



Bethany Briefs

Advent Edition 2023

Bethany Presbyterian Church

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PRESENCE IN ADVENT

by Pastor Doug Kelly, Head of Staff

O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence.

—Isaiah 64:1

I love this verse in Isaiah and its direct appeal to God to tarry no longer and come down and be with us. It's an appeal for God's reign to happen now. But it is also a plea for divine presence. You can hear echoes of this verse in the last chapter of the Bible - "Come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20) and in the prologue to John's gospel - "The Word became flesh and moved into the neighborhood" (John 1:14 The Message).

There is an ache in the human heart for connection with the very center of the universe. Of course, so often we find ourselves drawn to false centers. Instead of begging God to be present with us, we chase after gods of our own making. Yet there are seasons when even those most garrisoned against any notion of the Divine let down their defenses.

When the early church fathers were searching for a time in the church year to situate Jesus' birth, they intentionally picked the winter solstice. The season of short daylight hours was the best time to celebrate the light shining in the darkness (John 1:5). But I would also like to think that they knew that this was the time when the human heart is most receptive to the Divine come near.

Even in unchurched Seattle we can sense more openness to mystery, dare we even say yearning. And I want us at Bethany to pay attention to this openness and have some intention of hospitality.

The word for hospitality in the New Testament is a Greek construct meaning "love of the stranger." (Philoxenia: philo = "love" and xenia = "stranger.")

We are more familiar with the English word xenophobia which means "fear of the stranger.") I want us to do philoxenia at Bethany this Advent season.

We have some moments in the Bethany Advent calendar that are ripe moments for connection both human and divine. I'm talking about "Welcoming Christmas" which happens Saturday, December 2nd, 4:00 – 6:30 p.m. Invite a friend or come and meet a friend on this leisurely afternoon of food, Advent wreaths, crafts, and a concert near the end.

Another moment of hospitality is the Advent Reception after each worship service on December 10th. Enjoy great food in the fellowship hall and make a connection.

And don't forget Sunday worship these four weeks of Advent where the lighting of Advent candles prompts us to name that ache of our hearts for God's presence.

Our Wednesday Night Dinner community has philoxenia at the center of its life every week. Maybe the divine nudge for you is to come and experience that hospitality and God's grace that lives there.

Finally, I encourage you to invite a friend or neighbor who doesn't have a church home to come to Christmas Eve worship, 4:00, 7:00 & 9:00pm. Remember, it is not just Christians who harbor heavenly hopes on that night. We all have friends who may be ready to sing "*The hopes and fears of all the years are met in Thee tonight.*"

OPEN THE HEAVENS AND COME DOWN



Advent Calendar of Events

Join us as we prepare our hearts and anticipate the coming of Christmas together! The following are ways to stay connected, serve, and celebrate during this Advent season.

Welcoming Christmas

Saturday, December 2nd, from 4:00 - 6:30 pm, Fellowship Hall & Sanctuary

This is a community-wide event hosted by Bethany. Join us for crafts and activities - including wreath making, cookie decorating, card making, ornament painting, and more! We'll also have some yummy snacks for you to enjoy. All this will be followed by a family-friendly Christmas concert in the sanctuary at 5:45pm. Invite your friends and family! No cost to attend.

Advent Reception

Sunday, December 10th, after both services, Fellowship Hall

Congregants are invited to contribute sweet and savory "finger food" items from your family's Christmas traditions to our annual celebration - baked goods, crackers & cheese, fruit, gluten free options... be creative! Store-purchased items are fine. Contact Julie Christensen to let her know you're planning to bring something and/or volunteer to help: jfchristen56@hotmail.com. You can also sign up using our online form [here](#).

The Longest Night Service

Wednesday, December 20th

Dinner at 5:30pm - Fellowship Hall / Service at 6:30pm - Sanctuary Only

This season can be a difficult time of year for many people. Whatever it is that you are holding, you are invited to come to this service and lay these things before the Lord. This will be a service of scripture, music, poetry, candlelight, and prayer.

Christmas Eve Services

Sunday, December 24th

Join us as we celebrate the birth of our Savior!

10:00 Morning Worship - Sanctuary Only

4:00 Family-Friendly - Sanctuary & Online

7:00 and 9:00 pm Candlelight - Sanctuary & Online

Advent Events (cont.)

Advent Retreat Suggestions

Local: *Renewal Ministries Advent Day of Prayer - Pause, Worship, Be At Peace*, The Renewing Chapel, Mill Creek, Dec. 15 (7-8:30pm) or Dec. 16 (10-11:30am). We invite you to pause in this holy season of Advent, to ponder the wonder of God's love given, to be refreshed and renewed in God's peace. This 90-minute retreat will feature Scripture meditation and personal reflection accompanied by live contemplative music. Suggested donation is \$25. For more info and to register, [click here](#).

Online: *Illuminated Advent Retreat, A Journey Into the Heart of Christmas* with Jan Richardson. This online retreat is not about adding one more thing to your holiday schedule. It is about helping you find spaces for reflection that draw you deep into a season that shimmers with mystery and possibility. For more info and to register, [click here](#).



Wednesday Night Dinner Giving Tree

Please consider giving a Christmas gift to one of our regular Wednesday Night Dinner guests. Choose an ornament from the Giving Tree in the lobby. Please wrap your gift and return it by December 17th, with the ornament attached. These gifts will be distributed at Wednesday Night Dinner during our Christmas celebration on December 20th. Thanks so much!

Bethany Advent Playlist

Over the past few years, we've curated our own playlist of Advent music that is known and loved at Bethany. It has evolved over time as various members of our community have contributed favorite songs to this list. It lives on Spotify, but you don't need to have a paid plan to enjoy it. If you don't already have an account, just create a free login and you're set. >> [Click here to listen in this season >>](#)

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Advent Resources

by Marisa Gronholz, *Director of Formation and Outreach*

DEVOTIONAL BOOKLETS

This Advent season, we have devotional booklets available from one of our Outreach partners: Frontier Fellowship. Their daily devotional “Go and Tell” invites readers to consider the ways the songs of Advent and Christmas point us to God’s love, care and justice for the world. Join our ministry partner in this Advent journey through reflection, prayer, worship and song. You can pick up your copy in the church lobby or find it online [here](#).

ONLINE DEVOTIONAL RESOURCES

- Bethany Pres – We will be publishing our Bethany online devotional via email on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays throughout Advent. We will be focusing on the four words of Advent: Hope, Love, Joy, Peace. If you are not receiving Bethany online devotionals and would like to, you can sign up using the link here. If you’d like to write one of the devotionals, please reach out to Marisa Gronholz at marisag@bethanypc.org.
- Black Liturgies for Advent – *Daily Meditations*: www.blackliturgies.com
 - Holy Dark: Candlelit Evenings in Advent
 - Four Sessions | Sunday Evenings | Begins December 3rd, 7pm ET – available for those who preorder the book, *Black Liturgies*
 - Advent meditations/liturgies include poetry, questions for contemplation, and breath practice – available to Patreon members. www.patreon.com (search for Black Liturgies)
- Chasing Justice – *Longing for Liberation: Advent Guide*: www.chasingjustice.com
 - Order the \$10 e-book here: <https://324afb.myshopify.com/products/advent-guide-download>
- Kate Bowler – *Bless the Advent We Actually Have: A Daily Devotional For the Christmas Season* (free): <https://katebowler.com/advent/>
- Sarah Bessey – Reimagining Advent: A December Series at Field Notes with Sarah Bessey: https://sarah-bessey.substack.com/subscribe?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email (you will need to subscribe to her newsletter)

BOOKS

- [*Honest Advent*](#) by Scott Erickson
- [*Heaven and Earth: Advent and the Incarnation*](#) by Bishop Will Willimon

ONLINE ADVENT RETREAT

- Jan Richardson – online Illuminated Advent Retreat: www.janrichardson.com/adventretreat

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FROM OUR DENOMINATION

- PC(USA): <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/2023-advent-resources/>



Gathering Around the Table this Season

Young Adults Update by Matt Miller, Associate Director of Young Adults

Last Wednesday, our young adults gathered for an annual tradition we call Friendsgiving. In some sense this is merely a potluck borrowing Thanksgiving's culinary liturgy of turkey, mashed potatoes, and pie. In another sense, this little potluck has evolved in meaning as a space to consider two dimensions of family. Join us at the Friendsgiving table while we talk about it.

Inevitably, the approach of the American holidays—heralded by fallen leaves and plummeting temperatures before Thanksgiving—dredges up a wide range of emotions. This holds true for young adults, living one side of the complexity of family charted across ages and stages. At the holidays, the new and the old collide. Old family patterns meet new needs or boundaries, sometimes with relieved gratitude and often with chafing hurt. Old relationship dynamics meet new family members—partners along for the ride, new spouses inhabiting a childhood home. Old expectations are shattered in sparks, sometimes the joyful fireworks of addiction recovery and sometimes the devastating wildfire of re-traumatization. No matter your age or stage, you live one side of the relational dynamics and accumulated life events which cause so much *feeling* during the holidays, and I wonder: what do you feel heading into this holiday season? What wisdom, comfort, challenge, or peace does God offer you?

Beyond the complexity of *family* of origin, Friendsgiving has also prompted us year-over-year to pause. To look around. To see the other faces seated at the table.

And to marvel at the goodness of chosen church-family reflected in the Young Adult Ministry. I recall our first Friendsgiving many years ago at the height of COVID—outdoors, freezing cold, distanced 6-feet apart—and yet so close, so warm, aglow in human connection and the joy of belonging. This is how it feels again, this year. Paul's words naming us all fellow citizens of the household of God (Eph. 2:19) *feel* true and substantial in these moments. What's more, Friendsgiving has become a place to act like a family in anticipation of the holidays: spurring each other on “towards love and good deeds” (Heb. 10:24) as we consider what that really means as we head into the holidays called to love one another as Christ first loved us.

One of the many ways we spur one another on is through curious questions designed to open us up. Each of these questions is an invitation to share our true selves with another—to be seen as we are without pretense. I (on behalf of our entire young adult community) invite you to find a conversation partner and dig into a few of our questions:

- What do you love about your family of origin?
- Name one way your relationship with your family has shifted over time.
- What does your family expect from you during the holidays? How is that for you?
- Is the Spirit nudging you to show up more graciously in a specific family relationship this season?



Welcome New Members



Ben Barker

Ben Barker is married to Kate LeRoy with one son (Blake, 5 years) and one daughter (Blaine, 6 weeks) welcomed a daughter on 10/24. Ben and his family live on Queen Anne and he works downtown at CBRE in affordable housing multifamily brokerage. Ben enjoys outdoor activities including skiing, biking, rafting, and hiking.



Sherrie Bennett

Sherrie is a recently retired trial attorney, learning how to slow down a little and not multitask. She's married to Scott Gregory, and she enjoys volunteering with Wednesday Night Dinner, gardening, and having fun with paint and crafts.



Scott Gregory

Scott is a retired commercial fisherman and Tugboat operator. He and his wife, Sherrie, have a blended family of five grown children and five grandchildren. He likes downhill and cross country skiing and open water swimming. Scott enjoys regularly helping with Wednesday Night Dinner.



Katie Chan

Katie was born and raised in the suburbs of New York, but has called Seattle home since 2015. She and her husband, Jon, are the parents of seven-year-old Ellie and four-year-old William. Katie works at Expedia in program management and enjoys volunteering at her children's school. When she has spare time, she loves playing cello and tennis.

Welcome New Members



Katie Horn

Katie is married to Ryan Horn and is currently spending the majority of her time raising and homeschooling their 8 year old, Preston, and their 4 year old, Griffin. She is also a pediatric occupational therapist who enjoyed using her gifts and training working with other children and families prior to embarking on the homeschooling journey with her own. Katie loves to spend time outdoors and doing anything active with her family, friends, and her German Shepherd.



Ryan Horn

Ryan was born and raised in Seattle. He's the husband of Katie and father to Preston and Griffin. Ryan is the Manager of Seattle Children's Autism Center & Magnuson Clinic. He is an enthusiast of arts, music, and sports, and lover of all things nature.



Paige Sawers

Paige is an OR nurse, new wife, new stepmother to an amazing 9 year old, and a dog mom to two doodles. She loves cooking, reading, and traveling, and is looking to make new friends!

Tyler Sawers

Tyler is an activities director for a senior living facility in Lynnwood. He's husband to Paige and father to Charlotte.



Merrile Sing

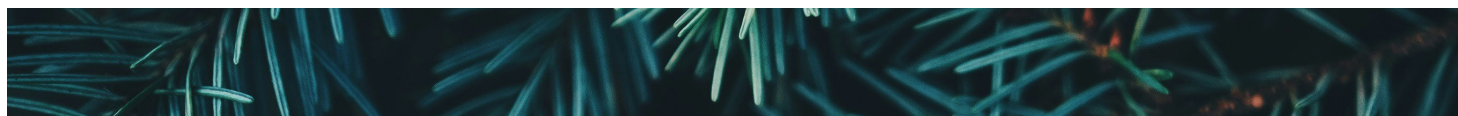
Merrile is a retired economist, and she enjoys attending seminars and volunteering as a mentor in the University of Washington's economics department. She worked in Washington, DC for 25 years and appreciated her access there to a large network of economists, as well as to DC's monuments and museums. Merrile worked an additional ten years in Seattle (with many business trips back to DC) while she oversaw her mother's care here in Seattle. She enjoys cycling, travel, tai chi, hiking, basketball, and spending time with friends.

Welcome New Members (cont.)



Carroll Snow

Carroll is a native of the Pacific Northwest. Since high school Young Life, she's been a huge fan of small groups as a place to grow in her faith and in community. Carroll was employed as an Occupational Therapist for 23 years. She is married to Tim, and their two daughters married great guys and live nearby. They also have a grand-dog and three grandchildren.



children & family ministries @ Bethany

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

This has been an exciting start of the school year! On September 17 we kicked off our 2023-2024 season with full classrooms and an enthusiasm for what's ahead. We have seen many newcomer families, and are working on strategies to connect them to committed Bethany folks within their first few visits. If you see a parent who looks lost, go ahead and offer a welcome and helping hand. A simple, "I don't think we've met before," can go a long way!

Parent Forum. The Children & Family Ministry leadership team, which includes Meghan Waddle and Cathee Till, recognized a need in the community - more opportunities for connection among parents. After attending a parent forum at SPU last Spring, we thought we could do something similar at Bethany. We invited one of their speakers, Rev. Sara Koenig, to lead 31 Bethany family members in a discussion about reading the Bible with young folks. It was a hit, and we hope to host similar gatherings each quarter.

Kids Choir. We are all so thankful for Carlos Rangel. Along with the dynamism he's brought to our Sunday services, he has a heart for kids in music. Singing with kids at VBC went so well, we decided to start a kid choir which kicked off on October 15. Every Sunday between services a group of kids learns from Carlos and Lynne Louise about singing techniques and specific songs for upcoming events. If you missed them at the October 29 service, come hear this choir at Welcoming Christmas and the Family Christmas Eve service at 4pm!

Welcoming Christmas. Join the entire Bethany community on Saturday, December 2nd from 4-6:30pm to ring in the Advent season. All ages are invited to mingle, eat delicious snacks, create crafts like Advent wreaths and ornaments, and enjoy the musical stylings of our kids and adult choirs. Feel free to invite neighbors, family members, and anyone who wants to celebrate the festiveness of Christmas!