

GRAPEVINE NEWSLETTER

January 2023

Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church, ELCA
12513 SE Mill Plain Boulevard Vancouver, WA 98684
360/254/9243
bslc@beautifulsaviorlutheran.com www.bslcwa.org



Pastor's Ponderings –

Merry Christmas! As I sit in front of John's and my Christmas tree to finally take a breath and write a note for this Grapevine, I wonder how your Christmas celebration might have been changed from that which you actually experienced. From Facebook and some direct sharing, I know a number of us had to “pivot,” while others with irreversibly changed life realities sought to embrace the promises of Christmas more profound than a simple holiday can hold.

This past weekend of icy limitations in the PNW sure changed BSLC plans for the weekend! I am grateful for having observed the longest night and how that bookended with Christmas Day worship actually provided rich meaning to my experience of Christmas, in spite of the shifting required in between. What did you do to mark the day and remember on Christmas Day this year after your plans shifted?

This past weekend seemed to me to reflect broader realities of our past several years, as we've needed to practice nimble flexibility of mind and spirit in response to a changing landscape of circumstance and understanding. It's often not a comfortable reality. We've faced more often than we'd have liked, times “when you don't know what you don't know” have been forced into our awareness—including that we hadn't developed a proactive plan for clearing the parking lot when ice coats it (thanks, Christmas elf who snuck in and scraped it away so worship could happen Christmas morning – and Christmas angel who let me know it had been done!) because we'd developed an assumption that Keizer's parking lot clearing crews, which have informally included ours for years, would continue without question.

Looking forward toward 2023 Counting that things which have long been assumed will come back and continue on is part of what's forming a roadblock as we have come back together as a congregation, in part because some of the

changes we've faced, and continue to wrestle with, have to do with changed circumstances, including currently lacking means for a staffed youth leader, and the retirement of Mariellen from her position as BSLC Office Administrator after 29 years.

Then there is a hesitancy being

seen across sectors of society, to "get involved" or return to previous levels of participation. On top of that, people have fallen out of relationship even with those with whom they were once in relationship, let alone with a pastor you never really had the opportunity to build a relationship with "on the ground", nor develop trust (those "coffee and conversation" via zoom didn't appeal to many, and requests for invitations to meet other ways didn't feel comfortable for too long). Then there are those who "moved on", whether in lost connection and commitment, literal moves, or death.

So that's something about where we are. And as a congregation, we must find our way around or through these and other markers of a reality that doesn't quite match "what was", if we are to continue traveling on the faith journey as a congregation. We need to name what is at the essence of who we are, that is to be passed from our earlier generation of being, to those who form us now, and we seek to pass on to future generations.

In the last month one of our congregation helped me recognize that when I speak of the need to define what is our essence, to bring focus to our ministry, or define us, it feels to some of you as if I am advocating for constraining limitations (which of course would spark resistance in independent PNWers). Part of what seems important to work on is coming to greater mutual understanding, and the whys behind our thinking and reactions.

As part of that work, the naming of core values shared across the congregation will reprise in January. From mid November to the end of the year it felt "off limits" for continued efforts. It is not too late for those folk to weigh in: if a group of folks not yet able to contribute wish to go through the broader process, please let me know; alternatively, provide responses to the values included on the lists generated in October. (the lists will be reshared soon)

Whichever way the congregation feels called to move forward on the proposal to sell land for affordable housing, we have work to do in regrounding ourselves

Installation of Jill Hellerud
BSLC's new Office Administrator
January 8, 2023
during worship

Forum for Dialogue

Facilitator: Joey Agar

SWWA Synod Bishop's Associate &
Director for Evangelical Mission

re: discernment & response to
interest in land purchase for
affordable housing

January 8, 2023

11:30 AM

Fellowship Hall

so that it again feels safe enough to imagine a future of ministry and mission out into the world. Again: discernment is not about any of us deciding what we want or are comfortable with, but seeking some sense of clarity together regarding next steps God hopes for for us. And after we perhaps falteringly take next steps, discovery of what next lies ahead will be clearer.

That's where we are - trying to find our way through a fog obscuring a fuller vision of what lies beyond, even as we take tentative steps forward trusting that God is there to lead us if we reach

out for direction. Please pray for wisdom and direction. I'll be sending a requested summary of how the process since the proposal was made has gone and what has been learned before the end of the year.

For now, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year, all! I wonder what 2023 will reveal? Pastor Jean

Responding to Prestige Development's Proposal for Land Purchase

We've spent several months sitting with and processing a proposal we received over the summer, asking us to consider selling a portion of the land BSLC is on, to be used for an affordable housing complex which it is anticipated will be owned and managed by Vancouver Housing Authority. We sent in questions generated at a first informational gathering, heads of Prestige Development and Vancouver Housing Authority provided a presentation of what they envisioned, and opportunities for small group processing of the idea were offered and held. In the fall, a survey about what else would be helpful was shared and results compiled.

From the survey and what was shared through circle conversations, the prevailing opinion about the best to vote was January so that we can move on to what is next, whatever the result might be. Offering one more time for



large group discussion was recommended. A first attempt to do so before the annual meeting in November did not raise indication of interest, whether PJ or a synod representative facilitated the conversation, although some people did show up for the meeting after word went out that it was canceled due to lack of interest in that tight timeframe.



At this time, January 29 is slated for the vote to move forward. We are working on what needs to be done in order to make it possible legally, to allow participation and vote through zoom and in person attendance (more info on that will be sent in a special e-blast). The vote will be to move forward in the process to step three, or to say “thank you, but no” to the proposed sale. If the vote is no, then further work to figure out a way forward in mission, ministry, and ability to fund those, will come next.

If the vote is to move forward, there is a level of assumption that “all things being equal”, we are willing to sell land to allow an affordable housing complex to be built. While there will continue to be more opportunities for input about what needs to be included in the sale documents and whether the price offered is what we can feel comfortable accepting, *and* making investment in appropriate legal counsel or a real estate advisor, and other financial aspects that come with selling property so we need commitment to embark on this process as investment in what is to come.

While some people have indicated their mind is made up and they are ready to move forward, others have expressed interest in having further time to discuss the matter as a community - to have the opportunity to listen to one another about the pros and cons of both selling the land and of retaining the land (either way there are pluses and minuses we must consider not only to make the most informed choice, but help us think about “what’s next”). Of those who desire further conversation, there are those who asked for someone from the synod office to come and help us process forward.

January 8, around 11:30 AM, in order to allow time to transition from worship and Sunday school, there will be a **forum** in the fellowship hall. Joey Agar, synod staff and Southwestern Washington Synod Director for Evangelical Mission, will facilitate the conversation. This is beneficial in various ways, including being an “outsider” to our congregational system so without the blinders and biases those of us in the congregation naturally have. His work also includes helping congregations work through

discernment, with a six month process starting in January. It seems likely to be too late to consider or ask to join the upcoming cohort, but knowing he has grounding in this work may help some.

Additional conversation? If there is interest in/willingness to participate in one more time of conversation before moving into a vote, please let Pastor Jean know so that it can be scheduled. For an evening forum please weigh in whether Tues. the 10th *or* Thurs. the 12th at 6:30 works, or whether one on Saturday the 14th *or* 21st, at 10 *or* 1 is what you will participate in.

Preparing for Reasoned Conversation To prepare for any of the upcoming conversations, you are encouraged to make a pro and con chart for each of the current two options (sell or retain). Please push yourself to consider and record the pros and cons of both options beyond what are most easy for you to name. We need to know what we are saying yes and no to, because each requires sacrifice and effort, *and* start thinking about what commitments each requires (“How am I willing to step up to support what next needs to happen?” “What does this congregation need to consider/do next/...?”), in order to live into whatever comes after.

What comes next? Either way the vote goes, we’ll need to enter into similar processes of discernment around “what’s next” for BSLC, including



identifying what we are called into doing and being for our next season together. Financial conversations will come with either decision: in response to a no vote – how will we fund and otherwise support our perceived mission and ministry, or in response to a yes vote, how will we plan forward while countering any tendency within ourselves, as a number of you have expressed concern about, to not support and shape the way we move forward in

mission and ministry as a congregation. Fears about “frittering away the proceeds” are felt by a number of you. Whether we do or not is a choice we can make – it’s not a decision to be made for us. That doesn’t mean the choice will be comfortable nor straightforward, so please be diligent in prayer for our congregation and wise decision making.

Concerns Two prevalent concerns were expressed in the listening circles for the after time, whichever way the results of the vote are. One is whether we

remember that being a community of faith is what is important and figuring out how to live into the decision made together. The other was that we not lose whatever momentum the consideration of this proposal stirred in us. The hope that people care enough to participate in and support the congregation through and beyond this decision was strong.

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From Outgoing Council President (2022), Nancy Kingston

Many of us, whether we grew up with hand-me-downs or the best of everything, carry around an old message of not enough, to some degree, in some variation. And for a lot of us, when we're worried or scared, that message comes back. Not enough time. Not enough people. Not enough money. Not enough ... something.

But when we notice the many blessings that God has graciously and generously poured out everywhere we look, when we feel grateful for those blessings, when we realize that God really does love us – then those worries and fears can go away and a new sentence can come to mind: “We have enough that we can share, and someone else will have plenty, too!” Plenty of time. Plenty of people. Plenty of money. Plenty of...love.

Perfect love – Christ’s love – casts out fear (1 John 4:18b), so we don’t have to worry. We don’t have to be afraid. There really is enough to go around, and more. Jesus wouldn’t have it any other way.

This message is excerpted from “Plenty to share” by Audrey Novak Riley from the February 1, 2017, [blog of the Women of the ELCA](#).

Please think about how and what you can share at BSLC, whether it is with your offerings, your time as a volunteer or just your support.

Nancy Kingston, Council President

Regular WEEKLY ACTIVITIES

- Sundays -- Worship 10:00 AM until further notice
 - Sunday School – 10:30 AM 2nd, 3rd, 4th, & 5th Sundays
- Wednesdays – Bible Study (zoom) 10:30 (ask PJ for link)
Jr. Choir 4:30; Bell Choir 4:45; Confirmation & Adult Choir 6:30
- Thursdays – 10:00 Bible study 10:00-2:00 LWR quilting (resumes 1/12/23)

Regular MONTHLY MEETINGS:

- 3rd Sundays – Council Meeting 11:30 AM
 - 3rd Thursdays – Peace & Justice 6:00 PM (potluck or bring your own supper)
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BSLC's Winter Shelter:

The shelter is in full-swing and our guests are grateful for the hospitality of our volunteers! The ministry we provide by serving as a shelter is a blessing to the community—especially to those without shelter. *Thank you all for your support.*

To sign up to help with breakfast & clean up, to help set up for dinner & do the clean up and be enriched as you get to know guests, or bring a hot meal for 18-20 **hungry** guests please sign up here:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/60B0849A4A623A2FC1-bslc2>



Lutheran World Relief -- Gifts of Hope!

LWR is on a holiday break and will resume work the second Thursday in January – January 12! You are invited to join in the work of LWR each Thursday, 10 AM - 2:30 PM. *All are welcome.* Come when you can, stay as long as you are able.

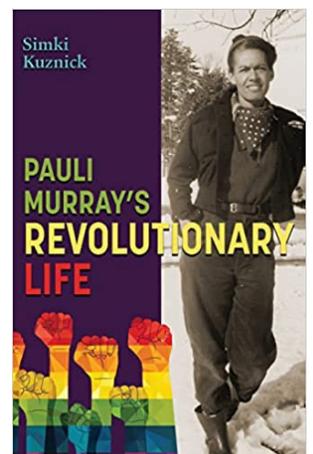
Once again, many thanks for your support, *Your LWR Team*

BIBLE & BOOK STUDY OPPORTUNITIES!

- Anti Racism Study & Conversation Group** – Sundays, 3:00

After reading a number of heavy but important books about racism and injustice, we will next be reading a less demanding yet inspiring book about Pauli Murray – someone the sort of which is described as “ahead of their time”.

“Pauli graduated first in her class at Howard University; in 1965, she was the first Black woman to earn a doctorate in law from Yale University; in 1966, she was a founder of NOW, the first National Organization for Women; and in 1977, Pauli was the first Black woman to be ordained as an Episcopal priest. She never faced a barrier she couldn't smash through, and her life as a feminist,



civil rights lawyer, poet, author, activist, and priest paved the way for all to live a life of equality and purpose."

Our first zoom conversation about this book will begin on **Sunday, January 8, from 3 - 4pm**. Contact Pastor Jean or Sonja for more information. We would love to have you join us. A Zoom link may be requested from pastorjean@beautifulsaviorlutheran.com

- Wednesday Morning Zoom Bible Study** 10:30 (request link from Pastor Jean)
- Thursday Gather Bible Study** meets in person at BSLC, 10:00 AM. For more information contact Nancy K (contact information available through the church office)

Proposed Six Week Study - *The Dread Project* from the podcast *More than a Feeling* Tuesdays at 6:30 PM (unless Thursdays 6:30, would include more of you)

After noticing that there continues to be a sense of dread about "what next" might happen and PJ learning of this project and its related podcast, an idea germinated to offer a series to learn from our dread. Interested? Please contact Pastor Jean for her to move the idea forward! Possible start date: Jan 31 (or Feb 2)

From BSLC's Green Team: **Everyday can be Earth Day!**

As an ongoing effort to be mindful of our Mother Earth's care, BSLC has the opportunity to serve our neighborhood alongside the Behrens Woods Restoration Crew. About the Restoration Crew:

"We are a group of nature-loving individuals working with the City of Vancouver's Naturespaces program for the long-term restoration and maintenance of Behrens Woods, a small forest park in the Bella Vista neighborhood with a relatively healthy PNW forest ecosystem. As part of the first phase of our restoration efforts, we are removing invasives, predominantly English Ivy, which have overtaken the park. Our ivy-pulling parties are held on the 2nd and 4th Saturdays every month from 9 AM to 11:30 AM."



If you want to join the restoration efforts, please email Varun (varunrathi06@gmail.com) or show up to our next event! We are a friendly group and usually have snacks and at least two flavors of La Croix.
