A Note from Pastor Casey

COVID-19 has uprooted our lives in traumatic, grief-filled, inconvenient, and unfair ways...and yet, in the midst of lament and mourning, I cannot help but be grateful for the silver linings. I’ve been leading the Preaching Preview Bible study on Wednesday mornings, and once directives came out limiting in-person gatherings, our Bible study shifted to meeting virtually via Zoom. This brought the unexpected joy of new people in our community being able to participate in those weekly studies, and even people outside our community, like my aunt from St. Louis, MO. I dearly miss the years when I attended worship every week with my mother and grandmother, but I never imagined that I could be in a virtual faith formation group with my aunt!

We know through analytic data that people far and wide are worshiping with us on Sunday mornings through the live-streamed services-sometimes even by accident! The church doors may be closed but the Church is still open and we are #StillConnected.

A Note from Marlon Balauag

2020 Governing Board

In this time of the Coronavirus pandemic where we are limited by social distancing, I marvel at how technology has changed our lives and we rely on technology to gather in ways we have not done before. Being part of the community of Bothell United Methodist Church has made me realize that despite the physical restrictions imposed on us, we are #StillConnected by the activities the church has worked hard to present. Being able to see the engagement of our members in various online activities, social media posts, group videocalls for each ministry and the Holy Week services, is inspiring. Despite the challenges, we, as a church, are stepping up and adapting to these changes.

There is a lot to take in with people’s lives forever changed by this disease; changed by grief, job loss, personal isolation due to closures or health problems, etc. Let our faith in God be our guide and cherish this time God has given us with our families as we stay in, reflecting on what is truly valuable in our lives. Let us continue to foster our relationships and look for opportunities to connect with each other, and, more importantly, to those who are in need at this difficult time as we purposefully work towards Becoming Christ in the Community.
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Cover Photo: 10:30am Easter Service. Candace Larson sings towards cameras in back of an empty sanctuary. Photo: Spring blooms around the church.
They Prayed
Written by Pastor Joe Kim

I have been reflecting on the Book of Acts these post-Easter days, thinking about how those first disciples and apostles must have felt in the days of crisis. At the close of the Gospel according to Luke, Jesus has ascended to heaven, and the same author picks up again in the Book of Acts telling the story of life after Jesus. In fact, the extended and more formal name of the book itself is “The Acts of the Apostles.”

And here’s a theme that I’ve noticed – whenever the apostles got together, they prayed...

Acts 1:14 When they return back to the upper room, the disciples “were constantly devoting themselves to prayer...”

Acts 1:24 In choosing a replacement for Judas, “they prayed...”

Acts 2:42 As the community of believers grew, the disciples and the three thousand people God brought into the community “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teachings and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers.”

There’s something about prayer that keeps us connected to God and to each other. It unites our spirits, it allows us to celebrate and to lament. We pray for guidance, we pray for healing, we pray for strength, and we trust that when we pray, God hears us.

As part of our #StillConnected campaign, our community has been praying together at 8:00am and 8:00pm, Monday thru Friday, via Zoom. We have been centering on Scripture and reflecting together, and we have been sharing about our days and finding opportunities for gratitude.

I personally have been blessed by these times together, and I invite you to join us.

Morning & evening prayer Zoom links can be found at bothellumc.org.

Scripture quotes from the Common English Bible.
During this time of isolation, connection has never been more important. **For our seniors in the community, this time can be particularly lonely,** with many of the ways we are connecting requiring some skill with a computer. I spoke with one senior member of our congregation, Judy Thayer to get an idea of what her experience has been like with doing church online and how she has stayed connected with her friends and family.

Judy has been a member of Bothell UMC for over 36 years and attends a CORE group called “The Golden Girls” and the Preaching Preview Bible study on Wednesday mornings. She is also a regular at the 9am service, which, if you are counting, means that she has three different weekly events that she needs to use technology to connect with her church family. When asked what it was like for her to use Zoom for groups and Facebook live for our 9am service, Judy responded with a chuckle,

"It's been like gambling, but I'm not a gambler." Judy went on to say, “I have a strong desire to connect with my groups. We are all so pleased to see one another, to check in and pray for each other. What has made the difference is the cheerleading from the church staff has been marvelous!"

Judy has not only been supported by our church community but by her family as well. Judy tells this sweet story of her grandson going shopping for her and how he got her some chocolate because when he was a child, he used to beg her for a treat.

**Judy says, “I think we all take each other for granted in our relationships, and this time has made me feel very loved and cared for.” Judy has also supported her community through prayer. “Being of a Christian belief all my life, it’s interesting the different people that have called with specific prayers. It’s been very satisfying for me to be able to do that for my community.”**

When asked what she missed about coming to church in person, Judy quickly reflected on the hugs she would receive from the children at the church who know her as “Grandma Judy.”

Judy’s story really reflects what we all need during this difficult time of quarantine. **We all need support, moments with familiar faces, prayer, and the ability to see what is good. Judy hopes when we look out into our communities that we all see, “the sweet things that are happening, and the goodness in everyone’s hearts.”**
Eggcellent Adventure
A QR Easter Egg Hunt for the Whole Family
April 11 - 18

You Are Loved
Did you know Bothell UMC has been hosting a community Easter Egg hunt for almost 40 years? Traditions change over the years as new participants and leaders join in, or as a public health crisis dictates, but the fun remains!

In 1982, a group of young moms colored 30 dozen hard boiled eggs and painted red rocks that egg-hunters could exchange for Cadbury eggs. Kids interacted with the Farmer and the Chicken (played by Dick & Judy Raymond) who were later joined by a Bunny.

Last year, in 2019, more than 470 people attended Bothell UMC’s egg hunt, which included an interactive Easter skit, music and dance, a photo booth, a visit from the Easter bunny, face painting, and a bunny pancakes breakfast.

This year needed to be different though, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the need for physical distancing. How could we still celebrate Easter and engage the community? A neighborhood-wide egg hunt with QR codes! We placed 12 egg-shaped signs throughout Westhill neighborhood from April 11-18 for families to walk and find. Each sign included a QR code that, when scanned with a smartphone, would take the egg-hunters to an online activity. Carson Sanderson crafted the activities, which included charades, trivia, and more! Neal Moore assisted with communications and Pastor Kristin found five local businesses who offered coupons that accompanied the online activities while Kris Cahill procured donations for prizes. Huge thanks to Caffe Ladro for donating gift cards for 2 of the winners!

But what about people who couldn’t walk in Westhill without driving there? With the ‘Stay Home, Stay Healthy’ order, it didn’t feel right to encourage travel or to inundate Westhill with egg hunters, so we created a portable version of the egg hunt where families could print off the QR egg signs at home and hang them up outside. At least 7 families from the church extended the Eggcellent Adventure into their neighborhoods all over the greater Seattle area! We also heard about a family on the Eggcellent Adventure in Denver, CO!

Approximately 720 people participated in this community outreach event. Families who found all 12 eggs were entered in a drawing for local gift cards—all four of our winners were new friends that hadn’t connected to Bothell UMC before!

Ruth Thomas, one of the winners said, “My son is an only child so this whole quarantine thing has been super boring for him. It was nice to have a little kid adventure where he could play. He had such a blast and was so thrilled each time he spotted an egg! We used Bananagrams pieces to figure out the word puzzle. Thanks so much!”

In addition to the Eggcellent Adventure, the Children’s Ministry arranged virtual visits on Zoom for families to visit with the Easter Bunny. In a time when so many fun activities have had to be canceled, it was a joy to bring smiles to children’s faces!
It's no secret that folks are going stir-crazy in this time of staying-at-home-as-much-as-possible. While some of us are drowning in dishes, laundry, and toddler messes, some members of the Bothell UMC congregation have been expressing their creative side! Creating is, at its core, a process of transformation. Raw materials, in the hands of an artist, transform into something new.

Being quarantined at home feels a bit like a caterpillar who has entered a chrysalis—the raw materials of its body completely unravel and are recreated into a beautiful butterfly. At home, many of us are feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and lonely, with an utter sense that life as we know it has unraveled. And it has. But during this time, our outward creative expressions are a sign of the inward transformations that are happening to us individually and as a society. I don't know when we will emerge from this chrysalis, but I trust that the artists who are painting, sewing, and building are revealing an important spiritual truth: that God too is an artist, working with the raw materials of our lives, transforming us and our communities toward something new and beautiful.

Creativity in the Chrysalis of Quarantine
Written by Pastor Casey Banks

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Photos (in order): Marlon Balauag began learning the ukulele. (Watch footage of him singing “Lean on Me” by Bill Withers on the “Bothell UMC Community” Facebook group!) | Maya makes lefse, a Scandinavian flat-bread made from potato | Lynne Pearson crocheted a poncho in record time. | Aaron Pazan wrote a series of poems for Good Friday, which were shared throughout the day during Bothell UMC’s devotions which were live-streamed via Facebook | Hailey and Tyler cut out rainbow hearts and taped them to their front window to bring joy to passersby. | This kiwi layer cake is one of the many baking experiments that Pastor Joe has been practicing! | Asher creates a mural featuring Kwazi the pirate cat from the Netflix kids series “Octonauts.” | Pastor Casey and Leila melted down old, broken crayons in bear-shaped silicone molds. | Joy Pearson painted vines on a pillar in the family room.
God sent Jesus the Son so all might have life. He was willing to die for you—and me, for everyone. Such love—pure and unrestrained love! I choke up just thinking about it.

As the old hymn says, “How wonderful is love like this!”

These weeks of quarantine have been strange for me. Most would not guess I am a closet recluse. My day job is highly rewarding—a stress-laden, blissful chaos. That’s why, for decades, I start my day sitting in the same chair with my coffee, savoring the peace and quiet of devotional time. Waiting in the stillness of the morning to hear from our Holy Father is a gift. No reason to rush off to the busyness of the day; these moments are more meaningful. But this year, as if God wanted more of me, my chaotic schedule has slammed to a halt because of Washington’s “Stay Home, Stay Healthy” order.

I had never been to a Good Friday service until last year. In Catholic churches, the cross is never empty. Jesus is always on the cross, reminding us of the crucifixion and his ultimate sacrifice of love that frees us from our guilt and shame. Pastor Casey mentioned the decades-old tendency of Protestant churches not to celebrate Good Friday until recently. I took notice—it’s good to be reminded that Jesus went to the cross for us. In preparation for celebrating Easter, it’s important to remember the ultimate act of love that Jesus offered for us, and the Good Friday Stations of the Cross videos on the church website helped our faith community remember.

I love worshiping with my church family in person, but electronic corporate worship carries a certain freedom to respond as the Spirit leads—to shout praises, stand with hands outstretched, or dance. I am rarely lonely (that’s the closet recluse in me), but I do miss seeing God’s people joyfully greeting and loving one another. That itself is a gift from God. Yet for now, shelter in place. Seek the Father, the Risen Son, and the Holy Spirit in place.
These last two months have been filled with learning experiences of how we, a people who love to be in community, remain #StillConnected when we can’t do it in person. We are also a people who strive to support one another and share the resources that we have. Although it isn't currently being used, our building is one of our resources. We will make sure that it's maintained and ready to go when restrictions are lifted. We will be able to provide safe spaces for our neighbors needing to meet for NA, AA, NarAnon, preschool, prayer, meals, and more. Our staff is continually learning how to be connected with groups and people who call Bothell UMC home, and those who don’t, using our technology resources.

The pantry for Bothell Community Kitchen is stocked up and volunteers are now able to offer non-perishable packaged meals and canned goods for anyone who needs a meal on Sunday nights. Thank you for your continued financial generosity that allows us to do this.

I have been thrilled to hear how some of our faith family are using their gifts during this time. There are quite a few people making masks for the safety of others.
Marsha Stueckle says

"[It’s] been rewarding. I am a hands-on, proactive, pitch in and raise-the-barn kind of person. I think God knew I would go nuts without something meaningful to do while waiting for the quarantine to subside… helping others helps me not obsess about our New Normal."

Barbara Wong is working with Seamstresses Unite, a grassroots group that was started to address the PPE shortage,

"Right now, I am madly sewing trying to get as many as I can for Western States Hospital."

I know many others are also sewing masks, and many of you are helping to shop for groceries and check in with our seniors.

Others in our community are considering how they can help others with their stimulus checks. Greg Reffner and Nolie Ramsey are a young couple who are looking at their financial commitments:

"Although our monthly budget feels quite tight right now, a $2,400 deposit suddenly landing in our bank account has fundamentally changed the question, "What does faithful giving look like for us?"

Thank you for being the faith-filled disciples that remain connected. If you are wondering how you could bless others by putting your gifts into action, please reach out to me (kristin@bothellumc.org) to learn about local opportunities. Let’s remain #StillConnected.
Raynie Hultgren (26) is a nurse at Evergreen in the postpartum unit. Lynne Pearson (26 for the past 31 years) works at Finn Hill Middle School as a library assistant and will retire in June. Lynne served as Raynie’s confirmation mentor years ago, and they recently chatted about life during this COVID-19 era.

What IMPACT has the novel coronavirus had on you?

Raynie: Working at Evergreen when it hit made everything I learned in nursing school about mass outbreaks real. In my unit, we don’t have a lot of foot-traffic, so I feel lucky I am not exposed like other colleagues. Financially, I am in good shape because I paid off my student loans and live at home.

Lynne: With the schools closed, I won’t get to connect with students again, and probably not my co-workers either, which saddens me. This is not how I thought my last year working would go.

What CONCERNS you about the virus?

Raynie: I’m afraid I will bring it home to my family. I feel guilty that I am not as close to the frontlines as my friends who work in the ICU and ER. They deal with dying patients and worry about making others ill. There are times I sit in my car after work and break down in tears.

Lynne: My mother has a heart condition. My sister cares for her and is overwhelmed at times because Mum is having a hard time with the isolation. I feel guilty that I can’t assist. They live in British Columbia and I can’t cross the border to provide additional care. I worry about escalating tension in family homes and those whose income has been reduced.

How are you COPING with social distancing and home quarantine?

Raynie: I run and bike. I watch Sunday services from Bothell UMC and listen to other sermons when I run. I connect with friends on Facetime,
I’m learning to bake and decorate wedding cakes, I do yard work, and I pray—especially when I feel overwhelmed.

Lynne: I walk with my neighbor and work out at home. I Zoom with friends and family. The #StillConnected morning prayer virtual group grounds me and I’m keeping a prayer journal.

**What have you LEARNED?**

Raynie: Nothing is guaranteed in this life, so I’m appreciative of the moments I have with my family. I miss hugging! I’ve never done online shopping before, but now I do.

Lynne: I know I can shop online, but I want to go into a store. I’ve realized how patient, thoughtful, and generous my husband is.

**What BLESSINGS have you discovered?**

Raynie: Painted rocks and chalk art with positive messages. People are less self-involved and more other-oriented. Social media posts are more positive and caring.

Lynne: Technology allows us to remain connected. Our faith community is talented and devoted.

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Whether you’ve been reading the Bible since January 1st or just found out about the #ONEyear challenge, feel free to pick up today & join us.

*There’s no shame if you miss a day, just hop back in where you left off!*

Learn more and download your bi-monthly bookmark at [bothellumc.org/oneyear](http://bothellumc.org/oneyear)

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN JOINING A GROUP OR GATHERING DISCUSSED IN THIS ISSUE?

Learn more & find links to zoom gatherings online at [bothellumc.org/stillconnected](http://bothellumc.org/stillconnected)
Coping in Crisis Through Humor
Written by Pastor Casey Banks

Using humor is a coping mechanism for surviving stressful situations. In the midst of a very serious, deadly and contagious disease pandemic, many have relied on humor to get them through the day. Even among the faithful, we need the reprieve of laughter. Artists have reimagined the feeding of the five-thousand with Jesus blessing and passing out baskets of toilet paper and have sketched the Last Supper as a Zoom video call. The Babylon Bee (religious satire) imagined churches might resort to delivering cups of Communion juice by drones!

Bothell UMC member Jeff Staley has been sharing humor with others through his Facebook page. Jeff joked that the inability to get a haircut might just turn him into a Nazarite, and he is conducting daily eating experiments on himself with expired contents from his pantry. While some of his posts are comics he isresharing from other artists, he has discovered some humorous moments simply by reading his daily scripture devotions in the context of this pandemic. May they bring a little comic relief to you as well!

Join for a new worship service
CONTEMPLATIVE WORSHIP
WEDNESDAYS AT 7pm

Beginning online on June 17 via Facebook Live
Stay tuned for more on this unique service meant to reach even more people in our community.
Pastor Kristin speaks in the empty Sanctuary

Follow Us
Find us on Facebook & Instagram.

Calendar
With “Stay Home, Stay Healthy” measures in place, the best way to stay up-to-date on events is by making sure you are subscribed to E-news.

As we return to in-person gatherings, you can find our calendar on our website.

Learn more at bothellumc.org/calendar

E-news
Get weekly updates on Friday with the latest details on events and ministry updates for the whole church.

Specific Ministry Emails are also available for Children, Youth, Community Engagement, Music, United Methodist Women, and United Methodist Men.

Sign up at bothellumc.org/email

Website
Find important links for #StillConnected, updates, and ministry details.

Find us at bothellumc.org

STAY IN THE KNOW

Photo: Pastor Kristin speaks in the empty Sanctuary

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E-news

Calendar

Website

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"And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together...but encouraging one another."

HEBREWS 10:24-25 (NRSV)

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

www.bothellumc.org
18515 92nd Ave NE, Bothell, WA 98011
425-486-7132

ONLINE WORSHIP TIMES
9am (traditional in the sanctuary)
10:30am (contemporary in the sanctuary)

The Witness is a bi-monthly publication. Want to submit a story or photo for consideration?
Email Drew Hogan at drew@bothellumc.org