

# Bethelite

A publication of Bethel Lutheran Church distributed twice monthly.



[bethelmadison.org/bethelite](http://bethelmadison.org/bethelite)

## THAT IS A GREAT QUESTION!

### The What, Why, and How of Sermons

**B**ack in the Fall of 2019, Pastor Margo asked me what I consider to be one of the best questions I've been asked at Bethel: What's the reasoning behind sermon series? The short answer is GROWTH. In my almost 30 years of leading churches, well done sermon series have been a key to growing the membership both spiritually and numerically. Preaching in sermon series helps build a larger church. It does this in three ways.

*First, it helps create word-of-mouth advertising.* Sermon series that include the titles of upcoming messages give members something specific to invite their friends or family to. They also give unchurched people in the community a clearer picture of what goes on in the church on any given Sunday. One of the reasons people say they avoid church is that they don't know if it is going to be worth their time. They are hesitant to invest an entire morning for what can amount to a roll of the dice.

*Second, it helps build momentum.* Momentum matters a lot in ministry. It helps keep the church going in a positive direction. In a series, each message builds on the other. People

begin to anticipate the next sermon. Anticipation increases attendance. Greater attendance generates more energy. Positive energy like this is attractive to people looking for a spiritual home.



*Third, it makes best use of study time.* Every time I preach, I study way more than I can use. Most of us are like that. You have more material than you have time or opportunity to share. Often, each sermon could be a series in itself. Series help me offer the fullest and best messages by allowing me to bring more of my learning to the pulpit.

While hearing sermons packaged in definite series may seem new at Bethel, the truth is that Lutheran pastors have been preaching in sermon series for decades. It just isn't widely said that way. What we

usually say is that Lutherans follow a liturgical calendar with assigned readings. The liturgical calendar has major blocks called "seasons" like Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and Pentecost. These seasons lift up certain ideas, truths, and events. These ideas, truths, and events are actually themes. What sometimes looks to us like a static and uniform progression of lessons, scripture, and major holidays is, in fact, a series of themes, and themes within themes. Often, these various series and themes go largely unnoticed by many worshipers.

I have found it to be effective to bring out these themes and to spend more than a single sermon on a text. For example, I didn't do it this year but will next year, preach a series of 3 sermons exploring the Epiphany to the Magi. That Biblical story is bursting with riches that a single sermon could never capture. Another example is the Wedding at Cana story in John. It is something we read every year in worship as a part of the liturgical calendar. It is also too rich in meaning to exhaust in a single sermon. It has deep roots in the OT and a wide reach through the NT.

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Beginning Feb 16, I'll begin a four-week series exploring this water into wine "miracle". I am calling the series on the Wedding at Cana, "Learn to Laugh Again." The central metaphor of this story is the wedding banquet and how Jesus brings new joy and laughter to a party that had run out of energy.

As we move forward together, you will hear a variety of sermon series and stand-alone sermons. Regardless of the shape, length, or style, you will always receive a message based in scripture that does what makes Lutherans, well, Lutheran. And that is proclaim God's unrelenting love and commitment in Jesus Christ to you and the whole creation. 🌈

—Mike Brown, Lead Pastor

## Wine Tasting Party: Tasting God's Grace from an Uncorked Bottle



*"Feasts are made for laughter; wine gladdens life."  
— Ecclesiastes 10:19*

Wine plays a beautiful and central part in the story of the Bible and in the life of Jesus. More than simply a beverage, it is a symbol and a metaphor that points to the joy and abundance of a life lived in union with God. Jesus even refers to himself as the "true vine" from which the fruit of the vine (wine) comes forth. On Feb 12 from 7-8:30pm, Bethel will have a wine tasting party in Borgwardt Hall to develop a holy appreciation for this Godly gift. There is no charge for the event, but we would like you to register here ([www.bethel-madison.org/wine](http://www.bethel-madison.org/wine)) so we can have a rough count. 🌈

## Creating Scenes from Jesus' Last Days: A Lenten practice for our community



You are invited - individually, as a family, or as a group of friends - to create an artistic representation of a scene from the last days of Jesus' life.

All the creations will share a common form - a three-fold presentation board called a triptych. You will choose a passage from the story of

Jesus' last days that makes a claim on you in some way, vexes you, comforts you, or captures your spiritual imaginations. Then, **during Lent**, and using any kind of medium you choose, you'll create some representation of that scene, to be displayed on the three-fold board. Bring your completed triptychs back to church on Palm Sunday, April 5, where they will be displayed in order of the story they tell in and around the Fireside Room. During Holy week, that space will be transformed into a quiet meditation space, your triptychs contributing to something like the "stations of the cross," where you and others of our community can enter into a deeper contemplation of the events and mysteries of Holy week.

Do not be dismayed if you think you or your family are not "artistic" enough for this! You can make collages, create scenes with Legos, make a mosaic, use finger paints, water colors, crayons, Sculpey, and more! All media are welcome - oil and acrylic painting, fabric art, photos and even videos. The only requirement is that they are "held" by the triptych board. You can represent a scene, a figure from the story, a symbol of Lent.

The intention is to create something that will focus your Lenten reflection and give shape to your spiritual practice during the season. And to create something that contributes to special contemplative experience for all of us during the days of Holy Week.

These boards will be available to you on Sun, March 1, along with guides for finding and choosing a biblical passage as your focus.

If you have questions, contact Pam Shellberg at [pam@bethel-madison.org](mailto:pam@bethel-madison.org). 🌈

# Spaghetti Dinner and Variety Show

March 1, 12:30pm, Borgwardt Hall



As Jesus accepted the invitation to attend the wedding at Cana to celebrate with friends and family a great occasion, we hope you will accept this invitation to do the same. On Sun, Mar 1, at 12:30pm, Bethel will have a feast of pasta, love, and laughter. Spaghetti generously covered with Chef Steve's special and secret marinara sauce, meat sauce, and white sauce, topped with ample

Parmesan cheese, served with salad, fresh bread, and desserts will lull you into a deep sense of relaxation. Then, comes the show! As the meal comes near a close, several Bethel members – children, youth, and adults – will perform songs and skits for your hilarity. This event takes place in Borgwardt Hall and will invite a free-will donation.

If you are interested in being the 'talent' for the variety show please register by filling out the form at this link: <https://forms.gle/mxHWtmKswMKcPzJu7>. The registration deadline is Feb 25.

Registration submissions and questions can be directed to Pastor Margo. 🌈



## Learn to Laugh Again

February 16–March 8

Sometimes people have the wrong view of God. They think they should be somber, serious, or down. Laughter is discouraged. Dancing is forbidden. But, God would not agree. Because, if the fact be known, God loves a party! God brings laughter where there were tears and a smile where there was sorrow. Join us and find the divine joy in the life of a Jesus follower. In the sermon series, Learn to Laugh Again, Pastor Mike takes us on an exploration of the story of the wedding at Cana when Jesus brought life back to the party and how God's joy enters into our lives. 🌈

## New Member Spotlight

Matt, Amy & Nick Bowman



We moved to Madison a couple years ago from Northeast Missouri for my job and to be near Amy's sister and her family. I am working at Epic as a software tester, and Amy is working for the Koshkonong Trails school in Cambridge. When she started work there in 2018, she had the good fortune to meet Katie and Nathan Gerlach, who invited her to visit Bethel...and here we are! We have four kids, Samantha, at college in Missouri, Cris and Aria, both high school graduates, and Nick, who is in his senior year at West High School and attends Bethel with us. 🌈

# Rockstar Lutheran Pastor, Bestselling Author, Tattooed Mother:

Nadia Bolz-Weber to Speak at Bethel

It's time for "the TALK." Yep, that's the one, the talk. S-E-X. Of course, you may already know everything there is to know about it. You may have had some sort of sex ed in health class ("this is a banana"), or squirmed through a parent figure trying to find the right words.



Maybe you were left to thumb-through an anatomy book, found your answers on the internet, or were simply told that sex is just dirty, wrong, and should be kept secret. Here is the truth. There is a dirty little secret when it comes to sex. But, it's not the sex! The real secret is how damaging everyday religious attitudes about sex really are. That's the thing nobody really wants to talk about.

Until now! Join us March 12, Thursday, at 7pm for a candid and hopeful conversation about sex. It's time to lift up a vision of human sexuality that celebrates the body, people, and love. It's time to come clean about all the harmful moralisms. It's time for a sexual reformation.

Join Nadia Bolz-Weber in the evening for a frank conversation about bodies, shame, sex, love, and more. Walk away with a new ability to accept and affirm yourself, remove shame from the equation, and live into your sexuality in ways that result in real connection.

Seating will be limited to the first 1,000 (over half sold). This event will sell out.

Free tickets are available here: [www.bethel-madison.org/nadia](http://www.bethel-madison.org/nadia) 🌈

## Archives Team Invites Docs and Photos:

### Maintaining Our History

The archive team at Bethel is gathering documents and photos to include in the Bethel archives to preserve and protect the memory of this storied church. Please bring any and all photos and historical documents pertaining to Bethel to the church reception desk. These will not be returned. Please make certain the documents are in an envelope clearly marked "Archives".



## LEAD 2020

(Leadership Education And Development)

Sat, Mar 14 8:30am-3:30pm at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Madison



This synod-sponsored workshop focuses primarily on providing information for anyone in a congregation

who wants to work toward improving our work together. Whether you teach Sunday School, serve on an official team/council, care about mission projects and/or support, want to widen our congregational hospitality toward issues of race, gender/sexuality and/or economic issues or simply enjoy meeting with and learning from other congregations, you can choose from 23 workshops.

Talk to Pastor Margo for more information. Brochures are available at our **reception desk**. This day-long learning event is available to you **at no cost if you register by Feb 20**. After Feb 20, you pay \$30.

Register at <https://bit.ly/SCSWLEAD2020>

**When you register**, be sure to indicate **Bethel Lutheran** as your congregation and click **Check to be mailed** as your method of payment. In this way, you will not be billed for payment. As you register, you will be asked to choose 3 specific workshops. Pastor Margo will keep a list of attendees to enable car-pooling. 🌈

# Lent 2020

## Now Go Without Hesitation



**“Now go with them without hesitation”** (Acts 10:20).

These are the words spoken by the Spirit to the disciple Peter, dispatching him to tell the centurion

Cornelius something of God. Peter had good reason to hesitate.

In the first-century, the Jesus movement was being transformed by Gentiles drawn to it – Gentile believers like Cornelius who had enthusiastic and spirit-filled responses to the proclamation of Christ. But within the movement, Jewish Christians like Peter resisted, suffering deep anxiety as their tradition was threatened by great change. Peter was perplexed and uncertain about what was happening. He wondered if he was on a slippery slope – sliding further and further away from his covenant with God – as his tradition began to look less and less like what had grounded him all his life. Peter had good reason to hesitate.

When it comes to questions about our religious and spiritual identities, and about the changes we see on Christianity’s landscape, we might find ourselves similarly perplexed and uncertain. We ask, “As my traditions and practices change, what does that mean about their value in my life? Have my commitments been misplaced? Why does what seems so real and true for me, so formative of my identity and faith, seem meaningless now to others? Did I get something wrong? Are changes in my tradition putting us on a slippery slope that threatens to compromise our faithfulness to the God we love?” When it comes to God and faith, the stakes are high. We hesitate.

The story of Peter and Cornelius in the biblical book of Acts is a diorama of religious change in the first century very similar to what we are experiencing now. It is a provocative story, challenging us with questions about God’s will and about the possibility that God’s mind can and does change. It makes plain how perceiving God’s will – and knowing how to respond – is rarely straightforward. It marks out a way for how we can, together, discern truth in our confusions and hear God’s voice amidst competing discourses. As we join our own stories to this one, we will learn to go, **without hesitation**, to do and to be as God calls us. Join us! 🌈

–Pam Shellberg, Director of Lifelong Faith Formation

# CARING FOR CREATION:

## Preserving Special Places in Wisconsin

Protecting the outdoors from human degradation

**February 23 | 10:15am | Borgwardt Hall**

“Preserving Special Places in Wisconsin” is a growing challenge as human activities degrade our natural environment and landscape. Mary Jean Huston, the longtime Director of the Nature Conservancy in Wisconsin, will help us understand the role of public and private support in protecting the outdoors from human degradation. She will explain how conservation-funding programs – especially the State of Wisconsin-sponsored Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program – protect such places. In particular she will describe the history of increasing and decreasing support of that program, its current status, and how it and other Wisconsin efforts compare with and also support similar efforts in other places. The important role of land trusts will also be highlighted.



**Mary Jean Huston**, State Director, Emerita, The Nature Conservancy’s Wisconsin chapter has been employed by the Nature Conservancy in increasingly responsible positions across several states and the Midwest Regional Office until her retirement in November 2019.

As Wisconsin Nature Conservancy Director, Huston was responsible for the overall direction and management of the program. Included among her most significant accomplishments in that role are completing the 64,000-acre Wild Rivers Legacy Forest working forest easement; leading a conservation campaign that raised \$31.7 million in four years; maintaining a strong statewide Knowles Nelson Stewardship Program (public funding for land protection); bringing federal funds to Wisconsin for conservation priorities; and launching the North America Regional Initiative of the global Alliance for Water Stewardship.

This is one of five forums C4C will offer this year. The full schedule is available in the current C4C/C4SJ brochure, on the info board outside of the sanctuary and online at [www.bethel-madison.org/caring-creation](http://www.bethel-madison.org/caring-creation). 🌈

–Wilda Nilsestuen  
Caring for Creation Team Member

# Love Our Neighbors Bake Sale:

Feb 9 in the Community Room



Valentine cards kids have made on Sunday mornings that will be given to people in the Homeless Ministry.

Bethel Kids are hosting a bake sale to benefit the Homeless Ministry. Stop by and pick up a plate of baked goods for someone special in your life or something for yourself! (Hint...they can go in the freezer until Valentine's Day!). 🍌

# Church is More Than Numbers:

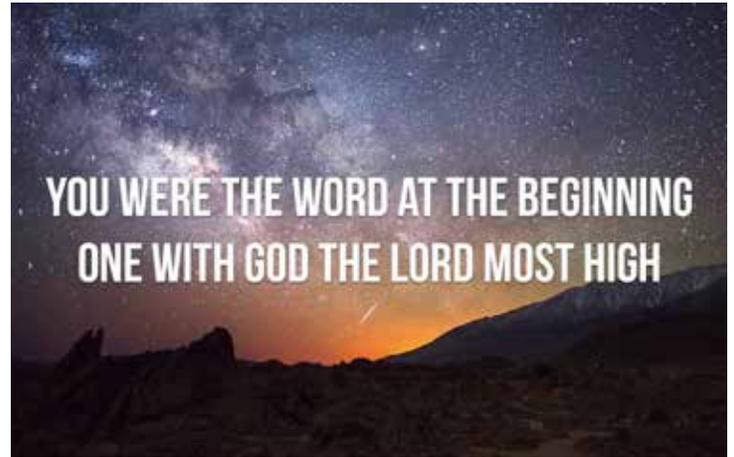
## But Some Numbers Should Be Shared

2019 Attendance average was up for the first time in over ten years. Total per weekend = 559.

2020 Pledges were higher than the previous year for the first time in several years. Total pledges amount = \$1,350,000. 🍌

# LED Screen Wall:

## Bethel Adapts with Changing Technology



In the coming weeks, Bethel is adding a new tool to spread the good news of Jesus. This LED Screen Wall is a significant plus as Bethel reaches new people in the community.

After months of planning and working on the details, the screen will be installed at the end of February. The screen will be lifted up near the ceiling and behind the speakers in the sanctuary. This will not block the view of the stained glass. The screen will be 9' x 16' and will be lowered by a custom designed hoist system.

The many uses for the screen include contemporary worship service, Children's Christmas Program, education, family ministries, speaker series, congregational meetings, women's circles, and many other uses. The screen size was dictated by the need to have people in the back pews of the sanctuary clearly see what is taking place up front. Like the speakers that are suspended overhead, the LED screen wall will recede into the background.

First estimates on the cost of the LED screen were between \$85,000 -- \$150,000. The variables included equipment quality and durability, and unknown installation costs. The actual cost will be approximately \$200,000. Structural engineering, structural supports, and a required custom fabricated hoist system added to the cost. Funding for this project has come from the Media Ministry savings account. The use of these funds was deemed appropriate and consistent with the donor's intent by the Media Ministry Team, the Director of Development Alice Mowbary, the Finance Resource Team, and the Church Council. 🍌

—Mike Brown, Lead Pastor

**WHAT MATTERS - Stay Connected To Synod Happenings, News, & Events!** Grow in your faith and leadership! Stay connected to exciting events and stories of our faith in action in our synod! To sign up for synod news, please email Assistant to the Bishop for Synodical Life, Deacon Vicki Hanrahan at [vickih@scsw-elca.org](mailto:vickih@scsw-elca.org) to be added to "What Matters."

**Men's Current Christian Concerns**

(7-8am; Community Room)

**Feb 6** - The Consequences of Aging

**Feb 13** - The Great Society Worked

**Feb 20** - What Killed Curiosity, the Cat?

**Feb 27** - Ukraine: Stories Behind the Story

**Men's Book Study (Feb)** - Is discussing the book, *Land of Hope: An Invitation to the Great American Story* by Wilfred M. McClay. This is the story of flawed individuals creating and building a great country. Come join us every Friday at 7am in Room 120 (sanctuary level) for lively conversation and great free coffee. And, by the way, this isn't your usual book group.

**Breakfast with the Birds (Feb 8, 22, March 7, 21, and May 9; 9-11am; Bethel Horizons Nature Center)** With this year's early snows, we've already identified 23 species visiting our feeding station. Join naturalist Eric Volden for an entertaining morning of bird watching and bird lore at Bethel Horizons' Nature Center. A hearty breakfast will be served with each session as Eric identifies birds coming to the feeders and relates bird feeding information and stories. Bring binoculars if you have them, and bird feeding stories to share. Cost for the breakfast and program is \$10/adult and \$7/child. Call 608.574.1992 for more info.

**Minecraft for Kids (Feb 9)** - Love Minecraft? Know someone who does? Join us at the Bethel Minecraft Club! Who: Open to all ages and experience levels. When: Second Sunday of each month from 11am-12pm. Where: "The SHIP" Kid's Fellowship Area (Room 216) What: Members will create and play in a server that is only for people in the Bethel Minecraft Club. Bring your own tablet with Minecraft downloaded. Why: Just for fun! Meet new people! Fun! Questions? Contact [cindy@bethel-madison.org](mailto:cindy@bethel-madison.org) with questions.

**Food Pantry Drop in the Barrel - Feb:** Bar Soap;

**Community Meal Program (Feb 10)** - Bethel volunteers serve the Community Meal at Luke House, 310 Ingersoll Street, once a month. The next serving date is Feb 10. Please bring your food contributions to Bethel's main kitchen on the Sunday immediately preceding that date OR no later than 10am on the day of serving. Food contributions and servers for the meal are always welcome. This is a great opportunity to share in a vitally important ministry taking place outside our church walls that has a very low time commitment. Janet at 274.6745 or [janetjohnson44@mac.com](mailto:janetjohnson44@mac.com)

**Friendship Club (Feb 14; 6:15pm; Borgwardt Hall) - Let me call you Sweetheart;** Forget the winter blahs. Come to the Friendship Club and enjoy some great Bluegrass Music. The Front Porch String Band will lift your spirits and lighten your step. The menu is Ham, scalloped potatoes, vegetables, salad and rolls. Chocolate cherry cake for dessert. Yum! Please make reservations with Judi Griffin at 608.222.9290 before noon Tues, Feb 11. Costs are \$12/members and \$15/guests. Membership dues are \$10/year.

**Caring for Social Justice Book Group (Feb 16)** will discuss the last 6 chapters of Robin DiAngelo's *White Fragility* on Sun, Feb 16, from 10:15-11:15am in Room 20 just off the Fireside Gallery.

**Christian Men's Fellowship (Feb 18; 10:30am; Borgwardt Hall) Biking With Bucky;** David Mossner enjoys combining two of his favorite things – biking and photography – that became the motivation to ride from his home in Verona to all 85 Bucky statues on display in the 2018 Bucky on Parade. You get to take the same trip without wearing bike shorts; getting sweaty, or climbing hills. In Biking to Bucky on Parade, Dave learned interesting things about Bucky and is now looking forward to sharing them. Mossner is the Development Director with the Oakwood Foundation at Oakwood Village. He and his wife, Rhonda, live in Verona.

**Blanket Workshop (Feb 27)** - Anyone is welcome to drop in between the hours of 9am-2pm to help tie pre-assembled quilts for Lutheran World Relief. No sewing skills are required! If you can tie a knot you are qualified! We meet in Borgwardt Hall. Join us for this wonderful time of fellowship and mission work as we create quilts that benefit those in need around the world.



# BETHEL

LUTHERAN CHURCH

312 Wisconsin Avenue | Madison, WI 53703

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## 5 EPIPHANY

Pastor John O. Swanson - Feb 8 at 5pm - Pentecost  
Pastor John O. Swanson - Feb 9 at 7:45 & 9am - Sanctuary  
Pastor John O. Swanson - Feb 9 at 11:15am - Sanctuary

## 6 EPIPHANY

Pastor Mike Brown - Feb 15 at 5pm - Pentecost  
Pastor Mike Brown - Feb 16 at 7:45 & 9am - Sanctuary  
Pastor Mike Brown - Feb 16 at 11:15am - Sanctuary

## SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 9

7-11a Pentecost Respite (Pentecost)  
7:45a Worship Service (Sanctuary)  
8:00a Coffee Fellowship (Emmaus)  
Children's Bake Sale (Emmaus)  
9:00a Worship Service (Sanctuary)  
9:30a Children's Ministry: Sunday School, Choir and Kids FellowSHIP  
10:15a Weekly Bible Study (Rm 120)  
Epiphany Bible Study (GS Chapel)  
11:00a Minecraft for Kids (Rm 216)  
11:15a Worship Service (Sanctuary)  
Nurturing Ministry Team (Rm 205)  
5:30p Parent Discussion Group (GS Chapel)  
Youth Activities (Borgwardt Hall)  
6:00p Confirmation & Senior High Youth Quake (Youth Quake Room)

## MONDAY, FEBRUARY 10

12:00p Food Pantry Open 12-3pm (M-F) (Lower Level)  
12:30p BLCEF Investment Committee Mtg (Rm 200)  
1:30p Seekers Circle (Library)  
5:00p Lifelong Learning Ministry Team (Rm 120)  
6:00p Executive Board (Rm 201)

## TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 11

8:30a Homeless Support Services (Pentecost)  
9:00a Worshipping Ministry Team (Rm 20)  
9:30a Library Open (Library)  
1:00p Homeless Ministry Board Meeting (Fireside)  
5:15p Rebuilding at Bethel (Library, Rm 120)  
5:30p Women's Choir (Choir)  
6:30p Creative Worship Singers (Choir)  
7:30p Worship Team Rehearsal (Sanctuary)

## WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12

6:00p Bell Choir (Rm 202)  
Compassion Circle (Library)  
7:00p Wine Tasting Party (Borgwardt Hall)

## THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 13

7:00a Current Christian Concerns (Community)  
8:00a Second Harvest Delivery  
Abigail Circle (Rm 120)  
8:30a Homeless Support Services (Pentecost)  
12:00p Blessings Circle (Rm 120)  
7:00p Bethel Choir (Choir)  
Renew Circle (Rm 100)

## FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 14

7:00a Men's Book Study (Rm 120)  
8:30a XYZ Bridge Players (Emmaus)  
11:30a XYZ Valentines Day Party (Borgwardt Hall)

## SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 15

9:30a Food Pantry Open 9:30-11:30am (Lower Level)  
5:00p Worship Service (Pentecost)

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