



Bethany Briefs

LENT EDITION 2023

Bethany Presbyterian Church

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Conversations with Jesus

by Pastor Doug Kelly, Head of Staff

*Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony,
"He told me everything I have ever done." John 4:39*

Our Lenten theme this year is "Conversations with Jesus." Building on lengthy encounters Jesus has with individuals in John's gospel, can I go deeper in my relationship with the living Christ? That may require a shift in perspective, reflection and practice.

That shift can start with how we read these Bible passages. For instance, I am realizing that I have had a fairly rigid interpretation of the story of the Samaritan woman in John 4. It's commonly assumed - and I've bought into it - that the woman is the town's pariah because of her illicit sex life. The fundamental lesson often highlighted is how Jesus models evangelism, offering the word of life that penetrates our closets with our secrets. Some contemporary preachers even refer to her as a prostitute. But when you slow down with the story, there is no real evidence for any of this.

And what has been ignored by me is this: John 4 has the longest extended conversation between Jesus and another person in all of John's gospel; the woman is a serious student who tracks with Jesus, unlike the confused Nicodemus in the previous chapter; and the woman is the first preacher in the New Testament: *"Many Samaritans believed in Jesus because of the woman's testimony."*

Come journey with me this Lent as we enter afresh these familiar stories in John's gospel. What is real-

ly going on? Where is Jesus drawing you? What is the shift of perspective you're being called to?

And as we journey together this Lent, come shift with me into intentional practices, perhaps just one new venture for you. Consider these:

- Come to worship every Sunday of Lent in person or online. (One third of our worshipers are online almost every Sunday.)
- Attend our special services: Ash Wednesday on February 22nd, Maundy Thursday on April 6th.
- Enter new practices for conversation with Jesus in prayer through our Sunday morning "Lenten Spiritual Disciplines" to engage in a different spiritual practice each week (see Marisa's article on page 3).
- Do a deep dive into these passages through our Lenten Small Groups, Sermon Study Guide, or with our email devotionals.
- Participate in an in-person book discussion with Pastor Doug Kelly, "From the Pastor's Book Shelf: The Samaritan Woman's Story by Caryn Reeder," on Sunday, March 26, noon, and online on Monday, March 27, 7:00 pm.

Conversations with Jesus – don't just read about them, enter into one yourself.

Conversations with Jesus

Lent Calendar of Events

Join us as we embark on a spiritual journey of preparation for Holy Week and Easter. Here you'll find events and opportunities to engage in worship, community, and contemplation during this season.

Ash Wednesday Service & Wednesday Night Dinner

February 22nd at 7:00pm, Sanctuary & Online

Come early and join our Wednesday Night Dinner community for a meal in the Fellowship Hall from 5:30-6:30pm. Then join us in the Sanctuary or online for this 50-minute, multi-sensory service where we launch ourselves into the season of Lent, the 40 days before Holy Week. Lent is a season of repentance as we walk with Jesus to the cross. The imposition of ashes on our foreheads marks us as those who acknowledge our mortality, confess our sins and prepare to meet our crucified and risen Savior Jesus Christ.

Lenten Small Groups

We'll gather weekly during this Lenten season (2/22 - 4/6) to contemplate the scripture text and themes, look for life applications using discussion questions, and prepare our hearts for Easter. If you are interested in participating in a Lenten small group or if you would like to facilitate a group, contact Jennifer Steenstra for more information: (jennifersteenstra.b@gmail.com).

Lenten Sermon Series Study Guide

This study guide is available for all Bethany small groups or individuals to use during this Lenten season. Prepare your mind and heart by reading and reflecting on the scripture text prior to upcoming Sunday sermons, and engaging with questions afterward. To access the study guide online, [click here](#).

Maundy Thursday Service

April 6th at 7:00pm, Sanctuary & Online

In this worship service, we remember Jesus' last supper with his followers and take note of his final command to "love one another" (John 13). This is a multi-sensory service where we touch the cross as it passes overhead and receive the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.



Spiritual Formation for Lent

by Marisa Gronholz, *Director of Formation and Outreach*

As you've likely read by now, the sermon series this Lent will be "Conversations with Jesus." We will be looking at several of the lengthy conversations Jesus has with people as recorded in the gospel of John. As I thought about this series, it made me wonder about how we have conversations with Jesus today. How can we be good conversation partners? Are we good listeners? Can we hear his voice? Are there practices that make us more receptive to hearing from and speaking to Jesus? Moreover, how can we become people who become more like Jesus after speaking with him—people who practice what he preached.

I am sure you have all heard the familiar phrase, "practice makes perfect." I've never loved the phrase. As a musician, I have done a lot of practicing, but perfection has continually eluded me. A friend and mentor told me a different phrase that resonated a little more deeply. He said, "practice doesn't make perfect. Practice makes permanent." Lent begins on Ash Wednesday with the reminder of our imperfection, our impermanence, our limitations, our mortality. A pastor dips his or her finger into a mixture of ashes and oils and while making the sign of the cross on our foreheads softly whispers the words, "remember that you are dust, and from dust you shall return." One of the invitations for the rest of Lent as we journey towards Easter is to practice... to practice those things that help us remember who we are, and more importantly, *whose* we are and how we are called to live as followers of Jesus.

This Lent, we will have a moment each Sunday where someone will share a spiritual practice or discipline that has been meaningful to them as they have journeyed in their faith and had their own "conversations with Jesus." They will invite you to explore ways you can incorporate that practice into your life. Each week there will be an offering either between services or after each service, and every week will look a little different. Check your Friday E-News for the most up-to-date information each week. I'm looking forward to journeying with you this Lent as we engage in these practices together.



You're Invited - Phase Two of Discernment Process

Pre-Registration Required by Feb. 27th

Saturday, March 4th, 9:30am-12:30pm, Fellowship Hall & Online

We are now moving into Phase Two of the Discernment Process about our wedding policy, and want to invite all Bethany members and worshipping community to participate in "The Discernment Weekend" on Saturday, March 4th, 9:30am - 12:30pm (gather at 9:00am) in the Fellowship Hall and Online. For more info and to register, [click here](#).

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Outreach Focus for Lent: Creation Care

by Marisa Gronholz, *Director of Formation and Outreach*

When I think of Spiritual Formation and Outreach, I don't think of them as separate entities. For me, they are two sides of the same coin. Our spiritual formation (our discipleship, practices, and posture) informs and impacts our outreach, and our outreach efforts shape and form us as we open ourselves up to new relationships, stories, and perspectives. Last year, we were encouraged by Dr. Brenda Salter McNeil and her team in our justice and reconciliation work to ask our young people what they cared about and to include their perspectives as we approached budget decisions. So, we asked our high school students and middle school students about things in our world that concern them—places where they see injustice. One of their primary concerns was regarding climate change and environmental stewardship. They will soon be deciding on a new partner working at the intersection of faith and the environment as part of a new “Creation Care” line item in the budget. I've listed the potential organizations below:

- PC(USA) Earth Care initiative: <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/environment/earth-care-congregations/>
- Earth Ministry/Washington Interfaith Power and Light: <https://earthministry.org/about/>
- A Rocha: <https://arocha.org/en/about/>
- Young Evangelicals for Climate Action: <https://yecaction.org/>

Each year we pick an outreach focus for Lent and, inspired by our youth, this year we will focus on Creation Care. If you are anything like me, the subject of creation care can be overwhelming. The questions are endless: *How can we be good stewards of the earth God has entrusted to us? How can we undo the damage we have done? What do we do with the guilt and shame of having contributed to the climate crisis in our world in both small and large ways?* (If you've ever seen a picture of me in junior high, you will know that I definitely made a dent in the ozone layer with all of the Aqua Net hairspray I used!) *What can we do that will actually make a difference? What do we do with all of the conflicting advice and opinions?*

This Lent, Janette Plunkett is going to help us sift through these questions and give us ideas on how we can be better stewards. More specifically, we will hear about how our denomination is attempting to address climate change and how we can be a part of it. She will be teaching a class on March 19th after the 9am service to get us started. Here is a description from Janette on what we will be exploring in her class and throughout Lent: *Our denomination, PC(USA), has called on us to become carbon neutral. Is that possible? What would it be like? Could Lent be a time when we shed our yoke to fossil fuels as part of our spiritual journey?* Come hear a quick update on what PCUSA is doing, actions you can take and other ways to engage in Creation Care as a spiritual practice in Lent.

UPCOMING EVENTS IN OUTREACH:

- Be sure to check out the Black History Month page on the Bethany website for resources and local events. <https://www.bethanypc.org/2023-black-history-month/>
- March is Women's History Month, so check the website for some recommended resources coming soon.
- Museum Without Walls Hawaii Trip. Sign up today! Trip dates are August 5th-12th. <https://museumwithoutwalls.org/programs/>
- Wrestling with Reconciliation—join our friends from Urban Impact every third Thursday of the month for a conversation about race, faith, and justice. <https://www.urbanimpactseattle.org/events>
- April 23rd, 2023: Save the Date for the Outreach Partner Fair where you can learn more about our many outreach partners and how you can get involved!

Prayer Ministries Thrive at Bethany

by Julia Sensenbrenner, *Prayer Elder*

Recently, a member of Bethany's Prayer Team observed, "Isn't it great Bethany is a church where people pray? We don't have to train people to pray; we just need to offer opportunities and people come." As prayer elder, I have observed this truth. Take a look at some of the places people at Bethany pray--and rejoice with me.

The Prayer Ministries email list has 27 people, who receive an email request to pray for the immediate personal needs of Bethany's members and friends.

The Dedicated Prayer for Bethany group has 18 people praying consistently for our church, including staff, programs, and outreach partners. This team, which was formed last June, receives a praise and prayer list each Thursday. Once a quarter, we also meet in person to raise up Bethany in prayer.

Another 22 people volunteer to pray during worship services, either during communion or after the services. If you like to pray individually with people, we definitely could use a few more volunteers on this team, particularly during the 6 weeks of Lent, when we serve communion every week!

Finally, 21 people pray for Bethany's elders and pastors during Session meetings each month. Each elder has asked someone to pray for them and Session. Since I usually don't know who that person is, I am not including these people in the numbers below.

Amazingly the numbers in the first three groups include 57 different individuals, with the majority only serving in one of the groups. The overlaps, those involved in either 2 or 3 of the groups, are staff members (Doug, Marisa and Danielle) or members of the Prayer Team (7 people who meet monthly to discern and plan prayer-related events). I raise joyous praise to the Lord for providing all these faithful prayer warriors—and involving so many different people in the various prayer ministries!

We gladly welcome newcomers to join these groups; if you are interested, or if you have a prayer request for the Prayer Ministries folks, email me at prayer@bethanypc.org.



Creation Care Fundraiser - Final Two Weeks!

The Bethany Arts Team is preparing to take down "The New Normal" lawn installation in early March! Proceeds from the fundraiser will go toward climate action through the creation care ministry of A Rocha, and to the artist, Roger Feldman, to help defray the cost of materials for The New Normal art installation. To explore the fundraising page and make a donation, [click here](#).

Wednesday Night Dinner Updates

by Jacque Ives, *Interim Director of Wednesday Night Dinner*

Our Wednesday Night Dinner (WND) community is in a time of transition and trust in God's provision and care. Here are a few highlights:

- After serving our community as the Director of WND for two years, Hannah Kunde moved on at the end of the year to accept a new job as the Director of Family Housing at the Interfaith Coalition of Whatcom County. While we were sad to say goodbye to Hannah, we're excited to see how God will use and provide for her up in Bellingham.
- I agreed to take on some of the duties of the Director of WND on an interim basis as we search for a new director. Over the past year and a half, I've enjoyed and grown through my involvement with the WND community both as a regular volunteer and as a member of the leadership team. My primary duties as the Interim Director will be to coordinate, recruit, train and appreciate our volunteers, and oversee the weekly dinner on Wednesday nights.
- After two and a half years of serving grab-and-go meals because of the pandemic, we returned to serving food and fellowship inside last November. While the number of guests we serve is not as high as before Covid (we've been averaging between 50-80 guests each week), we're hoping more folks will show up for a tasty meal and sweet fellowship. We continue to invite the greater Bethany community to participate in and with the Wednesday Night Dinner. There is always room at the tables for more participants... and if there's not, we'll set up more tables!
- We are grateful for a faithful team of volunteers from our Bethany and Queen Anne communities: of our 44 regular volunteers, almost half do not attend Bethany but live on/around Queen Anne. It requires approximately 30 volunteers each week to support our WND, including shopping, cooking, setting up/cleaning up the room, serving food, and cleaning the kitchen. Our efforts are rewarded with the joy of camaraderie, deepening friendships, and laughter each week.
- The Search Team (Jay Derr, Allison Fletcher, Frank Holman, Beth Steinkoenig, and Pastor Doug Kelly) has begun meeting regularly and will soon be taking the next steps to find our next Director.
- The needs are great in our WND community, and it's easy to feel overwhelmed and wonder if we're making a difference. I'm trying to remember and reflect on the wisdom shared by Father Greg Boyle (Jesuit priest, author, and founder and director of Homeboy Industries, a gang-intervention and rehabilitation program in LA): it's all about incremental change and offering multiple doses of kindness and goodness to all those who enter our doors. Come join us on Wednesday night for a meal and a dose of kindness and goodness!



Wednesday Night Dinner Community member, Rodney, playing the piano for our Thanksgiving Celebration



Alan Beasley and Stanley enjoying visiting at Wednesday Night Dinner

Update: New Director of Worship!



After a six-month search, the Session approved the recommendation of the Director of Worship Search Team and our Personnel Committee that we hire Carlos Rangel to lead our music and worship ministry.

The search team evaluated more than forty applicants. We chose fourteen as qualified based on information in their resumes. We used a rubric to narrow this list to seven. Based on the video interviews, we chose three applicants for in-person interviews in Seattle which we conducted in January. After some prayerful discernment, we offered the position to Carlos.

Carlos has been a worship pastor at several Baptist churches and is an ordained Baptist minister. He began his ministry career with large congregations in Brazil. He came to the United States for school and has a master's degree in Divinity and Music from Baylor. While in the United States, he has worked in 4 different churches, most recently as a Worship Pastor at a 300 member church in Texas.

Carlos impressed us with his musical flexibility, organizational skills, and creativity. As an example, at his most recent church he realized that the community had limited options for children to engage with music. In response, he started a music academy at the church that now draws 80 youth from the community.

Carlos' first Sunday with us will be April 23rd. We appreciate your prayers and of course the work of the committee: Kate Barker, Jenn Cavanaugh, Adrian Chow, Marlowe Hussey, Gena Morgan, Mary Steele (chair), Pastor Doug (staff).

children & family ministries @ Bethany

by Bianca Quezada, *Director of Children & Family Ministries*

We had a lovely Advent and Christmas weekend at Bethany! On December 3rd we hosted a family program focused on Advent. Among other activities we had wreath-making stations, ornament decorating, a reading and drawing corner, as well as treats galore. This Christmas Eve seven 5th graders led us in worship at two wonderful services. They read, they sang, they lit candles! I'm so proud of our 5th graders for taking this leadership opportunity seriously and helping others make great connections and memories this season. Thank you to their parents as well who communicated, practiced, drove, and dedicated their time for this milestone.

This Lent we are making countdown chain links in anticipation of Easter Sunday. During Sunday classes kids will connect the links and bring home this fun family activity. Look closely, each link has a verse or activity you can do as a family twice a week. If you missed the link-making opportunity or don't have a child in the program, I can send you a digital copy of the links to print, cut, and assemble.

We have started grade-specific faith milestones, so look forward to more sweet faces leading us in worship throughout the Winter and Spring. Lastly, dates have been set for Vacation Bible Camp, August 7-11, 2023 at Bethany! Please put this on your calendar. Think of friends and neighbors who may want to join, consider volunteering yourself! This is a fun tradition that brings all generations together in play, worship, and community.





by Willy Sydenstricker
Associate Director of Youth

I am grateful for the opportunity to reflect on the past few months. I am continuously surprised with just how formative Danielle's sabbatical was for me. I was able to develop in leading the ministry in a more independent sense, while Danielle was able to get much needed space and time to reflect and grow!

For the entirety of the fall, we contemplated community and belonging in BPYG. I was astonished to witness just how much closer students seem to one another than they did when I first started in January of 2022. This is in large part because of our leaders continual willingness to show up. This series ended with us celebrating Advent as a Middle school group and Danielle returned to lead the High school group from Sabbatical. Throughout the month of December we took a break for a few weeks.

With the new year, we began a conversation in MS about Justice - what is it? Why should we care about this as Christians? When have we experienced injustice? Participated in it? We will be culminating these conversations (with the recognition that these conversations can never really conclude) with a visit from some long-time WND volunteers who will explain to us the history of the ministry and students will be provided an opportunity to participate in helping the ministry in various ways, as well as encouraged to examine their own hearts for places of suffering in the world/community that they really care about.



Gratitude & Commitment Sunday

Gratitude & Commitment Sunday

Our stewardship campaign is underway! This is the time of year when we make our financial estimates of giving for July 2023 - June 2024. We will turn in our Estimate of Giving cards during worship on Sunday, February 19th. You can also fill out your card online by clicking [here](#). You are making a real difference in the lives of our community, and around the world through our outreach ministry partners. Thank you for your generosity!