

Life Together

**Bethany Lutheran Church's
e-newsletter
December 2022**



**Pastor Paul
Stumme-Diers**

[pastorpaul@bethany
ofbainbridge.org](mailto:pastorpaul@bethanyofbainbridge.org)
Office: 206-842-4241

Who we are

Bethany is a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and is Reconciling in Christ, open and affirming.



Where to find us

We are at 7968 Finch Road NE, Bainbridge Island, WA 98110.

**Sunday Worship &
Sunday School**

10 a.m. followed by coffee fellowship & Adult Ed

Saturday Worship

5 p.m. followed by wine and cheese fellowship.

Website

bethanyofbainbridge.org

PASTOR'S ADDRESS

Advent-sure

By Pastor Paul Stumme-Diers



Dear Bethanians,

If my calculations are correct, this year marks the longest Advent possible, spanning a full 28 days, with Christmas Day falling on a Sunday. Still, it seems as though those days are filling up quickly. Christmas trees atop cars; Christmas carols in stores; Christmas concerts filling the schedule; travel plans being made for an extended holiday, holiday parties on the calendar, school concerts and parties (and for sports fans, this year we add in a World Cup and a successful Kraken team). It is a full season. Advent is long and strong this year, especially after a couple of intense Covid years, as we make up for Advent deprivation.

In the midst of this wonderful hectic month, perhaps we do well to intentionally carve out some unscheduled time, some quiet, meditative time. Neil Postman wrote a book titled "Entertaining Ourselves to Death", which, if I remember correctly, spoke of the dangers of immersing ourselves in constant distractions and hedonistic entertainment indulgences (Lutherans, I guess, have always been against "indulgences"), and not making room for what is important: relationships and centering ourselves on what truly matters.

(Continued on next page.)

Council leaders



Vicki Browning,
president,
vickibrowning@comcast.net



Lynn Nordby,
vice president,
lnordby@msn.com



Jennie Harris,
secretary,
dgh4653@msn.com



Jim Rohrscheib,
treasurer,
jrohrscheib@juno.com

Advent-sure: *Continued*

Advent can be a quieter time, and in this spirit many of us embark on a walk to Bethlehem, disciplining ourselves to walk the miles traversed by Mary and Joseph. Others engage in Scripture reading or special devotionals, like those from the Church of Steadfast Love or Lutheran World Relief. Still others perhaps find contemplative connections through writing personal cards to loved ones. Perhaps it is simply taking more time for prayer each day.

Every year as we enter this season I think of Advent as an “Adventure”, as a different time, and as the church calendar suggests, not an ordinary time. I hope that your month will be such a time, filled with the richness of the offerings of this season, including the richness of solitude and meditation, which in themselves can offer “adventure.” And do it all with the spirit of “Advent-sure”, certain that the one who is long-expected, the one for whom we prepare, the one we celebrate, the one who is promised, is the one whose coming is sure.

Blessings to you as we embark on the “Advent-SURE!”

Pastor Paul (pastorpaul@bethanyofbainbridge.org)



PASTOR FOR FAITH FORMATION

The Word Made Flesh

By Pastor Erin Grayson



Dear Bethanians,

Advent is here, and it invites us into an intentional time of contemplation. During this mysterious season of endings and beginnings, there are so many things to ponder. This year, the theme of our children and family Advent devotional is “The Word Made Flesh,” and as I read it, I find my thoughts dwelling on the miracle of the incarnation. God loved us so much that God became flesh to dwell among us: to feel with us the range of human emotions and to experience with us what it means to be alive in this world!

Often when we contemplate Jesus’ birth, we focus on his divine nature and forget about his human, fleshy, earthly experience. And it’s this bodily experience that we can relate to most! Jesus knew what it was like to enjoy a meal with his friends and family. Jesus knew the beauty of a sunset and the sweet smell of spring lilacs. Jesus knew the pain of stubbing his toe! Jesus was vulnerable just like us – he was born a helpless baby who depended on his parents to care for him, to feed and clothe him, and to nurture him.

In very real ways, Jesus’ fleshy experience reminds us of the gift of our own fleshy bodies. As the Church, we are the “body of Christ” in the world, but not just metaphorically speaking. We are the fleshy bodies of Christ in the world, experiencing human life in the way Jesus did. And that’s a powerful realization that connects me to Jesus in new ways!

It helps me to be more aware of how I use my body to do God’s work in the world. It makes me more grateful for my body and all the things it can do, rather than complaining about its flaws. It makes me more thankful for the relationships I have with our human family, without whom life would be lonely and empty. It makes me more aware of the gifts that I experience in this life, even as I anticipate way down in my bones what good things are to come.

The excerpt on the following page by Brian Wren inspires me to think about Jesus – the Word made flesh – and just how good this gift really was! I share it with you in hopes that it might inspire you to connect with Jesus this Advent in a new way. And if you haven’t picked up a take-home Advent devotional, please take one from the table in the Narthex. While it’s designed with youth in mind, anyone of any age can find thought provoking ideas to contemplate during this season!

Yours in Faith,

Pastor Erin

Good is the Flesh

By Brian Wren

Good is the flesh that the Word has become,
good is the birthing, the milk in the breast,
good is the feeding, caressing and rest,
good is the body for knowing the world,
Good is the flesh that the Word has become.

Good is the body for knowing the world,
sensing the sunlight, the tug of the ground,
feeling, perceiving, within and around,
good is the body, from cradle to grave,
Good is the flesh that the Word has become.

Good is the body, from cradle to grave,
growing and aging, arousing, impaired,
happy in clothing, or lovingly bared,
good is the pleasure of God in our flesh,
Good is the flesh that the Word has become.

Good is the pleasure of God in our flesh,
longing in all, as in Jesus, to dwell,
glad of embracing, and tasting, and smell,
good is the body, for good and for God,
Good is the flesh that the Word has become.

An Excerpt from Good is the Flesh: Body, Soul, and Christian Faith, edited by Jean Denton (Morehouse Publishing, 2005)



FROM THE COUNCIL

Update from the President

Vicki Browning, Council President



Merry Christmas!

We on the church council are pleased to be able to worship in the newly remodeled sanctuary this Advent and Christmas season. What a beautiful setting we are blessed to have. Our deepest appreciation goes to Steve Christensen and Doug Love for their leadership with the building portion of the project and to Rachel Pritchett and her team for the interior design.

We will be working on the budget for the coming year and appreciate having received the generous pledges for 2023. If you have not been able to return your pledge card and the Time and Talent information, please do so as soon as possible.

We plan to host several information sessions regarding the Bethany Affordable Housing Initiative for our members and for members of the community at large. You may see surveyors on the property soon. There is a lot of information that needs to be gathered before we can move forward.

The congregational meeting will be held on January 29, 2023, so please plan to attend. In addition to approving the budget we will be electing new members to the council and getting an update on the affordable housing project.

Happy Birthday Jesus!

2022 Year-End Statements

Year-end giving statements will be mailed by the end of January, 2023. **Please note: any year-end donations that you want to count towards your 2022 giving statement must be received in the office by December 29th so that it can be deposited on December 30th.**

Donations received after December 29th will appear on the first quarter 2023 giving statement.

2023 Stewardship Campaign

Thank you to everyone who has returned the 2023 pledge card! Making a pledge to give in 2023 helps the Church Council formulate a budget that will sustain our existing programs and benevolences. If you have not yet had a chance to get your pledge card in, please mail it, drop it in the collection plate, or bring it to the office at your earliest convenience. Please also complete and return the Time-and-Talent survey. This is your opportunity to let us know how you would like to be involved and help the Bethany community in 2023. If you did not receive (or can't locate) your package, pledge cards and Time-and-Talent surveys are available on the table in the narthex.

A THANK YOU

From Mary Toepel Coar

Thank you to all who have been thinking and praying for me during my recent illness. I'd like to report I am making good progress toward recovery. Thank you, again. Mary

BETHANY NEWS

Advent at Bethany

Mark your calendars for a special, interactive worship program on Sunday, December 11. We won't have Sunday school on that day so that we can all be together and participate in this special service. After worship, join us for caroling at Madison house where we'll spread the love of this Advent season.



Christmas Eve Services

Bethany will have two worship services on Christmas Eve. Both services will include music and candlelight. The earlier service will feature a special message and gift for children. This early service is slightly shorter. The second service will feature the Bethany Choir and include the Service of Holy Communion.

5:00pm Early Service (Special Children's Message & Gift)

10:00pm Late Service (Bethany Choir & Service of Holy Communion)



There will not be a Christmas Day service this year. All are welcome to come celebrate the birth of our Lord on Christmas Eve.

Affordable Housing Initiative Update

David Swartling, Task Force Chair



After a long period of patience and prayer for Bethany members and affordable housing advocates, the fall of 2022 has been an inspirational time! A number of important developments have taken place, which — taken collectively — have been incredibly important in translating Bethany's vision for using a portion of its property for affordable housing into reality. And, these developments set the table for the next stage of that translation process!

The first development was passage of Ordinance 2022-02 in October! The genesis of this ordinance was the 2019 Washington state statute authorizing municipalities to grant churches such as Bethany an "increased density bonus for affordable housing". After more than 16 months of gentle advocacy and preliminary site assessment at Bethany, the COBI City Council adopted an ordinance which creates a pilot project at Bethany and would authorize up to 24 units of affordable housing!

The second significant development this fall was receipt of a \$100,000 grant from the Housing Action Fund of Bainbridge Community Foundation! As the City's legislative process slowly proceeded, it became increasingly clear that regulatory and other requirements to move forward into the permitting process would necessitate a number of next steps that would mean putting together a consulting team, conducting more extensive site analyses, and undertaking proactive communication and fund development strategies. The BCF grant provides essential funding to initiate that work!

Already some initial steps are underway! With the assistance of consulting architect Jonathan Davis, a plan is being developed to move forward. Already, a wonderful new team member has been added — Marja Williams is beginning to work on pro formas to look at options for development, and she also brings considerable expertise in construction planning and management as well. Jonathan Davis also has been in preliminary conversations with a number of other consultants who can provide necessary work to move forward to the permitting process. (These include experts in such areas as septic design, storm water management, surveying, etc.) We're also beginning to put together a communication strategy for public engagement, and we anticipate that you'll hear more about these efforts early in the new year.

These are exciting times as we undertake to translate our affordable housing vision into reality! Moving forward continues to call for your thoughts, suggestions, support and prayers!! Stay tuned!!!

December Bible Study

The Rachel Circle Bible Study group will meet on Tuesday, December 6th at 10:00am followed by quilting and a soup lunch. The Women's Bible Study group will meet on Monday, December 12th at 9:30am. The Men's Bible Study group will meet Tuesday, December 13th at 8:00am.



BETHANY IN THE COMMUNITY

Helpline House Senior Gift Cards

Thank you to the many people who brought gift cards in response to the appeal from Helpline House. We more than met Pastor Paul's challenge of 25 gift cards, collecting a total of 31 cards! If you purchased a card and haven't had a chance to drop it off yet, there is still time. You can bring gift cards to Debbie in until Tuesday, December 7th. Debbie's office hours are Monday-Thursday, 9am-3pm.



THE GREATER CHURCH

From the Bishop

Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee

I took the quilt to the cleaners to get washed. They looked at it and handed it back. If we touch this, they said, it will fall apart.



To most eyes, the quilt is nothing to look at. The bright yellow ducklings have long faded to muted colors. The binding is frayed. Happy, my dog from childhood, chewed holes in the fabric where stuffing came out and repair was never finished. (Happy did this to many sheets and blankets in my growing up years. My sisters and I called them "Happy holes." My mom did not.)

From the time I was a toddler, this quilt has held my laughter, tears, secrets, sleep, insomnia, sickness, health, anger. In darkness, this quilt surrounded me in warmth. Years later, my children were wrapped in this same quilt.

Long before my grandma quilted my "duckie" blanket and gave it to me, there was a young family without permanent shelter and a baby soon to be born. The village midwives came into the night to help birth a baby for a family unknown. They came to an unhoused couple, a foreign couple, a poor couple with no prospects or power. And yet, these midwives left their warm houses and their own families, bringing their own handmade blankets and strips of cloth as they participated in this baby's birth. And, when he was born, they wrapped this child and his mom in warmth.

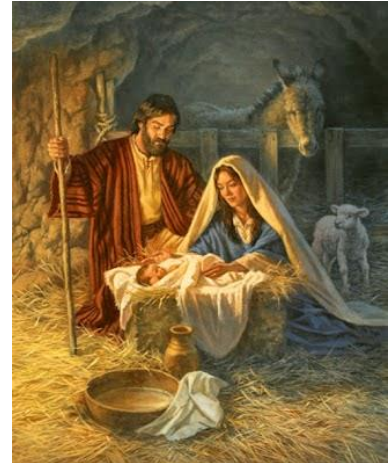
We know this because we hear the angels' words to the shepherds, "This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." Surely if the baby was wrapped in bands of cloth, the child was also wrapped in blankets.

What a difference it would have been without these blankets, without these swaddling cloths, without these midwives. Without the skills and the gifts God gave to them. The vocation of midwife brought Jesus into the world. The hands and wisdom of these women wrapped him in swaddling cloths.

It is such an amazing story...through God's invitation, and from Mary saying yes and Joseph saying yes and the innkeeper saying yes and the midwives saying yes – Jesus came.

Two thousand years ago, in a way no one could have imagined, God was with us in human form. Wrapped in blankets. Held in love.

What love, what grace, what beauty. Amazingly and almost inconceivably, in this little baby, God's love came and God's love continues to be among us through Jesus – Immanuel, Incarnate, God-in-the-flesh love. Embodied love...for you and for me. Always.



I know that life is messy. Life is sometimes hard. Sometimes the world seems out of control and we are so small against so much of what is out there. And yet...through something as small and vulnerable as a newborn baby, we are promised that God is here. Amongst us. And God's love is for everyone. Absolutely everyone. Regardless of your job or your political party, your anxiety or your income. Your ethnicity, your language, your gender, your situation in life. God's love is for you who celebrate this holy day and God's love is for those who don't. God's love is for those you are estranged from and those you embrace.

This Christmas and this year, may you feel surrounded by God's love and presence. In your laughter, tears, secrets, sleep, insomnia, sickness, health, anger – in darkness and in light may you feel God wrapping you into God's embrace...like a worn, faded blanket that is covered in ducks and Happy holes.

Have a blessed Christmas,

+Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee
bishop@lutheransnw.org



December

Fred Whittlesey	12/2	Fiona Johnson	12/14	Benjamin Ellerby	12/23
Selina Johnson	12/3	Heather Ballaine	12/15	Marty Dasler	12/24
Barbara Swartling	12/3	Charlene Selvar	12/15	Carol Reitz	12/26
Julia Jukubik	12/5	Caleb Grayson	12/20	Alec Stauffer	12/27
Sonja Selboe	12/13	Bill Brumley	12/22	Mark Drovdaahl	12/28
Carol Fenner	12/14	Calvin Kelly	12/22	Dawnae Whittlesey	12/28

January

Siri Love	1/2	Michael Noland	1/12	Sarah Lucioni	1/23
Chaney Weaver	1/3	Veronika Rohrscheib	1/12	Pat Sather	1/24
Norm Davis	1/4	Bitsy Ostenson	1/18	Ian Morris	1/26
McKenna Lang	1/5	Julie Cooper	1/21	Brant Weaver	1/27
Michael Noland	1/9	Doug Olson	1/21	David Ballain	1/28
		Peter Bang-Knudsen Jr.	1/22		

December Worship Assistants

Altar Duty:

Date:	Name:
December 3/4	Kathy Dudgeon
December 10/11	Gail Christensen
December 17/18	Alice McCain
December 24	TBD

Saturday Evening Worship:

Date:	Task:	Name:
December 3	Usher/Greeter	Dick Coar
	Lay Reader	Barbara Michael
	Hospitality Host	Gail Christensen
December 10	No Services	
December 17	Usher/Greeter	Jennie Harris
	Lay Reader	Jennie Harris
	Hospitality Host	Carol Fenner
December 24	Usher/Greeter	See Below
	Lay Reader	See Below
December 31	No Services	

Sunday Morning Worship:

Date:	Task:	Name:
December 4	Greeters	Jan Thrun & Lisa Deen
	Usher	Stephen Deines & Doug Dudgeon
	Lay Reader	Barbara Deines
	Communion Assistant	Barbara Deines
	Hospitality Host	Linda & Tom Newlon
December 11	Greeters	Claire & Marty Dasler
	Ushers	Alice & Bruce McCain
	Lay Reader	Claire Dasler
	Communion Assistant	Vicki Browning
	Hospitality Host	Vicki Browning & Shirley Funk
December 18	Greeters	Barbara & David Swartling
	Ushers	Barbara & David Swartling
	Lay Reader	David Swartling
	Communion Assistant	Barbara Swartling
	Hospitality Host	Debbie & Andy Rimkus
December 25	No Services	

The Month Ahead

December 2022						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<i>Non-Bethany events in italics.</i>				1 4:00pm BI Youth Orchestra	2 Noon AI Anon 7:30pm Amabile Holiday Concert	3 3:00pm Amabile Holiday Concert 5:00pm Holden Evening Prayer followed by wine and cheese fellowship 7:30pm Amabile Holiday Concert
4 10:00am Worship & Sunday School followed by coffee fellowship & Adult Ed	5 7:15pm Boy Scouts	6 10:00am Rachel Circle followed by Quilters 10:15am Preschool Chapel 3:15pm BI Youth Choir 6:30pm Amabile Rehearsal	7 10:15am Preschool Chapel Noon Altar Guild Cookie Exchange & Meeting 3:30pm BI Youth Choir 7:00pm Bethany Choir	8 4:00pm BI Youth Orchestra	9 Noon AI Anon	10 No 5:00pm Worship
11 10:00am Worship & Christmas Program followed by coffee fellowship & Adult Ed	12 9:30am Women's Bible Study 7:15pm Boy Scouts	13 8:00am Men's Bible Study 10:00am Quilters 3:15pm BI Youth Choir 6:30pm Amabile Rehearsal 7:00pm Council Meeting	14 11:00am Preschool Christmas Program 3:30pm BI Youth Choir 7:00pm Bethany Choir	15 11:00am Preschool Christmas Program 4:0pm BI Youth Orchestra	16 Noon AI Anon	17 9am BI Quilters Retreat 5:00pm Holden Evening Prayer followed by wine and cheese fellowship
18 10:00am Worship & Sunday School followed by coffee fellowship & Adult Ed	19	20 10:00am Quilters	21 7:00pm Bethany Choir	22	23 Noon AI Anon	24 5:00pm Christmas Eve Candlelight Service 10:00pm Christmas Eve Candlelight Service
25 No Worship Services	26	27 10:00am Quilters	28	29	30 Noon AI Anon	31 No Worship Services