USA Today reported in mid-October that the median home price in the San Francisco area was $1.4M (compared to $580K in Seattle). Middle-class families are being driven out of the Bay Area, and often out of state. Left behind are the very rich, the very poor, and communities struggling to maintain balance and vibrancy.

As I read, I thought back 25 years, when my boss told me, “If you want to see the future of Seattle, look at San Francisco. It always seems to be 10 years ahead of us.” Over the years, I’ve found her observation holds up. While our little hamlet’s explosive growth is miniature compared to San Francisco and Silicon Valley, if we desire to maintain the vibrancy and welcoming nature that is a Bothell trademark, we must ask ourselves,

“What are we prepared to do?” If we acknowledge our calling to become Christ in this community, then what will we do about it?

The challenge might be daunting, but to me, the opportunity is clear and surprisingly easy, thanks to our thoughtful Bothell UMC forefathers and foremothers: we must create homes that are affordable for people of all income levels and a community that is equally as welcoming and loving.

How is a challenge that significant also surprisingly easy? Because when our church

Barb Bailey and members of the Bothell Urban team met to address, research, and respond to questions that came up during the focus sessions in September. FAQs and additional information can be found on the bulletin board, in the office, or within periodic emails.
moved from downtown Bothell to its current location in the 1950s, the congregation purchased the whole block! Bothell UMC expanded in many ways over the decades, yet the West portion of the block sits fallow, waiting for its chance to make a difference.

Why not carry out the expansion our parents and grandparents envisioned, albeit in a way they probably couldn’t foresee? We can sell the empty land to the west of the parking lot and turn it into middle-class, single-family housing. The sale proceeds can then be used to create affordable multi-family housing downtown. We can create a vibrant, welcoming ministry our community craves. In addition, there’s the opportunity to serve the community through a downtown ministry component that could increase access to social services, job training, or straightforward community-building.

A recent Sunday Roots worship service (9am) closed with the hymn “A Man Owned a Vineyard.” The ending of the last verse stuck in my head as I pondered the future of Bothell Urban: “God, you give what is yours, more than what we deserve. May we reach out in love where you call us to serve. May we who have witnessed your grace gladly share your justice and love with your world everywhere.”

In coming weeks and months, the Governing Board and the whole congregation will be asked to make thoughtful – prayerful – decisions about the Bothell Urban ministry. I’d ask you to think deeply about where Bothell UMC should go. If you need more information, ask members of the Bothell Urban team, or the Governing Board. An exciting future awaits!

When I shared our Bothell Urban vision with pastors and lay people at a recent national United Methodist Church conference, their response came back in unison: you are so fortunate to have such resources available to you.

To share ideas or questions about Bothell Urban, contact the team at bothellurban@bothellumc.org.