

Bethelite

A publication of Bethel Lutheran Church distributed twice monthly.



bethelmadison.org/bethelite

BE KIND TO YOURSELF DURING HARD TIMES: God Is At Work

M. Scott Peck begins his 1978 bestselling book, *The Road Less Traveled*, with the line “Life is difficult.” Jesus teaches his disciples the same lesson when he says in John 16:33, “you will have trouble.” Of course, we would all prefer for our lives to be filled with only beauty, abundance, stability, health, and community. But the fact is, we live in a broken world. Its jagged edges cut into our bodies, our minds, our relationships, and our economies. The result is a sense of loss, a feeling of being robbed.

This is what is happening with the coronavirus pandemic. This virus is robbing us before our very eyes and, for the moment, we are powerless to stop it. It is taking our normal sense of community, our stability, and our health. Although it is so small that

you need an electron microscope to see it, it is inflicting a deep wound.

Wounded as we are, we are not entirely unprepared. Even though the

God-created process that results in our resiliency and healing. It is the grieving process. When there is a loss there is grief. The pandemic is creating losses. People are grieving.

Here is what you should expect and not always in this order.

First, when there is a loss there is disbelief. Another word for disbelief is denial. Denial erects a wall of defense to shield us from the blow. It's like looking at the sun. To do it directly without protection is damaging. God wires us so that our automatic reflex is one of setting up a shield. So automatic is it that it is extremely common for people to say “I can't believe it”

on hearing the news of a loved one's death, a parent's divorce, the loss of a job, etc. People will also say “NO!!!!” as if we can forbid the loss from occurring. It's like a protest, a



“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.” – Matthew 11:28

virus caught our nation and much of the world unprepared, God saw this coming from the beginning. With deep love, God shaped us internally to help us make it through loss and adversity. When something is taken away from us, it triggers a

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pushback against the sad reality. It's not bad or wrong if you feel that way. It is simply a sign that you are grieving.

Second, there is numbness. As the news settles-in, feelings of denial and protest lift into no feelings at all. At this point, people don't know how or what to feel. In fact, more common is the feeling of numbness. This, too, is wired-in by God. God has created our bodies so that when there is sudden and painful loss, our systems are flooded with natural pain killers called endorphins. It is due to the power of endorphins that soldiers who have traumatic injuries on the field such as a leg blown off by a landmine will say "I can't feel my leg!" That's exactly right. They cannot feel. For the moment, the body does what God designed it to do and sent a surge of endorphins to kill the pain. It is numb. The same happens with other losses in our lives. When my father died two years ago, I had a wedding to perform in California two days before the funeral which I was doing. I performed the wedding as if nothing had happened, not because I was not sad but because I was still in shock. What sometimes looks like great strength in people at funerals is actually shock. They are often times simply numb because God cares for us and has wired us with built in pain killers in times of trauma. When you feel numb in times of loss, it does not mean that you do not care. It is simply a sign that you are grieving.

Third, is confusion. In our shock, confusion and disorientation also appear. When our lives are uprooted, it becomes impossible to concentrate or focus. Our minds become scattered. We lose our bearing, unable to tell east from west. We do not know where the Orient is. Our internal compass spins around and we feel lost. I once knew a lady who actually got lost in her own home after her husband of many years died. When we are disoriented, we have a hard time being productive and getting things done. This is normal and ok. It is not a reflection of your character. It just means that you are grieving.

Fourth, comes the pain. As we move through the shock of a significant loss, we start to feel again. The natural pain killers begin to run their course. And we will begin to feel some of the sharpness of the pain. It doesn't break-in all of a sudden, but more like waves. Out of the blue we will find ourselves feeling weepy. We need to quickly find a private place for a crying spell,

maybe a restroom stall, maybe pulling the car off to the side the road. Then, the weepiness lifts and we move on. As time progresses, our weepiness might come more often with shorter periods of feeling "normal" in between. When find yourself in deep sadness, it does not mean that you are weak. It simply means that you are grieving.

Fifth, comes loneliness. No one knows or understands your loss like you do. There will often be sense in which people do not understand or get you. There is often a sense in which you feel all alone. But, you are not. An undeniable teaching from the Bible has to do with God's abiding presence. When you feel alone in your grief, it does not mean that you have no faith. It means that you are grieving.

Sixth, comes anger. At some point, pain begins to transform into feelings of anger, even rage. We become angry at the world, at our departed spouse, at people in our lives, anyone and everyone. When my precious niece, Scarlet, was 8 years old her parents got divorced. It was awful and painful. When she began to get angry, she was first angry at herself. She thought it was her fault. Then, she decided that wasn't right. So, she got angry at the attorneys. Then, she got angry at the judge. Then, she got angry at God. Anger is not wrong. The Bible says in Ephesians 4:26 "Be angry but do not sin." When we have had something dearly important to us taken away, anger is appropriate. It is fitting. Sometimes it lasts for a week. Sometimes it lasts for months. Sometimes it lasts longer. If you are feeling angry as the result of a loss, you are not a bad person. You are grieving.

Grief is the process God has hardwired into our minds and spirits to help us go through trauma and emerge on the other side more resilient, more compassionate, and more faithful people. It is a healing process. Grief is the healing feeling. It is not a sign that you are doing anything wrong. It is a sign that God cares for you and is helping bring your life back together. Be tender with yourself. Be tender with others. Be kind to yourself and others. 🌈

*–Mike Brown
Lead Pastor*

Holy Week at Bethel

Get Your Palm On!

April 5

Bethel will celebrate a Traditional Palm Sunday Celebration to be live-streamed at 7:45am and available for worship on Facebook and YouTube at 9am. It will also be broadcast at 10am on channel 27. We will also have a contemporary Palm Sunday celebration at the 11:15am live-streamed service. Please join these services as you begin your Holy Week journey to the cross and the empty tomb. 🌈



Good Friday April 10

Last Words of Christ



Join us online for the Last Words of Christ service. Hymns will be displayed for singing during the live-stream on Facebook at 7pm. Consider gathering seven candles for use during the service. After each word from the cross meditation, one candle will be extinguished. 🌈

Maundy Thursday, April 9

What Would Jesus Eat



Maundy Thursday is traditionally known as the night Jesus washed his disciples' feet. Often overlooked in the story of the foot-washing was the fact that the meal they were celebrating was the Passover meal. This year Bethel is going to celebrate the Passover meal in our homes. This has come to be known as a Seder meal. In Luke 22:15, Jesus says to the disciples "I have really wanted to celebrate this Seder with you." The Seder meal is a meal that recounts and remembers how God delivered the people of Israel from bondage in Egypt.

The plagues were brought upon the Egyptians with the last one being the angel of death. At that last moment, God's people ate a very specific meal to commemorate and remember. It included the pure unblemished lamb, unleavened bread, and bitter herbs. To prepare yourself and your house, consider purchasing at the grocery store during one of your few outings the following: horseradish, apples, nuts, lamb, parsley, eggs, wine/ grape juice, matzah bread (or pita bread), honey, and a cake. In the coming weeks, Bethel will post and email directions for how to celebrate a Jesus-style Passover meal.

In addition, consider watching the movie *The Ten Commandments* by Cecil B Demille. Or, the *Prince of Egypt*. Both are available for rent on VUDU, and Amazon Prime. 🌈



Easter Sunday, April 12

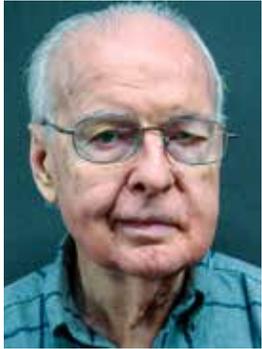
He is Risen!

Bethel will celebrate a Traditional Easter Sunday Celebration which will be live-streamed at 7:45am and available for worship on Facebook and YouTube at 9am. It will also be broadcast at 10am on channel 27. We will also have a contemporary Easter Sunday celebration at the 11:15am live-streamed service. Please join us for these special services. 🌈



New Member Spotlight

Francis McMahan



I was baptized and raised in the Catholic faith. After years of praying and reading God's holy word I came to the conclusion I did not want to remain in the Catholic faith. My wife, Rosemarie, has been a member of Bethel

for many years. We also have a son-in-law and daughter, Jeff and Maureen Bittner, that have been members of Bethel for many years. I have been retired since June 3, 1992. After my great love for God and my family, I love music. I look forward to being a member of Bethel. And I thank God for the excellent pastors on the Bethel staff! 🌈

New Sermon Series The Book of Job:

Finding God when your world comes undone



In our world, we like to be in charge. We like to act on the world and make good things happen. Many times that is the result. But other times, even after our best efforts, things come undone. There is no character in the Bible who illustrates this point more than Job. He was a man who had everything going for him. He was at the top of the world. His life had come together quite nicely. But then, out of the blue, came a series of setbacks that caused his life to come undone. His struggles and questions with friends, family, and the Creator are some of the rawest conversations in the Bible. Through it all, we see the lessons Job learned and how we can find meaning when our world comes undone.

April 19 - The Book of Job: (Un) Answered

April 26 - The Book of Job: (Un) Friendied

May 3 - The Book of Job: (Un) Happiness

May 10 - The Book of Job: (Un) Hinged 🌈



BETHEL

LUTHERAN CHURCH

For Times Such As These...

Late last fall I had the privilege of meeting weekly, once again, with folk from Bethel and the larger community who know a variety of grief experiences. During these sessions of Bethel's regularly offered Grief Group conversations, we share with each other in many ways: simple 'how are you doing' chats, as well as scriptures/poetry/prayers that we have found helpful in our own times of grief. Every group is totally different, because everyone's story is unique, and our conversations live out that individuality.

Some elements of each of these Grief Group experiences, however, are universal: grief...lament...times of sadness...uncertainty...fear...loneliness...wishing that life could go back to 'normal'. Among the many helpful and pertinent resources we have used, I find one to be particularly resonant to our current human and global reality of dealing with the corona virus.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, a French philosopher and Jesuit priest (1881-1955) wrote the following profound yet simple words of faith and wisdom. To access the original piece on the internet, simply search for de Chardin's words "Above All, Trust in the Slow Work of God". I took the liberty of paraphrasing, as I sought language to adjust the applicability from the personal to the currently global experience of fear and uncertainty.

Above all, Trust in the Slow Work of God

by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

Above all, trust in the slow work of God.
We are, quite naturally, impatient in everything,
Impatient to reach the end without delay.
We should like to skip the intermediate stages.
We are impatient of being 'on the way'...
to something unknown --- something new.

Yet, it is the law of all progress that is being made
that we must pass through some stages of instability
and these stages may take a very long time to evolve.

New ways and ideas mature gradually. Give them time
to grow;
let them shape themselves without undue haste,
resist trying to force them on,
as though we can know today
what time & circumstances will reveal tomorrow.

Only God can say what these new ways and ideas will be,
even now as they are gradually being formed.
Give our Lord the benefit of believing
that God's hand is leading us,
and accept the anxiety of living with times
of suspense, uncertainty and incompleteness.
Above all, trust in the slow work of God,
who is our universally & eternally loving vine-dresser.

My over-all take-away from de Chardin's truth, which is pertinent almost to the entirety of my life experience: God is always at work...ALWAYS! Always creating toward healing and hope out of tragedy and disaster, maybe especially when we are unable to see the 'fixes' that we need NOW! Many times we can only 'see' this hand-of-God-activity in retrospect.

God so clearly reminds us (Isaiah 55:8) that "...my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways." We need an abundance of patience and trust to 'let God be God', knowing that God's work and ways far surpass our frail, feeble and limited human ways and/or expectations.

I pray de Chardin's words many times throughout the day: trust the slow work of God. God grant us the gift of faith for such trusting. 🌈

—Pastor Margo R. Martens



Do you want to know what is happening at Bethel? A listing (with description) of all the events at Bethel is available here: www.bethel-madison.org/events. Bookmark this page to stay up-to-date with happenings at Bethel! 🌈

A Time to Come and a Time to Go



A text from the Hebrew Scriptures' book of Ecclesiastes (translated from the word Qoheleth, which means 'teacher') is familiar to many of us. This text (chapter 3) so poetically, yet honestly, reminds us of the time realities that life brings to each of us: "a time to be born and a time to die, times to mourn or dance, times to laugh or weep" (totally

paraphrased) and so, for me, in April of 2016 the time came for me to join in ministry with you and all Bethel folk, and now, as of April 19, of 2020, the time has come for me to go.

As one of your pastors, called and ordained to Word and Sacrament, I need to express (beyond my capacity with words) my immeasurable gratitude for the privilege of partnering with you in our ministry of sharing Christ's love for all people. A mere four years in a life-span is so short; yet these four years, in my life experience, have been far deeper than many other four-year spans. That's because of you and the privilege you allowed me to share in this sacred ministry together. Simple words will have to suffice: Thank you. You-all are forever in my heart.

Just for clarification, I am resigning, not retiring. (Yes, I know I am old enough to do that.) At our 11:15am Sunday worship, we often sing a wonderful and up-beat song that best defines my life pursuit:

"I want my life to make a difference,
I want my life to make a change.
I want my life to do some good here,
I want my life to make a change."



It is that God-given passion for meaning that leads me to be in conversation with our synod office, as we explore together other congregational ministry options within our synod.

In "times such as these" every pattern and routine that we have known has been totally changed. So it is, that we pay attention to best community practices and we do the job that we are called to do: stay away from each other. Such a harsh reality. How to say 'good-bye' within the parameters of distance and absence? We can learn new ways. My phone works...and probably yours, too. The post office remains in business, so we do have choices and avenues of communication available to us.



We have the power to cancel some things. Thankfully, our cancellation power is limited. We can and will cancel face-to-face gatherings of all forms. As God's people we WILL exercise community leadership, canceling all public worship as we model wise ways to promote best health options for all people. The GOOD NEWS? We have no power to cancel JESUS' RESURRECTION! Our Savior, the Living Christ lives and loves among us! And we WILL celebrate, in creative and new ways. We WILL tell the STORY! Each of us: called to spread the GOOD NEWS via phone, snail/email, and all those fancy technological tools available to us. And we will hold one another close in our deepest times of prayer.

Bethel has long-served the Madison community faithfully and that will never change. You are the people of God, infused with the Holy Spirit, extending the love of Jesus without exception for all people. God will continue to inspire, encourage and bless your ministries. Truly, thanks again from the bottom of my heart. Through your wise ways of love and partnership, ministry with you has forever changed my life. My heart-felt prayer is "God be with you, 'til we meet again." 🌈

—Pastor Margo R. Martens

Fireside Chats with Pastor Mike - Pastor Mike will be sitting down with you virtually and answering questions you have for him during his Tuesday Fireside Chats live-streamed on Facebook at 7pm (or it can be viewed on YouTube anytime after 8pm). If you have any questions you would like to ask him, please send them to christal@bethel-madison.org.

Lord's Supper with Pastor Mike - Join us on Wednesdays at 7pm for the Lord's Supper. Just because we are unable to meet in person for worship doesn't mean we can't share the Lord's meal. There are few features more central to the life and teaching of Jesus than the common meal. Every Wednesday until we are able to celebrate in person, Pastor Mike will lead us in a live-streamed Lord's Supper at 7pm on Bethel's Facebook or you can watch anytime after 8pm on our YouTube channel. Of course, no Lord's Supper is complete without the bread and wine (or juice). So, everyone is asked to have wine/juice and bread ready for the evening's communion (any type of bread and wine/juice will work). Pastor Mike will lead the blessing over the internet. We will all share the body and blood together and the goodness of God.

Contemplative Scripture Reading on Thursdays (Interactive) - Join Pam Shellberg for a time of interactive, contemplative scripture reading. During each 45-minute period, we will read a passage from scripture and reflect on it by way of the ancient practice of lectio divina. This involves engaging the scripture with our minds, imaginations, and hearts – along with good measures of silence and sharing. This will happen in “real-time,” and you will be able to join in as part of a video conference (if you have a webcam on your computer) or by phone. Links will be provided in the Thursday Daily Devotion email for joining this group. Send any questions to Pam Shellberg at pam@bethel-madison.org.

Brat Fest Rescheduled - Brat Fest has been rescheduled to the last weekend in August. To all those who have signed-up to volunteer over Memorial Day Weekend we hope you will be willing and able to help in August. You will be hearing from us when the new schedule comes out.
-Tom and Mary Anne Smith, masmith204@aol.com

Seeking Bethel Military Connections - If you or a member of your family is currently a member of the military, Peace Corps or some other form of service, we would like to know. Please share the name, branch of service, address and Bethel connection to christal@bethel-madison.org.

SAVE THE DATE: Bike-a-Thon - The 35th annual Bike-a-thon for Bethel Horizons will happen Sat, June 6. Naturalist and Adventure programs will benefit at Horizons!

SAVE THE DATE: Community Picnic - will be on June 7 at Bethel Horizons. More details to come.

Bethel Book Women (Apr 16) - We will be discussing *The Library Book* by Susan Orlean. We keep in touch via our group email account and will send our thoughts, favorite part of the book, etc. to each other on or by April 16.

Use Amazon Smile and Donate to Bethel - Do you shop online using Amazon? Did you know you can donate to Bethel by doing your regular shopping through Amazon? By using Amazon Smile, they will donate 0.5% of the price of your purchase automatically to Bethel!

How can you set this up? It's Easy!

1. Go to: <http://smile.amazon.com> (we recommend bookmarking this page for easy accessing)
2. Under the search bar click on the word “Supporting” in orange letters.
3. Select “Change your charity”.
4. Type “Bethel Lutheran Church, Madison, WI”
5. Click the Search Button.
6. Click the Select button.

That's it! You will now be donating to Bethel every time you make a purchase. (Remember to use the Amazon Smile web page as that is how Amazon tracks your purchases for donation. If you use the regular Amazon page, your donation won't be recorded.) Your Contact: christal@bethel-madison.org



“Drop in the Barrel”
for the Bethel Food Pantry
April: Shampoo



BETHEL

LUTHERAN CHURCH

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PALM SUNDAY

Pastor Mike Brown - Apr 5 at 7:45, 9am & 11:15am

EASTER

Pastor Mike Brown - Apr 12 at 7:45, 9am & 11:15am

SUNDAY, APRIL 5

- 7:45a Worship Service (live-stream on Facebook & YouTube)
- 9:00a Worship Service (viewed on Facebook & YouTube)
- 11:15a Worship Service (live-stream on Facebook & YouTube)

MONDAY, APRIL 6

- 9:00a Daily Devotion (Email)
- 12:00p Food Pantry Open 12-3pm (M-F)

TUESDAY, APRIL 7

- 9:00a Daily Devotion (Email)
- 12:00p Homeless Meal Pick-up (Parking Lot)
- 7:00p Fireside Chats with Pastor Mike (live-stream Facebook)
- 8:00a Fireside Chats with Pastor Mike (YouTube)

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8

- 9:00a Daily Devotion (Email)
- 7:00p Lord's Supper with Pastor Mike (live-stream Facebook)
- 8:00p Lord's Supper with Pastor Mike (YouTube)

THURSDAY, APRIL 9

- 7:00a ZOOM - Current Christian Concerns (Zoom)
- 8:00a Second Harvest Delivery
- 9:00a Daily Devotion (Email)
- 10:00a Contemplative Scripture Reading with Pam Shellberg (Zoom - Interactive)
- 12:00p Homeless Meal Pick-up (Parking Lot)
- 8:30p Contemplative Scripture Reading with Pam Shellberg (Zoom - Interactive)

FRIDAY, APRIL 10

- 7:00a Men's Book Study (Zoom)
- 9:00a Daily Devotion (Email)

SATURDAY, APRIL 11

- 9:00a Daily Devotion (Email)
- 9:30a Food Pantry Open 9:30-11:30am

PASTORAL STAFF

Pastor Mike Brown - Lead Pastor
pastormike@bethel-madison.org

Pastor Margo R. Martens - Visitation
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Pastor John O. Swanson - Director of Congregational Life
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**NEVER BE
AFRAID TO TRUST
AN UNKNOWN FUTURE
TO A KNOWN GOD**

— CORRIE TEN BOOM