

Dear Bethanians,

A few months ago, Matilda Jurdal Thulin, Executive Director of Bainbridge Island Special Needs Foundation (also known as Stephen's House) approached Bethany to inquire about renting space in our lower level for their weekday programs.

After giving it some thought, I presented the idea to the Bethany Council at our March meeting. With their blessing, I continued the conversation with Stephen's House to see where it might lead. Matilda and members of her board of directors visited the space and were enthusiastic about the prospect. After many subsequent conversations with Matilda, the Bethany Council, and the groups who would be directly impacted by a potential new neighbor using space in the lower level (e.g., the preschool, quilters, Sunday school coordinator, and choir director), we agreed on an arrangement that would suit everyone.

I'm pleased to say that a one-year renewable lease was approved by the Bethany Council at our June 11 meeting. Beginning on Sept 1, Stephen's House will pay Bethany monthly rent of \$1800 for the use of part of the lower-level space Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm. The total number of rooms to be rented is three classroom spaces plus one large multipurpose space which formerly served as the nursery. They will also have use of the church kitchen when available for lunch and in coordination with Debbie.

On the weekends when Stephen's House is not open for services, Bethany may use any of the lower-level space, excluding one room which will be reserved for Stephen's House offices. In other words, should we need to use the classrooms for Sunday school, nursery, or meetings, they are available to us. Bethany will retain the use of the current choir storage room and the current "craft supplies room," which will become the new quilting room. The closets in the staircase landing will remain as they are for Bethany's use only. As a result of the reshuffling, some church storage will be relocated to the education building.

In preparation for the move-in, the Building and Grounds Team along with volunteers from Stephen's House has offered to organize work parties over the summer to clear out, re-organize, repair, and clean the lower level. Several of the items currently located in the lower level can be used by Stephen's House (e.g. shelving, some craft supplies, and tables/chairs). Other items like music and choir storage, AV equipment, and seasonal decor will be moved to designated storage areas. In addition to the items that will be used and/or stored, there are several things that can be donated to Rotary or other charities such as a few pieces of office furniture, some books and VHS tapes, and other miscellaneous items no longer used or needed by the church. Before anything is donated, all items will be offered to members of the congregation. Any items deemed unsafe or unusable will be disposed of properly.

As your Caretaker Pastor, I am delighted to see how the ministry and reach of Bethany continues to grow as God calls us into the future of co-creating God's kingdom here and now. We serve a God of abundance who constantly shows up to show us that there's enough grace and love for all of us – plus even more than we can even imagine! I'm looking forward to witnessing how relationships will flourish in our beloved community between church members, preschool families, and now, adults served by Bainbridge Special Foundation at Stephen's House. I hope you'll join me in welcoming and getting to know our soon-to-be new neighbors!

Please do not hesitate to be in touch with me or a Council member with any questions.

In Christ,
Pastor Erin