin

[1] Guite, Malcolm. "Jesus Weeps." In *Sounding of the Seasons: Seventy Sonnets for the Christian Year*. London: Canterbury Press: 2012.

WORSHIP AT BETHANY

Holy Week

Welcome to Holy Week, when we immerse ourselves in the story of God's deep and abiding love for us made known in Jesus. Join us for our Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter worship services throughout this week.



Holy Week at Bethany

**Palm Sunday – 5pm, April 1st & 10am, April 2nd,
followed by coffee fellowship**

Maundy Thursday – 7pm, April 6th

Good Friday – 7pm, April 7th

No Saturday evening service on April 8th

**Easter – 10am, April 9th, followed by coffee
fellowship**



The Season of Easter

The Season of Easter is the high point of our church year, lasting not a single day but a full 50 days, ending with Pentecost. It is the second longest season of the church year after Ordinary Time. The season is an extended feast wherein the paschal candle is lit at every service as a sign of the risen Christ. Why 50 days in the Season of Easter? After the resurrection, Jesus spent forty days on earth before he ascended, and then there were ten more days after that before the Day of Pentecost.

FROM THE COUNCIL

Update from the President

Vicki Browning, Council President



Christ has risen! He is risen indeed! That's what it's all about. Alleluia!

As we move forward with plans for springtime, input is appreciated. The church council meets the second Tuesday evening of each month. This meeting is open to all members of Bethany.

I also encourage you to attend the information session on our Affordable Housing initiative after the 10am service on April 16 and especially the congregational meeting after the 10am service on April 23. The congregation will be asked to approve the formation of an LLC which will oversee the project. More details on the status of our Affordable Housing initiative can be found on page 7 of this newsletter.

It is an exciting time at Bethany as we focus on thoughts of fellowship after the previous spring found us with masks and a reluctance to gather. If you have not had an opportunity to enjoy the fellowship after service on Saturday evening or Sunday morning, I would like to encourage you to check it out. In addition, the IMPACT family gatherings each month are a great way to share that fellowship. While they typically are on the second Sunday at 4pm, the April IMPACT gathering will take place on April 16. Look for more information about IMPACT on the next page.

The fund raiser for the victims of the earthquake in Turkey in Syria was not only a financial success, it was also a wonderful fellowship event. Mary and Jeff Jensen along with Sylvia Cauter and their team were amazing in the planning and making sure it was a success.

The Bethany vegetable garden will soon be ready to plant and the produce from the garden will be distributed to those in need. This is another excellent fellowship opportunity while enjoying the springtime planting season. If you are interested in helping with the Bethany vegetable garden, contact Pastor Erin.

BETHANY NEWS

April Bible Study

The Rachel Circle Bible Study group will meet on Tuesday, April 4th at 10:00am. The Women's Bible Study & Book Group will meet on Monday, April 10th at 9:30am in fellowship hall. They will continue discussing "True Paradox: How Christianity Makes Sense of Our Complex World" by David Skeel. The Men's Bible Study group will meet on Tuesday, April 11th at 8:00am. All Bible Study groups meet in fellowship hall.

April Impact Gathering



Due to Holy Week and Spring break at the beginning of April, IMPACT, our first-Sunday-of-the-month intergenerational gathering for youth and family will meet instead on Sunday, April 16 from 4:00-5:30 in Fellowship Hall. This month's gathering will feature pizza for dinner, ice cream sundaes for dessert, and a fun game of family-friendly "Would You Rather?" We'll also plan collaboratively for the Bethany community garden, where we'll "grow a row" for our local food banks

during the spring and summer months. Come one and all, everyone is welcome--youth and families, their friends, and those who love them! Please contact Pastor Erin with any questions pastorerin@bethanyofbainbridge.org.

Baby Shower Save the Date!

The Rachel Circle invites everyone to a baby shower which will be held on June 10th at 2:30pm in the Fellowship Hall. There will be food and beverages, along with a game or two. This is your chance to help fill the baby kits that we ship off each spring and fall. Clothing and blankets must be new or gently used. (Many of us shop at the Goodwill or Bargain Boutique.) We ship sizes 6/9 months to 24 months. Please – no fleece (not biodegradable), patriotic or camouflage items. As gowns can be hard to come by, we generally send 4 tees and 2 pairs of pants. Please go to lwr.org/kits/baby-care-kits/instructions for the complete list or pick up a copy of the list at the office.



Please Sign Up Now For Altar Flowers

While we will not have altar flowers during the Season of Lent, there are plenty of dates available after Easter. Please sign up for the special date that you would like to honor an event or remember a special person while you have a choice. Select either A - you will provide the arrangement, or B - altar guild will do the arrangement and you will provide the check [there is an envelope to put the money in by the calendar]. Questions? Email Rachel Pritchett rachelpritchett@msn.com.



NEXT STEPS FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING AT BETHANY!

David Swartling, Task Force Chair

For several years, the operative metaphor for Bethany's work on affordable housing has been "setting the table". While it's been apropos, who would have thought several years ago that it would take almost 1-1/2 years to get plates and silverware for a meal (not to mention an ordinance!) onto the table where it can be enjoyed?!



Well, it's time for a new metaphor, and fortunately kitchen staff is getting ready for meal planning and preparation (speaking metaphorically)! A number of recent developments reflect this metaphor. First, Marja Williams has joined Jonathan Davis as a development consultant, and they are overseeing preliminary work on site as well as preparation of proforma financial projections to assist in moving forward with next steps (and planning the menu!).

Second, the Housing Resources Bainbridge (HRB) Board adopted the Preliminary Memorandum of Understanding that the Bethany Council presented at the Annual Meeting and was adopted by the congregation in January. The Preliminary MOU acknowledges past cooperation and looking prospectively, it seeks "to mutually commit to working together to develop an organization and plan in order to realize the shared vision for an affordable housing project at Bethany". In furtherance of this mutual commitment, we have held a number of meetings with HRB. (If you would like a copy of the complete mutually agreed upon Preliminary MOU, please let me know!)

Third, as authorized by the Annual Meeting of the congregation, steps have been taken to prepare the necessary legal paperwork for a limited liability corporation (LLC), to oversee the development of an affordable housing project on Bethany's property. We are fortunate to have retained local attorney Hayes Gori (who is graciously providing services on a pro bono basis). And, we have been advised by the General Counsel of the ELCA that such an LLC can operate under the group tax exemption available to the ELCA by the IRS. As a practical matter, this means that gifts to the LLC will be tax deductible. At the request of the Affordable Housing Task Force, a special congregational meeting is being called after worship on Sunday, April 23. Also, an informational Q&A session will take place after Sunday worship on April 16. We also anticipate a community meeting sometime in late April or May. Stay tuned for more information on the LLC (which is tentatively called "Finch Green" – a wonderful suggestion from consultant Jonathan Davis!).

Fourth, we are continuing to meet with COBI City Council members to bring them up to date with respect to our initial efforts to move forward to implement Ordinance 2022-02, which was the response to the state statute mandating density bonuses for religious organizations building affordable housing. The resultant Ordinance authorizes up to 24 houses, and preliminary plans call for approximately 20 homes, some with 2-, 3-, and even a few 4-bedroom models, in order to address particular needs for family housing on BI. The key issue now is obtaining some funding from COBI, which our consultants advise is indispensable for success in later grant

applications to state and federal lenders, as well as foundations. We will need to provide evidence of local support!

Stay tuned because now that the table is mostly set, lots of other preparations are underway for the banquet to come!

THE GREATER CHURCH



From the Bishop

Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee

I recently learned that the largest glacier between Mt. Rainier and Glacier Peak is no more. The reporter actually said that the glacier had died. Died. Gone. For thousands of years, the Hinman Glacier lived in the Washington Cascades providing much needed water to the Skykomish River. Now it is gone.

A few months ago, my beloved dog, Gracie, died. She was thirteen. She was sick. It was time. But Gracie was with me through my cancer treatment, my children leaving home, my marriage ending, moving to a new city, beginning a new job, being in a new relationship...and now she has died. She is now gone.

In this synod we recently had two churches close: Clearbrook Lutheran Church in Lynden and Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church in Concrete. There are additional congregations who are discerning closure in this synod. All these congregations thrived in their communities for many years. Baptisms, weddings, funerals happened. People heard, shared, and lived into the good news of Jesus. And now these congregations have either decided, or are discerning, if their time lifecycle has come to an end.

All of these deaths are hard. They hurt my heart. There is grief and there is pain. And, while I might not know what you are grieving, I am sure there is heartache in your life, too. Sometimes it seems that there is so much death. And sometimes it seems overwhelming.

As Christians we might say, "But I thought we were promised immortality. I thought death has lost its sting. Truthfully, it doesn't feel that way. Death is real. It hurts. Where is this resurrection and new life we are promised?"

Dr. Brian Bantum, professor and author, writes regarding human immortality:

Our personhood, the body we speak of so confidently that was meant to live forever, is itself an arrangement of cells and tissues that are cycling through life and death. Our bodies are constantly undergoing changes, small transformations in our gradual development from infant to adult. Our bodies are no different and we are connected to the cycles of life and death that are intrinsic to creation's goodness. As Indigenous theologian Randy Woodlief reminds us, 'Death is simply another part of living.' (*Christian Century, Did God intend for Adam and Eve to live forever?, March 12, 2023*)

On Ash Wednesday this year, I had a vision of God playing in the dirt. Kneeling down, mixing dirt into mud, molding and mixing, and forming each human. God – laughing and creating. God – loving and generating. I smiled at this sight. Later in the service, when I went forward to receive ashes in the shape of a cross upon my forehead, when I heard, "Dust to dust and ashes

to ashes,” I had a vision of God scooping each beloved human into God’s arms at the end of their life. Holding the human turned dirt again. Loving and creating even more.

Dr. Bantum writes later in the same article, “Change, transformation, death, cycles of renewal and cessation – these are all part of God’s creation. And this change is beautiful and good.” Is it possible to move beyond the grief we feel when something ends and see the new life that might be coming?

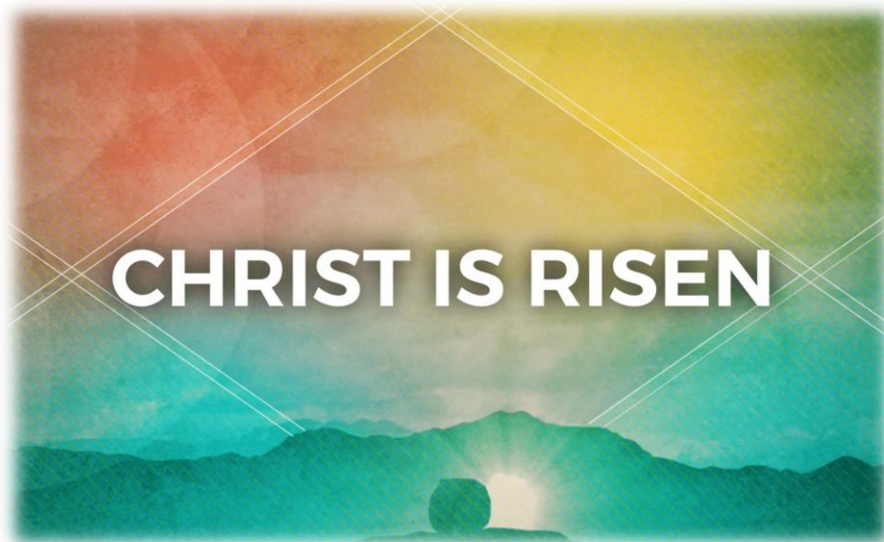
Perhaps the glacier that died could be impetus for us to take seriously the threat of climate change. I would hope so. I hope that the love my dog Gracie had for me will make me more loving towards others. In our synod, we are working with the closing congregations so that together we may begin new ministries and new ways of being church in this new day and age.

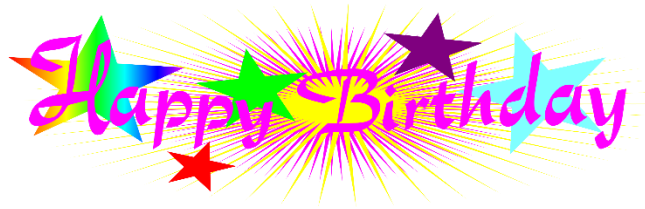
During this season of Lent – and into Holy Week and Easter – we know the truth of death. We know it in our bones. We acknowledge the pain, the difficulty, the fear, and the grief that comes with death. And yet, even more so, as people of faith, as people who celebrate Easter, we trust in God’s love through Jesus Christ who died and rose again for us and for the redemption of the world. Yes. There is death. And yes. There is resurrection.

God continues to play in the soil. God continues to create and nurture new life. God continues to hold and sustain life. And, fundamentally, without question, God brings life from death – each and every day.

May you have a blessed Easter. May we together, in this real world that we live in, trust in Jesus. And my we, with all the angels, archangels and all the saints, should the good news together, “Happy Easter! Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed!”

+Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee
bishop@lutheransnw.org





April

Ed Noland	4/1	David Swartling	4/7	Georgia Hansen	4/17
Shannon Noland	4/1	Sundi Stauffer	4/9	Karen Kushner	4/18
Randy Weiss	4/1	Kathy Dudgeon	4/10	Gavin Jakubik	4/21
Rachel Running	4/2	Brett Lindquist	4/11	Renzo Lucioni	4/24
William Hansen	4/3	Andy Rimkus	4/12	Dianne Peoples	4/25
Dale Johnson	4/3	Gail Christensen	4/13	William Bang-Knudsen	4/28
Louise Urness	4/4	Peter Bang-Knudsen III	4/15	Signe Lindquist	4/29

May

Mary Jensen	5/1	Nancy Miles	5/16	Brett Dudgeon	5/20
Marlene Orwiler	5/1	Helen Stoll	5/16	Mia Christensen	5/24
Doug Love	5/1	Gary Bech	5/17	Steen Christensen	5/24
Valerie Johnson	5/2	Gary Johnson	5/17	Renzo Lucioni	5/25
Angela Lucioni	5/3	Carolyn Weiss	5/17	Marit Ellerby	5/28
David Peoples	5/3	Alan Orwiler	5/18	Petra Ellerby	5/28
Kaye Hansen	5/4	Debbie Rimkus	5/19	Dennis Harris	5/29
Michele Shields	5/15			Jennie Harris	5/30

April Worship Assistants

Altar Duty:

Date:	Name:	Date:	Name:
Palm Sunday (April 1/2)	Kathy Dudgeon	April 15/16	Vickie Bech
Maundy Thursday (4/6)	Barbara Swartling	April 22/23	Gail Christensen
Easter (4/9)	Nancy Wetzler	April 29/30	Linnea Chu & Alice McCain

Saturday Evening Worship:

Date:	Task:	Name:
April 1	Usher/Greeter	Carol Fenner
	Lay Reader	Gail Christensen
	Hospitality Host	Jennie Harris
April 8	Usher/Greeter	No Service
	Lay Reader	No Service
	Hospitality Host	No Service
April 15	Usher/Greeter	Joe Sommerseth
	Lay Reader	Rachel Pritchett
	Hospitality Host	Veronika & Jim Rohrscheib
April 22	Usher/Greeter	Jim Rohrscheib
	Lay Reader	Carol Fenner
	Hospitality Host	Carol Fenner
April 29	Usher/Greeter	Charlene Selvar
	Lay Reader	Barbara Michel
	Hospitality Host	Marlene & Al Orwiler

Sunday Morning Worship:

Date:	Task:	Name:
April 2 (Palm Sunday)	Usher/Greeter	Barbara & David Swartling
	Lay Reader	Andy Rimkus
	Communion Assistant	Vicki Browning
	Hospitality Hosts	Kristi Sutton & Vicki Browning
April 9 (Easter)	Usher/Greeter	
	Lay Reader	Linda Newlon
	Communion Assistant	Linda Newlon
	Hospitality Hosts	Noreen & Jeff Sievertson
April 16	Usher/Greeter	Eve & Mike Curtis
	Lay Reader	Barbara Deines
	Communion Assistant	Barbara Deines
	Hospitality Hosts	Kathy & Doug Dudgeon
April 23	Usher/Greeter	
	Lay Reader	Linnea Chu
	Communion Assistant	Linnea Chu
	Hospitality Hosts	Claire & Marty Dasler
April 30	Usher/Greeter	Nancy & Harry Wetzler
	Lay Reader	Andy Rimkus
	Communion Assistant	Vicki Browning
	Hospitality Hosts	Debbie & Andy Rimkus

(April calendar on back page.)

The Month Ahead

April 2023						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 5:00pm Worship followed by wine and cheese fellowship
2 Palm Sunday 10:00am: Worship & Sunday School followed by coffee fellowship	3 7:15pm: Boy Scouts, FH	4 10:00am: Rachel Circle Bible Study followed by Quilters 6:00pm Amabile Choir	5 7:00pm: Bethany Choir	6	7 Noon: Al Anon, FH	8 10:00am Service of Prayer, Eucharist, and Healing NO 5:00pm service
9 Easter Sunday 10:00am: Worship & Sunday School followed by coffee fellowship	10 9:30am: Women's Bible Study, FH 7:15pm: Boy Scouts, FH	11 8:00am: Men's Bible Study 10:00am: Quilters 3:15pm BI Youth Choir 6:00pm Amabile Choir 7:00pm: Council Meeting	12 3:30pm BI Youth Choir 7:00pm: Bethany Choir	13 4:00pm BI Youth Orchestra	14 Noon: Al Anon, FH	15 5:00pm Worship followed by wine and cheese fellowship
16 10:00am: Worship & Sunday School followed by coffee fellowship 4:00pm IMPACT Gathering	17 7:15pm: Boy Scouts, FH	18 10:00am: Quilters 10:15am: Preschool Chapel 3:15pm BI Youth Choir 6:00pm Amabile Choir	19 10:20am: Preschool Chapel 3:30pm BI Youth Choir 7:00pm: Bethany Choir	20 4:00pm BI Youth Orchestra	21 Bloodworks NW blood drive Noon: Al Anon, FH	22 9am BI Quilters Retreat 5:00pm Worship followed by wine and cheese fellowship
23 10:00am: Worship & Sunday School followed by coffee fellowship	24 7:15pm: Boy Scouts, FH	25 10:00am: Quilters 3:15pm BI Youth Choir 6:00pm Amabile Choir	26 3:30pm BI Youth Choir 7:00pm: Bethany Choir	27 4:00pm BI Youth Orchestra	28 Noon: Al Anon, FH	29 5:00pm Worship followed by wine and cheese fellowship