A Note from Pastor Joe
Lead Pastor

It really did start simple and small – one single pack of Christmas lights bought on sale to decorate our front lawn this holiday season. But quickly, one pack became two packs, which then became four... now, we have hanging from our trees and our rooftop blue lights, warm white lights, cool white lights, and multi-colored lights... lights of all shapes and sizes!

As I was hanging the lights on those wet winter days, I kept thinking about the text from Matthew 5:14-16

“You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to God...”

We will keep the Christmas lights on at our house for a few more weeks, but at some point, they will need to come down. We will bring out the boxes, get back on the ladders and store the lights until next season, when I’m sure we will add to our collection.

Though our Christmas lights will soon fade away, I hope and pray that the light of Christ that fills your heart will continue to shine from you and through you, so that all might come to know the unconditional love of God.

As we enter into this new year, may God continue to bless you with hope, peace, joy and love, and may God continue to lead our church as we strive to live into our purpose of Becoming Christ in the Community!

A Note from Ron Kreizenbeck
Governing Board Trustees

As we close out the Christmas season and enter a new decade, I am thankful for the many ways we live out our purpose of “Becoming Christ in the Community.” Our facilities were used this past year by a wide range of grateful community members and organizations, and that is a constant reminder of our good work, stewardship, and community outreach.

Bothell UMC will face many new and exciting challenges in 2020, and given our faithful commitment to Christ, I am confident that we will continue to live out our purpose of serving others by offering hospitality to those with whom we share our sacred space.
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*Cover Photo: Children’s time on Christmas Eve.  
*Photo: Families rehearse for the annual caroling event on December 7.*
In November, I had the privilege to attend the Circle of Congregations Consultation in Grand Rapids, MI with Sharon Ryder, the coordinator of Bothell UMC’s Wonderfully Made ministry, and Nicole Dibble, Director of Children’s Ministries. This get-together of 27 congregations from across the nation was put on by All Belong, an organization whose mission is to create inclusive communities by providing resources and education to promote a vision that people of all abilities belong in Christian community.

As a parent of a teenager with a disability, this was a perfect opportunity for me personally to learn more about what I could do to help both my congregation as well as my son. I know firsthand that Bothell UMC is proactive in enhancing the church to ensure that everyone belongs. Our congregation has done a marvelous job of incorporating universal design, a concept presented at the conference by the amazing Barbara Newman, Director of Church Services for All Belong. In universal design, the environment where people gather is thoughtfully designed from the beginning to be accessible and used by people of all abilities, from an adult who uses a wheelchair to a child with sensory sensitivities. It’s an investment in the value of inclusivity.

Sharon, Nicole, and I shared with other congregations the practices that Bothell UMC uses to be more mindful and welcoming. We offer large print Bibles, large video screens to project song lyrics and scripture, a buddy system for children who need added assistance, cut out pews for attendees in wheel chairs, an elevator to access first and second floors, gluten and allergen-free bread, wheelchair ramps, nut-free environment, a basket of fidgets and noise-reducing headphones, a Prayground interactive worship space at our 10:30 worship, and more. During the conference, we visited various schools and churches in the Grand Rapids area to see their universal design concepts, and I learned ways that Bothell UMC can do even better.

This learning experience was just the beginning of my journey to equip myself and our congregation with the tools and strategies to include persons of all abilities in our Christian community. Bothell UMC will continue working with All Belong for the next two years to ensure our vision of a more inclusive space becomes reality!
On Sunday, December 1, 2019, the church met for our annual All-Church Conference. It was a time for both fellowship and business as over one-hundred-fifty people gathered. After lunch and a brief devotional, the conference moved on to the business of the church for the coming year. District Superintendent Mark Galang presided and asked the annual accountability questions (such as whether our property taxes were current and if a safe sanctuaries policy is in place). We elected new leaders for the Governing Board, Lay Members to Annual Conference, and the Nominations & Leadership Development Team; approved candidates for ordained ministry and a certified lay servant; and voted on pastoral compensation.

After celebrating four baptisms and seventeen new members, members voted on removing inactive persons, remembered those who passed this year, and then voted on two motions related to the Bothell Urban project.

The first motion was, “Trusting that God’s guidance and vision is leading us in our purpose and that our leadership and governance will move forward in the Bothell Urban project with due diligence, communication and financial responsibility, the Governing Board moves to sell the parcel of property west of our parking lot for a price that enables us to purchase land in downtown Bothell and preserve a percentage of the proceeds for the downtown Bothell ministries.”

The second motion was, “Trusting that God’s guidance and vision is leading us in our purpose and that our leadership and governance will move forward in the Bothell Urban project with due diligence, communication and fiscal responsibility, the Governing Board moves that we be authorized to purchase appropriate property in downtown Bothell utilizing the proceeds from the sale of the parcel of property west of our parking lot.”

Both motions passed upon vote.

Minutes of the meeting will be posted online and available in hard copy in the church office by January 12.
My faith wasn’t forged on mountain-top religious experiences.

My church-based upbringing certainly included the standard highs of church campfires, Christian rock concerts, gross food games, and sugar-fueled lock-ins, but my faith became real to me through the times of walking through the valleys…the times of pain, heartache, and even failure. We have many names for God because we experience many facets of God’s nature, but the one I know most intimately is that of Comforter. I feel closest to God when my heart is breaking and God is all I have to cling to.

I suppose that’s why I’m so drawn to worship services like The Longest Night. When a community gathers together, on a night of overwhelming darkness, to share in our feelings of loneliness, to name our losses and grief, and to lament the tragedies of the world, I feel nearest to both the One who comforts me and those whom God comforts. Even during seasons when my life seems to be fully blessed, I still need those quiet, somber places of worship. I also want to be there in solidarity with others…just as they will be there for me when I experience a season of suffering.

This year, at our Longest Night service, our faith community wrote down things we had lost and people that we were missing on slips of red paper and hung them on a barren tree in the chapel. We also named statistics from around the world of ways that people were hurting from natural disasters, violence, exile, and illness. We poured out water libations on poinsettia plants on the altar as a way of remembering those who suffer and called on God to bless them.

The winter solstice has since passed, and we move now toward increasing hours of sunshine. The cycles of light and darkness each year mimic the cycles of blessing and suffering in our own lives. Praise the Lord that God is faithfully present with us in all of life’s seasons.
Searching for Belonging
Written By Amanda Underwood

Like so many folks that call the Pacific Northwest home, I am not originally from here. I grew up in the small town of Heber Springs, Arkansas, where my family owned and operated a fishing resort for 50 years. Growing up in a small, rural area had a lot of privileges: little traffic, low cost of living, lots of family time, and close community with neighbors. Unfortunately, there was also little diversity. Everyone basically looked the same, and it was assumed we all believed the same things, even that we voted the same ways. I’m sure anyone who grew up in a small town can relate to this narrative.

Where I’m from there are currently no affirming churches. The closest one is easily a 90-minute drive away, which isn’t accessible even if one does have reliable transportation. Recently, a close friend of mine moved back near our hometown. He started seeking a new church but wasn’t finding one he really felt he belonged in. I wanted to share the Bothell UMC church experience with him, so I offered to live stream our church service on Facebook.

I MEANT THIS AS AN ISOLATED GESTURE BUT SUDDENLY REALIZED I HAD A NUMBER OF FACEBOOK FRIENDS WATCHING MY LIVE STREAM.

The reactions and messages I got from various Facebook friends reminded me how other communities deeply need the message of belonging that Bothell UMC offers. Some of the people that watched would never identify as Christians, and many of them have felt displaced by church. Places of belonging are fewer than we realize. While it’s ideal for some to have a physical space to go to, utilizing social media to share safe spaces shows more folks that these spaces do exist.

AS FOR BOTHELL UMC, WE SHOW FOLKS THAT NOT ONLY DO SAFE SPACES EXIST, BUT SAFE SPACES WITHIN THE CHURCH EXIST. BELONGING IS VERY HEALING, AND WE ALL BENEFIT FROM THAT.
“I deeply appreciated the Christmas concert—the variety of music, the intergenerational performances, and the thoughtful readings. It was, I think, the best, most profoundly moving Christmas program I have ever been a part of—either as a choir participant or as an ‘observer.’ Well done!”

- Jeff Staley

“During the Advent Storytelling Workshops, we read through the Bible passages we were using for the music concert program and then related them to life, which created a sense of peace. Before deciding what stories to share, we shared ideas as they came up and expanded on them to arrive at what became the drama part of the concert. The conversations were cleansing and it was wonderful to be a part of the program.”

- Michael Nelson
“All the music was so unbelievably beautiful and inspiring for me this Christmas. It was a true blessing and it motivated me to pursue my treatment and get right back up in the saddle.”

-Linda Shaw

“I appreciated the part of the program that remembered the children killed by Herod. I appreciate that the darkness isn’t swept under the rug but allowed to be part of the story. Yes, Christmas is about miracle and love, but it’s also about the reality that is trying to destroy God’s grace and love. Ignoring the pain creates a false worship.”

-Anne Shantz

“As a nearly 40-year member of the Chancel Choir (and veteran of many Bothell UMC Christmas Concerts!), it was such a joy to once again participate in the rehearsing and presenting of some wonderful choir anthems. I look around the choir loft and see faces I have known many years, and faces new to our choir - all singing together in harmony. Such a powerful & meaningful experience!”

-Sylvia Cunningham
Youth: Becoming Christ in the Community through Service
Written By Drew Hogan, Youth & Community Engagement Coordinator

“It’s important to serve because ___”

This was the question that I asked our youth before we recorded them on video so that they could hear what their friends said. As students filled in that blank, we saw their answers ranging from the simplistic and blunt “Jesus said to, and so should you,” to the surprisingly articulate “Jesus called us to help the least, the last, and the lost; and in this way become closer to God.”

As I was growing up, service was a foundational part of my faith journey. Whether it was going on a mission trip or sacrificing my birthday celebrations to do a food drive with friends, service became a significant part of my identity.

Now, some of my favorite days of the year are the days I get to participate in service projects with others in the church community. We have the chance to watch people grow in awareness of life outside their “normal,” grow in their skills or gifts, grow in community together, and—best of all—in their relationship with a living and moving God.

Two big things are happening in the youth ministry early this year:

On Martin Luther King Jr. Weekend, the youth will be gathering for a service-based overnight activity with fun activities filtered between service activities. We’ll be cooking food for a tent city, working with Mary’s Place and Atlantic Street Center, going on a scavenger hunt, playing bubble soccer, and more!

Toward the end of January, a team of youth and parents will finish the process of selecting the Summer 2020 mission trip destination. We look forward to announcing it when we bring you our first fundraiser of the year: a take-and-bake pizza fundraiser for Super Bowl Sunday on February 2nd.

I ask that you pray for our youth and the communities we will serve; and consider how you yourself would fill in that blank.
Christmas Eve Special Offering

Every Christmas Eve, a special offer is held for a ministry or organization outside the Church walls. In 2019, the special offering went towards the Removing Barriers Fund, a program of the Northshore School District that assists families in need.

$3,500 was RAISED FOR THE REMOVING BARRIERS FUND

#ONEyear

The Bible In a Year

MAKE THIS THE YEAR

learn more and join us in the challenge to read the Bible in a year.

bothellumc.org/oneyear
One of the best ways to live into our mission of "Becoming Christ in the Community" is by hosting engaging, all-are-welcome events such as Fun with Frosty. This event was co-hosted with Zero & Somebuddy and held on Saturday, December 14, 2019. 183 children and adults (at least half of whom came from the community) joined Frosty and his friend Hocus Pocus (the funny bunny magician) to help bring Frosty to life, experience magic tricks, sing songs, create holiday crafts, and test their arm in an indoor soft "snowball fight." Participants could also capture family selfies at our life-sized snow globe, crafted by Kris Cahill, and enjoyed hot cocoa—plus a zillion baked goodies! Whew! There were a lot of activities, many new faces and conversations, and it was truly fantastic to witness people of all ages and abilities celebrating, sharing, interacting, and having fun as one big, happy family. This is what the true meaning of Christmas is all about!

During Fun with Frosty, we collected 34 pairs of socks for Camp Unity Eastside. The Children’s Ministry and Bothell United Methodist Church believe that Christ is at work every day throughout the year, but Christmas is a special time to focus on love, giving, happiness and celebration—especially for children. Our sincere gratitude and thanks to everyone who helped plan, volunteer, and participate in joyful community outreach event!
Entertaining children and family audiences is what we love to do! Their joy & laughter is music to our ears! It's affordable fun for families when money can be tight. We were thrilled Fun with Frosty could live on in 2019 at Bothell UMC! Thank you so much for hosting and bringing Frosty to life again with us!

-Sarah & Chris

The local clown comedy duo, Zero and Somebuddy, (A.K.A. Chris Whalen and Sarah Seigneuret-Whalen) have been entertaining children all over the world with theatrical adventures since 1994. Since 2002, they've been performing for birthday parties, preschools, and more on the Seattle East side. They started Fun with Frosty in 2011 at Bothell Country Village as part of their free public Christmas festivities. After Country Village’s closing, Zero and Somebuddy hosted their summer kids drama camp at Bothell UMC, and then joined our Rock the Knock Halloween event with incredible balloon-making.
Community Assistance Plan: 2019 Impact
Written By Pastor Kristin, Deacon

In 2019, the Bothell UMC Community Assistance Plan helped 48 unique individuals with money for gas, groceries or one-time crises for a total of $4,901.79. This special fund is supported by individual donors like you, who want to make sure that we can help people who have unique financial needs. Several times per month, we respond to people who are asking for immediate help with groceries or gasoline when there isn’t another option locally for that assistance.

We also assist by sharing information about the available resources in our community. There are food banks in the area, and the Hopelink Mobile Food Pantry comes to our parking lot two times per month.

However, sometimes it takes awhile to apply, or the availability doesn’t line up with a person’s schedule. In addition, there are cases where people have an urgent need and there isn’t another known resource for help. In cases such as these, we offer one-time financial assistance. For example, a woman who resides in her vehicle and relies on her beloved dog for security needed assistance with a large veterinary bill after her dog’s emergency surgery. The Community Assistance Team (volunteers at Bothell UMC) worked with the vet and another local financial resource and together we were able to pay her bill.

In another instance, we were able to pay for a car battery for a man whose car is his residence. Your generosity to this fund is helping to transform conditions for people in crisis who need a sign of God’s love.

If you are interested in learning more about this program, or want to contribute in some way, please contact pastorkristin@bothellumc.org
Calendar Highlights:

New Members Class & Dessert  
Sunday, January 5 | 6pm | Clergy Office

Breakfast by United Methodist Men  
Saturday, January 11 | 8:30am | Fellowship Hall

United Methodist Women  
General Meeting & Brunch  
Saturday, January 18 | 10-4pm | Fellowship Hall

Take-and-Bake Pizza Fundraiser  
To Support Youth Missions for Super Bowl Sunday  
Pre-orders beginning mid-January  
Sunday, February 2 | Pick up after services | Fellowship Hall

Breakfast by United Methodist Men  
Saturday, February 8 | 8:30am | Fellowship Hall

"In-Stitches" Gathering  
Monday, February 10 | 6:30pm | Fireside Room

10 Great Dates + Kids Night Out  
Saturday, February 29 | 5-8pm

FOR THE FULL CALENDAR GO TO: bothellumc.org/calendar
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)

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

In the same way
LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE
BEFORE OTHERS
SO THAT THEY MAY
SEE YOUR GOOD WORKS
AND GIVE GLORY TO GOD

- Matthew 5:16

Photo/Candlelight service on Christmas Eve

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