Note from Pastor Kristin Joyner  
Deacon, Community Engagement  
When people gather together for conversation, prayer, and Christian fellowship, we can experience the depth and breadth of God in real tangible ways. When Elizabeth gave birth, her neighbors rejoiced with her (Luke 1:58); a father celebrated with many people when his lost son was found (Luke 15:23); and when death happens, a community weeps together (Mk 5:35-39). Life happens in community – your life affects my life. Your life is also different from my life; sharing your life with me expands my understanding and compassion, and it teaches me new ways of being.

Small fellowship groups are an important way for us to intentionally encounter one another and God. One such group I loved was a book group. We picked books that centered around a different culture – sometimes it was historic, sometimes it was cultural, economic, or ethnic – but always a book written from or about a perspective different from our own. The discussions about the book not only helped us learn about different perspectives, but it helped us to understand our own. And of course, over the years we shared in each other’s lives as well.

In a large church it may feel difficult to connect with people, and yet we know we come to church to feel a sense of belonging. We gather corporately in large numbers on Sunday mornings for Worship, but it is in smaller gatherings of Christians in fellowship where connection with one another is found and strengthened. This is what builds vital community. My life has been deeply enriched in small groups. My prayer is that you will find a few people to gather with on a regular basis so that you can love, be loved, and know that you belong!

Note from Drew Hogan  
Youth & Community Engagement Coordinator  
God uses small spaces in big ways. In college, I had the opportunity to get involved in a Christian fellowship where I joined a small group. This space was unique in my week. No matter how crazy my week was, it was the place I found stillness. No matter how hectic my schedule was, I had people who made time for me. No matter how overwhelmed I felt in the week, it was a place where I was filled up, realigned my heart, and grew in my faith as I wrestled and had healthy discussion with a few people that became pillars in my faith journey and calling to ministry.

Getting involved in a small group small setting can be intimidating but they can also be the very thing that tears down the walls of our faith to make room for the renovation and expansion our lives are meant to have. I wonder what your experience of small groups is and what your experience can be for this year. It’s my hope that as you read the stories here and recall your experiences that you will be excited to see what big things God can do when we get involved in smaller settings!
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Cover Photo: Kids playing at WheelFest on June 15
In 1742 a group of Methodists in Bristol, England needed to pay off a building debt, so they launched a rather unique capital campaign. The church members were divided into groups of 12 people, and a leader visited each member once per week to collect one penny. Captain Foy, the campaign creator, took the 11 poorest members into his own group; if they could not pay their penny, the Captain paid it for them. During this campaign, the leaders discovered that the people called Methodists were struggling to keep John Wesley’s three “General Rules” for Christian living: do no harm, do good, and attend upon the ordinances of God (including public worship, receiving Communion, private prayer, reading scripture, and fasting). Wesley had an epiphany: the small group leaders who visited each member for the collection were perfectly situated to offer spiritual accountability to help Methodists walk their faith journey. For the sake of efficiency, the group leaders began gathering their members all together in one home. And thus, the Methodist class meetings were birthed.

From 1776 to 1850, every Methodist was required to participate in a weekly class meeting—it was the heart and soul of the Methodist movement, and class membership is what distinguished one as a Methodist. Immediately after professing faith in Christ, converts were put into a class meeting with 7-12 others who lived in their neighborhood. During that time, the movement grew from a few thousand Methodists to 2.5 million.

The class meeting focused on 3 things: holding one another accountable to the General Rules, collecting an offering for the poor, and giving testimony about one’s experience of God during the previous week.

The leader would ask each person, “How is it with your soul?” Participants could share how they saw the Spirit working in the world that week, what they were grateful for, how their prayers had been answered, or perhaps how they had been tempted or gave in to sinful behavior. The leader would offer advice, encouragement, or reproof as needed. The meetings ended with hymns and prayer.

After watching the fruitfulness of the class meetings for sixty years, Francis Asbury and Thomas Coke (the first bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America) became convinced that the Christian fellowship achieved through the class meetings was an essential component of the Christian life. As Christians met weekly with their neighbors, they practiced vulnerability and intimacy. They became aware of one another’s needs and organically began to care for each other. They knew they needed each other if they were to persevere on their faith journey, and the small class sizes ensured that no one was overlooked or forgotten.

As Methodists moved away from the mandatory class meetings, the denomination’s growth slowed, stopped, and finally began a path toward decline. Perhaps it is time we return to our roots and revitalize our Christian fellowship.
It was a bittersweet day for Carol Russell. It was Tuesday, June 3rd, and soon, her home would be filled with her dear CORE group friends who have been meeting together for 8 years. But after today, things would be different. Carol’s good friends and long-time church members Warren and Betty Brown were moving soon to live closer to family. The Browns had deep roots at Bothell UMC—Warren started the garden across the church parking lot called Farmer Brown’s Garden which provided food to local food pantries, and Warren had recently served faithfully as the offering usher for the 8:00am River worship service. Their absence would be deeply felt by their CORE group.

But this day was more than just a going-away party—it was also an anniversary party! The Browns were celebrating their 68th wedding anniversary that week. A shiny, gold-lettered “Happy Anniversary” banner hung on the wall, and Carol had ordered a special cake: a carrot cake with brown frosting and little flowers, baked with love by their friend Kathy Muller.

During their last CORE group meeting together, the group wrapped up their year-long study of Adam Hamilton’s book Unafraid: Living with Courage and Hope in Uncertain Time. After enjoying a potluck meal together, the group presented a gift to the Browns: a plaque in the shape of a church window, which Betty now displays on a bookshelf in her apartment where she can see it often and remember that her CORE group friends are often praying for her and Warren.

This little, faithful group of Christians have formed an intense experience of Christian fellowship together over the years. It has met together weekly or monthly since Bothell UMC first started CORE groups in 2011. CORE groups aim to have roughly 8 to 12 members, patterned after Jesus’ inner circle of 12 disciples, and they seek to Connect to God, be Open to friendship, Reach out to the community, and Explore the Bible. John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement, knew that there was no such thing as a solitary Christian—that the spiritual journey Christians are called to walk needs the support of fellow faithful journeyers.
Carol Russell has certainly found support from those who walk the journey with her. She enjoys the opportunity for study and fellowship and the participants have become really close. “We wouldn’t hesitate to call each other, anytime, day or night,” Carol says. “We pray for each other and truly help each other out.” As a CORE group, they have walked together through experiences of cancer, death, and now Alzheimer’s disease. They are transforming their lives together in covenant community.
**FELLOWSHIP TIMELINE**

Compiled by The Archive Divers

A brief sampling of the history of how Bothell United Methodist Church has gathered together for fellowship, growth, and service.

1885  First meeting of families in the community to read the Bible, sing hymns, and pray together. The church formed officially in 1886.

1894 The Ladies Aid Society began with 18 members. It met regularly for devotions, study, hymn singing, and fellowship. To raise funds for the church building, they held ice cream socials, box lunches, chicken suppers, and quilting bees. When they cooked, they pumped water by hand, chopped wood for the stoves, and washed dishes in a tin sink. The name changed in 1941 to Women’s Society of Christian Service. In 1972, it became United Methodist Women (UMW).

1897 (approx.) The Women’s Christian Temperance Union (W.C.T.U.) was not only concerned about temperance and a curfew, they helped pay the pastor’s salary and electric bills. They also provided the first “public” library in the church basement, donating 300 books in 1909. They pressed for the Women’s vote and organized letter-writing campaigns. Their watchwords were, “Agitate – Educate – Legislate.”

1900 The Epworth League youth group was started at the church in 1900. They hosted socials, held a Bible study class, and educated themselves on non-Christian societies. They also paid $25.00 towards new church property. When it was founded, it was the lone social organization in Bothell.

1903 Ladies Aid Society

1910 One of the first Boy Scout troops formed in the US (Troop One of Bothell) began when Rev. H.W. Michener started the troop in the church. Boys connected with God and each other as they learned new skills and served their community. The troop reorganized as Troop 420 in 1943 and has been at Bothell UMC for over 70 years. 140 of their troop members have attained the rank of Eagle Scout.

1911 CORE groups began to meet weekly for study, prayer, and fellowship. Five of the original CORE groups meet to this day.

1917 A number of Small Groups began, including: Floating Diners, Pairs and Spares, XYZ (X-tra Years of Zest), Bridge, Quilters, M&M (young married couples), Good Company (single adults), and a Chinese Cooking group.

1922 Ladies Aid Society

1931 A Boy Scout is presented the “God & Country” award.

1951 A Boy Scout is presented the “God & Country” award.

1967 36 youth and 5 adults made a cross-country trip in a school bus, going as far as New York City and Washington, D.C. Methodist churches along the way hosted them. The group called itself YUME, for Youth United Methodist – East, and the journey profoundly affected the lives of the travelers. A highlight was a visit with Washington state’s Junior Senator, Henry M. Jackson.


1972 Ladies Aid Society

1980s A number of Small Groups began, including: Floating Diners, Pairs and Spares, XYZ (X-tra Years of Zest), Bridge, Quilters, M&M (young married couples), Good Company (single adults), and a Chinese Cooking group.

1981 An adult Sunday school class gathers

1985 1900 The Epworth League youth group was started at the church in 1900. They hosted socials, held a Bible study class, and educated themselves on non-Christian societies. They also paid $25.00 towards new church property. When it was founded, it was the lone social organization in Bothell.

1996 OPERATION HOGAR was a Volunteer in Mission (VIM) project in Juarez, Mexico. 36 members, ranging in age from 14 to 75, from Bothell UMC and Lake Washington UMC went twice. They helped build homes for the working poor families who had acquired land near the garbage dumps of Nuevo Juarez. They also led a small Bible school for the children, after working at the building sites all day.

1996 Operation Hogar

2011 Fifteen Small Groups formed, ranging from book studies to photography to hiking, and 70+ people participated. The following year, the church offered twenty-one Small Groups and 175+ people participated.
I sat there staring at my computer screen, looking at image after image of exhausted immigrant families. They had journeyed northward, driven by the need to find a better life only to be stopped by implacable guards intent on sending them back to a life of fear and violence. The internment camps along the Mexican border were far from hospitable. Families were separated and forced into overcrowded and unhygienic hastily constructed barracks. This was not the promised land these people sought. My heart broke. I was about to hit the “Give Now” button to enter my credit card number when I hesitated. I knew nothing about this organization. I didn’t know who exactly would be receiving help and how much of the money I gave would go to them. There had to be a better way, perhaps a different organization, that would be more efficient and transparent with donor gifts. But how would I learn which charities best matched my values as a Christian called to give generously to those in need? Well first, I decided to recruit some help! For the 2018-2019 year, Sylvia Cunningham and Shelly Ainsworth joined me for a small group called “Sharing and Caring.”
We were three passionate souls who believed in showing our love for the world through supporting organizations that are being the hands and feet of Christ. The premise was that we would learn about nonprofit organizations that are doing work that aligns with our faith principles. We met monthly, and we picked topics that we were passionate about: women’s health, safe water, immigrant rights, animal welfare, addiction, mental illness, voting rights, and homelessness. It was one person’s responsibility to research organizations that worked in the field of one of the topics. They would then present three of the organizations to the group and individually we would choose one to support financially.

One of the things we looked for was if the organization was faith-based. We were pleased to note that the United Methodist Church and the United Methodist Women are doing great work but not necessarily with the issues that we were interested in.

We live in an area where clean safe water is a given. But that is not the case in many parts of the world. Shelly researched access to clean water which introduced us to Charity: Water and Water.org. Through different methods, both of these organizations partner with those affected to maximize the impact of the work that they do.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12
Shelly Ainsworth said, “My family knows that a donation to a charity helping women or animals is my favorite gift to receive. Therefore, when I saw a small group focusing on how to research charities and their values, their accountability, and their effectiveness, I knew I had to be a part of this. I learned a lot! When you investigate things about charities like their major supporters, board of directors, and rankings on charity evaluation sites, you know how to make every dollar donated count. There was joy, amazement, incredulity, fellowship, and love in every meeting of this group.”

Sylvia Cunningham shared, “I was raised to feel fortunate with what we had/have, and that it is our responsibility and privilege to help others. I have my pet charities and haven't before taken time to research others - turns out there are many others that are terrific and that I want to support. I learned how to use Charity Navigator and Guidestar to research charities in which I am interested. Taking the time every month to just focus on a particular cause, whether by listening or researching, has really broadened my understanding of areas I might not have taken time to delve into. Plus, I have truly appreciated the fellowship of this tiny small group.”

For myself, I wanted to make sure my money was being used wisely, and by organizations that aligned with my principles. Recently I had stopped monthly contributions to a charity when I discovered that their views on LGBTQ persons were different than my own. I believed in the power of community. Shelly and Sylvia were keen and diligent researchers. Their areas of interest were different than mine and the organizations that they found were excellent and sometimes surprising. I knew that by working together, we could be certain that our money would indeed help save lives and change circumstances.

Sylvia, Shelly and I have known each other for more than twenty years. We have served together in a number of ways at Bothell UMC, but this was an opportunity to add another layer to our relationship. As the small group leader, it was my responsibility to start each meeting with the question “How is it with your soul?” which is the same historic question John Wesley used to begin each class meeting when he started the Methodist revival. I was compelled to say more than “Fine.” Because our group was tiny, and we had such history, I felt able to share the burdens that live in my heart. I knew there was no judgement, just support. This group was a blessing to me this year and I was glad to be part of it. I liked putting my faith into action and I loved sharing with two beautiful souls.

Middle: Family, Love, and Chaos Small Group. Led by Chris & Nicole Dibble, this small group gathered families with children in homes, at parks, and in bowling alleys (pictured).
BIBLE STUDY OPPORTUNITIES
AT BOTHELL UMC

Read & Reflect
Led by Donita Payne, Sundays at 8am in the Lounge

Digging Deeper
Led by Doug Will, Sundays at 10:30am in the Lounge

Preaching Preview
Led by Pastor Casey Banks, Wednesdays at 9:30am in the Lounge

“I look forward to meeting each week with church friends to discuss scripture. This is the one opportunity I have to exchange interpretations of the Bible and be led by a pastor educated in theology. At the Preaching Preview bible study, we learn from each other and prepare ourselves for the message coming the next Sunday. Bible study is an opportunity to develop my faith with a better understanding of the Bible. It’s a learning that can take a lifetime.”

-Mike Kennedy

Interested in joining a Bible Study? Email Celeste Deveney at celeste@bothellumc.org
New Ground
Bothell Ministry
WRITTEN BY BETSY BURNS

On Sunday, June 9, Drew Hogan spoke about “taking it to the streets” and speaking the languages of the heart. Bothell UMC works in many ways to do this. One such way is through the New Ground Bothell program. The New Ground Bothell program provides a supportive structured environment for young single women between the ages of 18 and 24 who are pregnant or parenting a child under three years old. The goal of the program is to help the residents achieve self-sufficiency, financial independence, and long-term housing stability.

Bothell UMC helps by providing Welcome Baskets for young women that are enrolled in the residential program. Providing the Welcome Baskets is a way of saying, “You are loved,” and it is one of the first steps in the transformation of these young women’s lives. The items that Bothell UMC provides in the baskets include kitchen, bath, bedroom, and laundry items, as well as baby blankets. These items are kept by the residents when they leave the program and begin their new independent journey.

If you would like to help speak this language of the heart and “take it to the streets” you can find a list of items that are needed for these Welcome Baskets in the foyer across from the Fellowship Hall. If you have any questions, please contact Carol Packard at redsophia2000@hotmail.com.

Native American Ministries Sunday

On May 5th, Bothell UMC collected $883 for the Native American Ministries Sunday special offering. Worldwide, The United Methodist Church collected $59,917.

ABOUT NATIVE AMERICAN MINISTRIES SUNDAY:
This offering funds scholarships for United Methodist Native American seminarians, strengthens and develops Native American ministries and communities, both urban and rural, and supports Native American outreach at the annual conference level.
Calendar Highlights:

Joe’s Morning Meditations
Mondays, 7-8am | Café Ladro, Bothell

Summer Short Films
July 7-August 25 | Sundays at 6pm

Sing! Choir Camp
July 15-19

Faith & Family Day at the Mariners
July 27

Youth Mission Trip
July 28-August 2 | Portland, OR

Vacation Bible School
August 5-9

Community Serve Day
August 25

FOR THE FULL CALENDAR GO TO: bothellumc.org/calendar
"They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

EVERY DAY THEY CONTINUED TO MEET together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people."

ACTS 2:42,46-47

Becoming Christ in the Community
Transformed people. Transformed relationships. Transformed conditions.

SUNDAY WORSHIP TIMES
8am | River (contemplative in the chapel)
9am | River (traditional in the sanctuary)
10:30am | Wings (contemporary in the sanctuary)

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The Witness is a bi-monthly publication. Want to submit a story or photo for consideration? Email Pastor Casey Banks at pastorcasey@bothellumc.org