

# BETHELITE

MARCH 1, 2025: VOL 74, NO.3

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## Learning to Walk in the Dark: A Lenten Invitation

As we enter the season of Lent, we often think of it as a time of solemnity, repentance, and reflection. Yet, what if this season is also an invitation to embrace the darkness—not as something to be feared, but as a place where God is profoundly present?

Barbara Brown Taylor, in her book *Learning to Walk in the Dark*, challenges us to reconsider our understanding of darkness. Rather than equating it with fear, sin, or despair, she invites us to see darkness as a space of deep transformation, where faith is not diminished but refined.

In many traditions, darkness is not an absence but a presence. In Hebrew, חֹשֶׁךְ (Choshech) is the same darkness that covered the waters at creation—out of which God spoke light into being. In Japanese, 幽玄 (Yūgen) describes a profound and mysterious beauty hidden in the unseen. In Arabic, قسغ (Ghasaq) refers to the deepening dusk, a time of peace and quiet reflection. And in Finnish, *Hämärä* reminds us of the soft dimness of twilight, a space between day and night where mystery and clarity meet.

Lent is a season for *Hämärä*—a space between what was and what is to come. It is a time to trust that, even when we cannot see the way ahead, God is already there.

In scripture, darkness is often the setting for profound encounters with God. Abraham steps into the unknown beneath a star-filled sky. Jacob wrestles with God through the night. The Israelites walk through the wilderness guided by a pillar of cloud and fire. And on the cross, as midday darkness covers the land, Jesus breathes his last—only for the greatest light to come three days later.

This Lent, we invite you to learn to walk in the dark with us. During our Lenten book study we will explore this theme directly, using Barbara Brown Taylor's insights to guide our reflections. Through worship, study, and conversation, we will consider

(con't ...)



Pastor Lauren Wrightsman

(con't from page 1...)

how darkness can be a source of hope, peace, and renewal. Through scripture and story, we will journey alongside those in the Bible who encountered God in the wilderness—places of uncertainty and waiting, but also spaces where divine light breaks through in unexpected ways.

Just as God was present in the darkness of creation, in the stillness of the tomb, and in the quiet moments of our own lives, we trust that even in the shadows, we are never alone.

Join us on this journey. Come, and let's walk together—knowing that even in the dark, God is near.

Pastor Lauren Wrightsman

## EXCITING NEWS: BETHEL LUTHERAN CHURCH 10AM TELECAST

Begins Sunday, Apr 27

Watch Live Online at 9am  
(Facebook or YouTube)

or catch the previous week's telecast  
on WKOW (Channel 27) at 10am

Bethel's 9:00 a.m. service provides a rich and vibrant worship experience, and we're excited to bring this to our TV audience. Because of this shift, our telecast will now air one week later at our regular time of 10 am on WKOW (Channel 27). More detailed information will be provided in the April issue of the Bethelite.



## LENT 2025

### ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE

Wednesday, Mar 5  
Noon & 6:30 pm

Imposition of ashes and Holy Communion will be offered at both services. The evening service will be preceded by a soup supper at 5:30 pm in Borgwardt Hall.

### LENTEN WEDNESDAY WORSHIP & SOUP SUPPER

Wednesdays  
March 12th – April 9

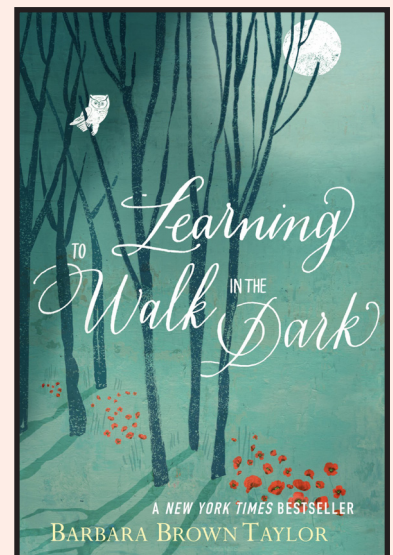
Soup Supper at 5:30 pm  
Worship Service 6:30 pm

A 45-minute worship service will be offered on the five Wednesdays after Ash Wednesday. Soup Supper will be offered (donation request) from 5:30 pm to 6:30 pm in Borgwardt Hall.

### LEARNING TO WALK IN THE DARK BOOK STUDY

Begins Mar 10

Pastor Lauren will lead a five-week study of *Learning to Walk in the Dark* on Monday evenings at 6:30 pm on Zoom and in person at Bethel on Wednesdays at noon and 7:30 pm following the evening worship service.



# Easter Giving 2025

## ONLINE FORM

[bethel-madison.org/easter-garden](http://bethel-madison.org/easter-garden)

Please write separate checks for Easter Garden & Bethel Disaster Assistance. The Deadline is Tuesday, April 8, to return this form and money to Bethel for donations to be included in the Bethel Weekly.

## Easter Garden

CIRCLE ONE: In Memory In Honor

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

BY \_\_\_\_\_

X \$22 = \_\_\_\_\_

# OF PLANTS

TOTAL DUE

Flowers may be picked-up after last worship service on April 20 or after.

## Bethel Disaster Assistance\*

\*Split between LDR & LSS

CIRCLE ONE: In Memory In Honor

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

BY \_\_\_\_\_

AMOUNT \_\_\_\_\_

CASH/CHECK # \_\_\_\_\_

ENVELOPE # \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

Return entire form to: Bethel Lutheran Church  
Attn: Easter Giving  
312 Wisconsin Ave, Madison, WI 53703



# BETHEL FINE ARTS COMMITTEE EASTER ART EXHIBITION

Mar 3 – Apr 28

“Any painting can make you look, I hope mine can make you see”...

-Ron DiCianni

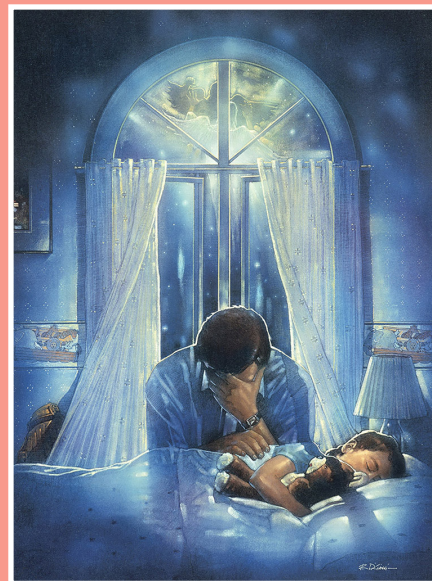
Born in inner-city Chicago, Ron's passion for art and faith shaped his journey. Frustrated by the lack of Christian influence in the arts, he urged publishers and artists to use their talents for God.

In 1989, his painting *Spiritual Warfare* sparked a movement, inspiring people worldwide. More works followed, declaring God's glory and launching a new chapter in Christian art.

Ron sees himself as a “Christian cleverly disguised as an artist,” dedicated to a Second Renaissance. With major awards in painting and writing, he has collaborated on over 50 books, selling millions of copies with authors like Max Lucado and Randy Alcorn. His award-winning *Tell Me* series emerged from these partnerships.

Among his many works, *The Resurrection Mural* at the Museum of Biblical Art in Dallas, standing 12 feet tall and 40 feet wide, has been viewed by millions and featured on CBN.

What began with one painting continues today—most recently, he collaborated with Broadstreet Publishing on *The Masterpiece Bible*.



## ATTENDER TO MEMBER: JOIN THE BETHEL FAMILY

Sunday, Mar 23 | 10:30 am

Are you ready to take the next step in your faith journey? Join our "Attender to Member" classes at Bethel Lutheran Church! **Attender to Member** sessions are a welcoming opportunity to learn more about our church's mission, beliefs, and ministries, and to explore what it means to become a member of our faith community.

Whether you're new to Bethel or have been attending for years, we'd love to have you join us. A light lunch will be served. Registration is required. For more information or to sign up, contact Chelssey at [chelssey@bethel-madison.org](mailto:chelssey@bethel-madison.org) or scan the QR code.

Welcome home to Bethel!





# MUSIC OF SCHUBERT, HAYDN, MOZART, AND BEETHOVEN

**SUNDAY, MAR 2  
2 PM | SANCTUARY**

**T**revor Stephenson, Artistic Director of the Madison Bach Musicians, will bring his Viennese-style 18th-century fortepiano—the type of concert instrument on which Beethoven, Mozart, Haydn, and Schubert all performed—for this fascinating program of solo keyboard music and songs. Joining Mr. Stephenson for sets of Lieder by Schubert and Haydn is internationally renowned mezzo-soprano Clara Ozowski.

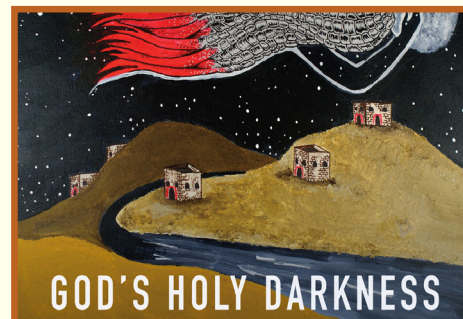
**Trevor Stephenson—harpsichordist, fortepianist, and pianist**—earned a Doctor of Musical Arts in Historical Performance from Cornell University, studying fortepiano with Malcolm Bilson. With Norman Sheppard, he has built and restored historical keyboards. He has released sixteen recordings on Light & Shadow and tours the U.S. as a performer and lecturer.

**Mezzo-soprano Clara Ozowski**, praised for her “rich and radiant voice” (Urban Milwaukee Dial), is an acclaimed soloist and chamber musician. She was the first American to place second in Thomas Quasthoff’s International Das Lied Competition. Recent highlights include her Minnesota Opera debut, a recital at Wigmore Hall, and performances with the Kansas City Symphony and Handel and Haydn Society.

\*Provided by a generous grant from the Bethel Endowment Foundation.

# GET READY

## GOD’S HOLY DARKNESS CHILDREN’S BOOK FOR LENT



Bethel’s Lent team was thrilled to discover the children’s picture book, *God’s Holy Darkness*, that perfectly matches our Lent theme and Lent study book of the same name, *Learning to Walk in the Dark*. In the hands of families — parents, grandparents, caregivers — children can join older members of the congregation in seeing God in the dark places we’re often taught to fear.

As the title suggests, this richly illustrated book is about darkness and the dark places where God shows up in the stories of God’s people. These are not times to be met with fear but times when God shows God’s love — like creation or when the angels appear to the shepherd to announce Jesus’ birth. Each page reveals another instance from the Bible where God met

God’s people in the darkness. Yet this is more than a beautifully illustrated book of Bible-based stories. It’s obvious the authors are keenly aware of the power of language and how negative associations with words like ‘dark’ and ‘black’ transfer to race. Nowhere in the book is race mentioned, and yet the message is there that darkness in us is also holy.

Copies of *God’s Holy Darkness* will be sold at the Lent Table in the Emmaus Room for \$10 on Sundays through March 2 and at the Sunday Forum on March 30 with co-author Beckah Selnick. *God’s Holy Darkness* is published by Beaming Books, an imprint of Augsburg Fortress Publishers.

*God’s Holy Darkness* by Sharei Green & Beckah Selnick, illustrated by Nikki Faison (Beaming Books)

# FOR LENT

For five Sundays in Lent, **Bethel's Sunday Forum** speakers will help us explore our Lenten theme of *Learning to Walk in the Dark*. From stargazing to light pollution to Paul's loss of sight on the road to Damascus, each speaker is passionate about an aspect of darkness that Barbara Brown Taylor touches on in her book *Learning to Walk in the Dark*.

## Sunday, March 9: *Wonders of the Night Sky* by Jeff Shokler

An observational astronomer for decades, Jeff began doing astrophotography in 2015 to share his sense of awe and wonder about the universe—its complexity and beauty. His subjects include objects in our solar system and galaxies millions of light-years away. A self-proclaimed “nerd,” Jeff is a past president of the Madison Astronomical Society (MAS) and frequently gives presentations on the wonders of the universe.



## Sunday, March 16: *Protecting the Night: Reducing Light Pollution* by John Rummel

John's talk will focus on the problem of light pollution—how Madison is faring, what the future may hold if we do nothing, and actions that give us reasons to hope. John is a long-time member and former president of MAS and has recently taken an active role in advocating for

dark skies and the adoption of smart lighting choices. He is speaking at Bethel under the auspices of DarkSky Wisconsin, a chapter of DarkSky International.



## Sunday, March 23: *The Apostle Paul on the Road to Damascus* by Pam Shellberg

The apostle Paul's experience of being without sight for three days after encountering the resurrected Christ illuminates all that can be seen with the eyes of the blind. We'll hear from the author of *Acts*, Paul, Barbara Brown Taylor, and Annie Dillard, all of whom invite us to consider the gifts of darkness and spiritual sight.

Pam is the Director of Spiritual Nourishment at Holy Wisdom Monastery. She has been a public school educator, the director of Christian education at several ELCA churches—including Bethel—and an assistant professor of New Testament at seminaries in Maine and

Massachusetts. She received her Ph.D. in Theology and Religious Studies from Marquette University, writing her dissertation on *Luke-Acts*.



## Sunday, March 30: *God's Holy Darkness* with co-author Beckah Selnick (via Zoom)

*God's Holy Darkness* is a children's book that celebrates instances in the story of God's people when darkness, blackness, and night are beautiful, good, and holy. From the darkness at the beginning of creation to the blackness of the sky when Christ's birth was announced to the shepherds, children learn that blackness is something to celebrate. Vibrant illustrations underscore the mystery and beauty of these wondrous acts of God's holy darkness.

Beckah Selnick is the co-author of *God's Holy Darkness* and lives with her family in the Pacific Northwest.



## Sunday, April 6: *Dark Night of the Soul* by Pam Shellberg

"The dark night of the soul" has come to mean many things to many different people across time, but it has a very specific meaning for John of the Cross. He describes what can be a great challenge in our life of faith—that moment when the rituals, traditions, beliefs, and prayers we've leaned on no longer console, encourage, or inspire us. What do we do then?

### Ash Wednesday Service

Mar 5

12:00 noon & 6:30 pm

### Lenten Wednesday Worship

Mar 12 – Apr 9

6:30 pm

(Soup Supper at 5:30 pm)



## MEET BETHEL'S HOMELESS

It was a cold January morning—9 degrees with wind gusts up to 21 mph—when I arrived at **Bethel's Homeless Ministry**. The Pentecost Room was filled predominantly with men, some eating breakfast, others napping. I was there to find out why guests come to Bethel's program.

**Adrian** was the first person I met. He came to Madison in 1992 to attend the University, working various jobs before becoming homeless after losing two restaurant positions and his downtown apartment. Currently, he sleeps in UW buildings and looks forward to Bethel's program on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Adrian regularly attends Sunday worship services and appreciates the relationships he's built with Bethel members, saying, "It's an anchor for many of us." He wishes the congregation understood how much the program means to its participants.

Next, I spoke with **Michael "Big Mike" Walton**. Leaving Chicago's Southside in 1996 to escape drugs and gangs, Mike credits Bethel's

program for keeping him out of trouble, and jail since 2008. He participates in Tuesday morning's Circle and serves as a "big brother" to others. Mike emphasized the importance of following rules, ensuring the ministry remains a safe space. He appreciates the program's unique offerings, including breakfast, clothing, and a place to socialize—essential for combating isolation. Mike has a low-income apartment.

Lastly, I met **Juan Tobar**, a newcomer to Madison who sleeps at Porchlight. Raised by an abusive, alcoholic mother, he suffers from PTSD and feels betrayed by his family. At Bethel, he's found compassionate volunteers and effective counseling. Juan called Bethel's program an "eye-opener," providing him with hope and a safe haven.

I walked home deep in thought; reflecting on how fragile life is. And how grateful I am to Bethel's Homeless Ministry for helping me fulfill my Christian obligation to "the least of these." – Sigrid Knuti



## I SPY QUILT

We have a beautiful quilt on display on the wall in the Sunday School wing between rooms 214 and 213. The inscription on the back reads:

*"Made with love and prayer for the children of Bethel Lutheran Church by Patty Saxe and Mary Anne Smith, September 2024."*

According to Mary Anne, "The 'I Spy' quilt is meant for children to look at and locate things such as an apple, a bird, a cross, etc. In other words, they might say, 'I spy a bird' or something similar. It can also be used as a game, such as finding five things that start with the letter C or counting how many animals are visible. The quilt serves as both an interactive activity and a way to keep children engaged."

She continues, "We were asked by Paula Evenson if we could make the quilt, and it took us a couple of months to complete the project. We carefully searched for fabric with appropriate pictures, stitched the squares together to create the quilt top, and then completed the quilting process. We truly enjoyed the experience and are pleased to know the quilt is now hanging for the children to enjoy. I am away from Madison for the winter and have not yet seen it in place."



# BETHEL HORIZONS EVENTS!



## SPRING RETREAT

**Apr 11 - 12**  
**Bethel Horizons**

All friends new and old are welcome to our Spring retreat at Bethel Horizons in Dodgeville. Bring your family, your circle, your small group, and your friends. New to Bethel? The Spring Retreat is a great way to meet folks and get connected.

Spend the night in comfort at the **Prairie Center** lodging facility with private rooms and private bathrooms. Or, simply come for the day. A variety of activities for all ages will be available including games, hiking, art, nature activities, and service projects.

Register Today!



## SUMMER RETREAT AT HORIZONS

**July 1 - 5**  
**Bethel Horizons**

### What to Expect

Enjoy a fun-filled week at Summer@Horizons with hiking, swimming, biking, service projects, ropes/cliff adventures, arts, games, kids entertainment, adult nights out, and campfires. Prefer a relaxed pace? Enjoy a stroll or unwind on the deck with a great book and stunning views.

### Who Can Attend?

This family-friendly event is open to the Bethel community and friends. No matter your age, mobility, or interests, there's something for everyone!

### Lodging & Food

Stay in the Prairie Center, featuring private family rooms and individual bathrooms, or opt for a campsite at the campground. Meals are provided, and dietary restrictions are accommodated.

### When?

**Tues, July 1–Fri, July 5.** Stay for all five days or join for a day or two as your schedule allows.

### Cost

Thanks to a Bethel Endowment Grant, we're offering reduced rates! Fees cover lodging, activities, and meals. Click below for rates.

Scholarships are available—please consider what you can contribute.

Join us for an unforgettable experience at Summer@Horizons!



## VACATION BIBLE CAMP

**Aug 4 - 7**  
**Bethel Horizons**

VBC@Horizons is a cherished Bethel tradition. Kids through age 18 are welcome for a week of camp, faith formation, and fun. Your children or grandchildren will be transformed by a week spent living in Christian community at Bethel Horizons.

Children under age 8 must be accompanied by an adult for overnight camp. Children ages 5 and up can attend day camp without an adult.

To register click on the QR below to go to the Bethel Horizons website and then click on the words "Register Here" and login or create a new account. You just need the special code Bethel25 when it asks for the "GHR ID." This code will allow you to see VBC as an option to select for registration.





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DATED MATERIAL: REQUESTED IN HOME BY MAR 1 2025

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**PAID**

MADISON, WI  
PERMIT 602

# BETHEL

LUTHERAN CHURCH

312 Wisconsin Avenue  
Madison, WI 53703



## LOOKING AHEAD

**Mar 5**  
Ash Wednesday

**Mar 12 - Apr 9 | 6:30 pm**  
Lenten Wednesday Worship

**Apr 13**  
Palm Sunday

**Apr 17 | 6:30 pm**  
Maundy Thursday Worship

**Apr 18 | 6:30 pm**  
Good Friday Worship

**Apr 20**  
Easter Sunday

## FUND FACTS

Expense to fund one day of the year for BLC, based on the 2025 budget, is \$5,702.

This year, Bethel has **360 households** who have pledged support for their church. Thank you if you've made a plan! Gifts given to support Bethel's operating plan last year came from **653 households**, and 81% of total gifts were from pledged plans.

Appreciated stock and mutual fund gifts given directly to Bethel continue to be a great gifting vehicle – that have double tax benefits; the capital gain is not taxable AND it's included with your deductible gift tally.

## JANUARY 2025 YEAR-TO-DATE FINANCIALS

	YTD Actual	YTD Budget	Variance
<b>REVENUES</b>			
Offerings	170,801	135,500	35,301
Miscellaneous revenue	118,524	36,468	82,056
Non-operating revenue	2,515	1,625	890
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>291,841</b>	<b>173,593</b>	<b>118,247</b>
<b>MINISTRY INVESTMENTS</b>			
Staff	122,051	125,963	(3,912)
Ministry & Resource Teams	27,563	36,899	(9,336)
Benevolence	8,417	3,751	4,666
Administration	8,427	6,823	1,604
<b>Total Ministry Investments</b>	<b>166,457</b>	<b>173,436</b>	<b>(6,978)</b>
<b>Total Net Income (Loss)</b>	<b>125,384</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>125,225</b>

A complete copy of the financial statements are posted to Realm;  
you can access these through your Bethel Realm profile.



bethel\_madison



Bethel.Lutheran.Madison.WI



BethelLutheranTV

**Worship Times:** Sunday at 7:30am & 9am - Traditional; 11am - Contemporary  
Saturday at 5pm - Casual

