

Bethel Congregational United Church of Christ

Open, Affirming and Accepting of All God's People

Annual Report 2023



Pastor Andy Wade

pastorandy@bethelwhitesalmon.org;
541-806-5415

480 East Jewett Blvd (PO Box 219)
White Salmon, WA 98672
Phone (509) 493-1747

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Moderator Report

Paul Pennington

Bethel Board of Directors 2022 Annual Report to the Congregation

Officers: Paul Pennington, Moderator; Debra Pennington Davis, Past Moderator; Tom Pierson, Vice-Moderator; Katey Ellen Price, Secretary; and Judy Davis, Treasurer.

Members-at-large: Becky Williams, Nancy Smith, and Charlie Moore.

Deacon's Representative: Barbara Young

The Board is responsible for:

- Church governance
- Policies and procedures
- Business affairs
- Buildings and grounds
- Church programs
- UCC Central Pacific Conference relationship

The Board appoints the Finance Committee members who prepare our annual budget. The Board reviews the budget and then recommends it to the Congregation for approval; During 2022, Bethel continued to offer both in-person and online Sunday services. Our online congregants strengthen our community, bringing valuable enthusiasm, ideas, and wisdom. Two online congregants are on the Board – Nancy and Charlie.

Highlights of the past year

- Saying a loving goodbye to Laura Robinson our wonderful pastor for the last 2 ½ years;
- Hiring Andy Wade as Transition Pastor and then calling him to be Settled Pastor this summer;
- Hiring Scotty Davison (on contract) as our enthusiastic & energetic Children & Youth Coordinator;
- Appointing a Reimagining Team to lead us into our Church's future;
- Saying goodbye to a beloved friend – David Carrier;
- Nurturing community with Second Tuesday potlucks, Peterson Prairie campout; Mount St. Helens geology tour, poetry & writing workshops, summer kickball & picnic, Taize services, etc.;
- Speaking for the Trees as a congregation, with both education & action;
- Improving online worship services; Training & hiring our teens to provide tech support;

- Updating our Building Use Policy, a huge undertaking; Increasing the use of our buildings by congregants and by our larger community – for example, book club, recital, graduation, community memorial services, and community programs;
 - Completing major repairs on our water-supply infrastructure; Resealing and striping our parking lot; Building a new fence for the food bank garden;
 - Supporting Jack Perrin as he grows MakerSpace’s programs in White Salmon; Helping him update the MakerSpace building, our old Fellowship Hall;
 - Reinvigorating the teen OWL program & starting a program for younger children; Helping make OWL programs self-supporting; Supporting the high school Pride Club and its members;
 - Sending delegates to the annual UCC Fall conference;
 - Providing financial support of our Community Partners; Providing grants to new & upcoming community programs with Dedicated Outreach funds;
 - Running a stellar Giving Campaign for 2023; coming in under budget for 2022;
 - PLUS selling Ukraine cards, participating in Gorge Pride, and other highlights I have missed..
-

Bethel Search Team 2022

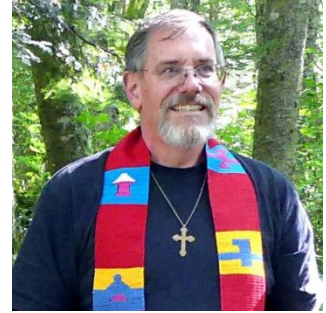
Rick Davis

2022 saw the search for a new Pastor following the departure of Pastor Laura Robinson at the beginning of the year. The Search Team consisted of Rick Davis, Deana Dahl, Ali Townsend Moore, Nancy Smith, Will Swope and Ex Officio members Paul Pennington and Tom Pierson.

The Bethel Search Team met weekly for several months to consider the best course of action for Bethel. They discussed our current circumstances and our recent past. We reviewed the Profile developed with congregational input when we called Pastor Laura.

We met with Conference Minister Tyler Connoley to understand the Search process and guidelines. We took a deep dive into the demographic and financial challenges facing our church and gathered input from the Congregation

We debated and considered several paths for moving forward and came to believe that the right choice for Bethel was to extend a call to Andy Wade to be our Settled Pastor and rather than going through the lengthy Search process we've used in the past.



We chose this path for several reasons.

- First and foremost is our belief that Andy brings the skills and stability that Bethel needs at this time.
- He is truly a humble, caring, open-hearted pastor with a deep love for Bethel and all of us making up this quirky community.
- Like Bethel, he is passionate about issues of peace, justice, and the environment.
- His theological values and perspectives mesh well with the diverse beliefs of the Bethel Community.
- We know him well and he knows us.
- He has deep roots in the Gorge and understands people and issues here.
- He thinks outside the box about how a church should be and what it can do.
- He is open to the perennial wisdom found in other faiths and in poetry and literature.
- He spent years as a church startup missionary, learning first-hand what can pull people onto a faith journey, but also, more importantly, what turns people off to the church and to Christians.
- He can provide Bethel leadership stability in these uncertain times and will hopefully be with us for more than a few years.

For all of these reasons we recommended Andy to be our Settled Pastor and the Board scheduled a Congregation meeting and vote on August 14th. The Congregation approved Calling Andy by unanimous vote.

As part of the Search, we identified financial and leadership challenges facing the church and also recommended the Board create a Reimagining Project to address the challenges Bethel is facing.

Pastor's Report

Pastor Andy Wade

Wow, what a year! I arrived at Bethel just over a year ago, overlapping the final week of December with Pastor Laura. You brought me in as your “Transition Pastor” with the potential of becoming your “Settled Pastor” should we all determine that I was a good fit for the Bethel community. I remember the excitement of coming back to serve this beautiful community after walking with you for seven months just before Laura’s arrival. My excitement remains!

Pastoral leadership transitions always involve change, and change can often be difficult, even painful, for close-knit communities like Bethel. As Transition Pastor, my charge for the first eight months of the year was to keep the church running and keep people engaged as the pastoral discernment process played out. This wasn’t a season to introduce new programs and ideas but to help hold us together and promote the activities and visions already in place. As an idea person, that was a challenge, but it was similar to my earlier role with Bethel – with added administrative responsibilities.

This transition time was also an opportune time to reconnect with you and with the new people who arrived after I left. I treasure this time of deepening relationships and getting to know one another after a few tough years of the pandemic.

Gathering together started slowly in 2022, with COVID evolving and keeping us on our toes. COVID limited our activities in person, but we found creative ways to be together. Many of our activities centered around the Just Peace team’s theme, “Who Speaks for the Trees?” Our spring and summer included fun activities and opportunities to learn and grow around climate change and earth care issues.



We kicked the year off reading and discussing Rev. Dr. Randy Woodley’s book, *Becoming Rooted: One Hundred Days of Reconnecting with Sacred Earth*, and *Grounded Faith*, a shorter devotional based on Randy’s book. We had some engaging Zoom discussions around the many issues raised

from a Native American perspective. Randy and his wife, Edith, joined one of our Zoom gatherings to share with us and answer questions. I'll refer you to the Just Peace report for more about all the activities that happened through that effort.

In May, Bethel and Riverside joined together for a one-day trip to Eloheh Indigenous Center for Earth Justice (in Yamhill, OR) run by Randy and Edith Woodley. We gardened, remodeled, and put up tipis! It was a splendid afternoon of working and learning together.

Tragically, we lost our dear friend and fellow traveler, David Carrier, in a climbing accident in August. David's death was a heart-wrenching loss for our Bethel family. I wish I could say this was our only loss, but many of us experienced other deep personal losses during the year. You all did a beautiful job holding and supporting one another throughout these deaths and many health and other issues among our members. You know how to love one another.

This fall, we saw the relaunch of our Our Whole Lives (OWL) program, nearly fully funded and with the addition of a 4th-6th grade cohort! This new class is shorter and successfully concluded in mid-December. The 7th-9th grade cohort took a winter break and started back up in mid-January. See the OWL report for more information.

In August, you voted to invite me as your "Settled Pastor," an honor and delight for Susan and me. This also meant we could begin exploring what's next in Bethel's long and impactful story. With excitement and anticipation, we launched our Reimagining Bethel campaign in November. It turned out to be a "soft launch," a bit of a slow start due to travels, holidays, illness, and a pile of hardships that seemed to come one after another to my family. While our small team continued to meet and plan, our real Reimagining kickoff began this year on January 8th, as we began to share our many stories of coming to Bethel and finding a spiritual home.

The logo for 'Reimagining Bethel' is written in a colorful, handwritten-style font. The word 'Reimagining' is in purple, green, and orange, while 'Bethel' is in blue and orange. The letters are connected and have a fluid, artistic feel.

We welcomed Scotty Davison as our new Student and Family Coordinator in December. He immediately jumped in and has already done an outstanding job connecting with our children, youth, and parents. At Scotty's request, we contracted with him for six months to help us start Reimagining what it means to be intergenerational and supportive of our kids' spiritual and social-

emotional growth in ways that they and their peers understand. While this is a six-month contract, our priority is to continue funding some form of this work into the future. Our students and families are more than worth it!

If I were to sum up our time together in 2022, I would say we explored what it means to plumb the depths of radical love. That's not to suggest we finished plumbing those depths. That is a life-long process. But as we explored what that looks like individually and as a community, we found ourselves gravitating toward a center. I spoke quite a bit about Bethel as a church centered around the well of love and justice. Bethel is not a faith community of boundaries attempting to define who's "in" and who's "out."

We are a community of individuals trying to understand how our whole selves fit into the world and fit together as Bethel. We don't erect boundaries because we recognize that we all are, every day, both moving toward the center of radical love, and moving away from it. Radical grace is the dance partner of radical love. We are complex, conflicted, and often confused. But we hold one another in love. We walk together to encourage and support each other along the path. We are not alone. You are not alone!

It is with profound appreciation and joy that I am able to serve as your pastor and fellow sojourner. May the year ahead bring exciting new possibilities as we travel together into an unknown future overflowing with love.

Treasurer's Annual Report for 2023

Judy Davis

Operating Budget

Thank you, pledgers. Our pledge income was almost exactly what we budgeted. See Table 1. The same wasn't true for plate, coming in at less than half of the budgeted number. We withdrew less than budgeted from both the General Endowment and the Outreach Endowment because we only withdraw funds when we need them.



General spending was lower than budgeted mainly because we did not hire a Children Youth Coordinator until the end of the year and we did not have expenses for bringing in candidates to be our next pastor. (See Table 2). Outreach spending (and the parallel withdrawal from the Outreach Endowment) was lower than budgeted because we did not identify projects or activities to utilize all these funds.

Table 1 – Summary of 2022 Operating Budget Income

Income	Actual	Budgeted	Difference
Pledge	120,063	120,000	63
Plate	4,666	10,000	(5,334)
General Endowment	25,000	37,253	(12,253)
Outreach Endowment	4,210	13,806	(9,596)
Other	2,173	2,000	173
Carry Forward 2021	22,410	24,000	(1,590)
Total	178,522	207,059	(28,537)

Table 2 – Summary of 2022 Operating Budget Expenses

Expenditures	Actual	Budget	Difference
Employees	93,755	106,230	(12,475)
Worship	9,332	11,350	(2,018)
Nurture	1,535	3,750	(2,215)
Outreach	14,050	25,806	(11,756)
Administration	18,793	18,256	537
Building and Grounds	35,777	38,862	(85)
Total	178,242	204,254	(28,012)

Special Funds

In addition to the budget, we receive special offerings and other designated gifts and payments that we keep track of outside the budget. Table 3 lists the funds that were active in 2022.

Table 3 – Summary of Bethel Special Funds - 2022

Fund	Beginning Balance	Credits	Debits	Ending Balance
Our Whole Lives (OWL)	4761	14,755	12,796	6,720
Covid Fund	1,976	0	1,976	0
Children's Climate Fund	1,261	838	1,000	1,099
UCC Special Offerings (2)	0	615	615	0
Kathy Thomas Memorial	1,015	0	0	1,015
Peter Pennington Memorial	0	1,000	0	1,000
David Carrier Memorial	0	200	200	0
Ukrainian Cards	0	1,140	1,140	0
Christmas Adopt-A-Family	0	725	695	30
Deacons Fund	0	250	250	0
Total Special Funds	9,013	19,253	18,672	9,864

OWL. Bethel offered Our Whole Lives classes in spring and fall. Most of the money is from tuition payments. The funds are used to pay facilitators.

Covid Fund. We set up a fund to support programs and people affected by the pandemic. We closed out this fund this year.

Children's Climate Fund is a way to offset fossil fuel use (particularly gas and airline travel). Youth decide how to use the funds.

UCC Special Offerings. We participated in the two special offerings of the UCC—One Great Hour of Sharing and Neighbors in Need.

Kathy Thomas Memorial. Money was received in memory of Kathy Thomas and a committee is working on an appropriate use of these funds.

Pete Pennington Memorial. Money was received in memory of Pete Pennington.

David Carrier Memorial. Money was received in memory of David Carrier to be used to cover the cost of his obituary in the local paper.

Ukrainian Cards. Artist Janet Easley credited cards to support Ukrainian Relief. \$900 was sent to the UCC Ukrainian Relief Fund and the remainder of the funds paid printing costs.

Christmas Adopt-A-Family. Bethel bought gifts for a family in need.

Finance Committee Report

Endowment Report

Like most investments, our endowment declined in value last year, 16% for the General Endowment and 24% for the Dedicated Outreach Endowment. We budget to withdraw 5% of the beginning value each year. Last year we withdraw less than budgeted for each endowment. We also earmarked \$5,000 of the General Endowment as Building Fund Reserves.

General Endowment

1/1/22	\$745,630
12/31/22	\$603,260
Returns	-\$122,370
Gain/-Loss	-16%
Withdrawals	-\$20,000

Dedicated Outreach

1/1/22	\$276,120
12/31/22	\$205,212
Returns	-\$66,980
Gain/-Loss	-24%
Withdrawals	-\$4,210

Total Assets

1/1/22	\$1,021,751
12/31/22	\$808,472
Returns	-\$189,069
Gain/-Loss	-19%
Withdrawals	\$24,210

Property Committee

Submitted by Martha Johnson, Chris Heald, Paul Pennington

2022 IMPROVEMENTS

- Parking lot paving & striping project. Water utility box elevated. COMPLETED 2022. Car parking bumpers to be painted this Summer.
- Rock wall & bank stabilization, landscaping, drip irrigation system, stair railing. COMPLETED 2021/2022
- New garden fence & gate. Thanks Tom Pierson & crew. COMPLETED 2022
- Retaining wall to shore up west emergency exit doors, thanks for the help Ben. Need to finish pathway. WALL COMPLETED 2022
- Interior hall & Narthex overhead lights replaced by Jack/MakerSpace. COMPLETED 2022
- IT improvements to facilitate hybrid services. ONGOING
- Water system hard line leaks repaired. COMPLETED 2022 / Spring 2023 check irrigation lines for leaks & monitor weekly.
- Makerspace Entryway - New flooring, paint. COMPLETED 2022
- Makerspace - Switched out & refreshed two south facing bathrooms to comply with ADA regulations. Repurposed two unused bathrooms for storage. Repaired hot water heater to comply w ADA regs. Thanks Jack and all. GOOD PROGRESS IN 2022. Need to finish capping unused pipes & drains.
- Roof evaluated by multiple persons, determined that roof is in good shape. COMPLETED 2022
- Spring Clean Up was a great success due to the helpful hands of our member volunteer crew! Fall Clean Up was unfortunately rained out.

Deacon Report

Rick Davis

According to the Bethel Church organizational structure, the Deacons' responsibilities include:

- A. Deacons work with the Pastor to help plan and lead worship. They assist with communion and baptisms. In the absence of the pastor, the Deacons are responsible for organizing and leading worship and recruiting others to share reflections.
- B. Deacons maintain a roster of active members. They annually review the participation of members in the life of the Church and act within their discretion to change the status of members as provided within these Bylaws.
- C. Deacons, along with the Pastor, shall work to support the spiritual, emotional and physical well-being of church members. They shall assist with on-call pastoral care and visitation at the request of the pastor.

Deacons for the past year were Barb Young, Marcie Heald, Sue Pennington, Will Swope, Regula Muller-Baum, Warren Smith, Andy Lade and Rick Davis.

Throughout the year, Deacons met monthly to help support the Pastor to plan worship and coordinate community care for individual church members, especially those who struggled.

Early in the year, Bethel offered Zoom only worship, but returned to having both In Person and Zoom worship for the remainder of the year. With Laura's departure and reduced risks from Covid, several Zoom participants left Bethel and returned to their former churches. The Deacons reviewed and updated the list of Bethel Members and Friends.

The Deacons also completed the overdue task of updating the Church Directory. An online directory service was employed. It allows people to edit their contact information and photos, then accessing the directory using their home computer and/or phones. Printed copies are also available in the Church office.

During the year, Bethel relaxed Covid precautions while continuing to support people in wearing masks and limiting exposure. Communion was offered using individual cups.

To encourage participation of our children, the Deacons put together special activity packets to use during the service. An activity table was set up at the back of the sanctuary where children can be present during worship while using their packets and other activities.

Following the sudden death of David Carrier, the Deacons assisted Regula Muller-Baum in holding a memorial service for David that included members from his climbing community.

Some other events organized in 2022 include Peterson Prairie Campout, the Blessing of the Animals/Indigenous Peoples, kickball, a welcoming party for Pastor Andy and Susan and the Winter Solstice walk.

The Deacons are grateful for Pastor Andy's guidance and assistance throughout the year.

Students and Families

Scotty Davison

*"Cultivating spiritual curiosity and meaningful expression
for families in the gorge"*

This annual report is a reminder to all of us that for a community to flourish we MUST cultivate the sacred journey of all its members, our young ones especially. Because Bethel believes this to be true, the community and board proposed hiring a part-time Student and Family Coordinator in summer of 2022. This job was filled by Scotty Davison (me) and I began officially working in December of 2022.

I hadn't been involved in church for 5 years but living in the gorge and knowing my friend Andy was the pastor... well I thought I would check things out. That was December 2021 and since spring of 2022 I have participated regularly in the vision that is The Bethel Community. (*The house of the divine in community*)

All Church campout: We had a robust representation of families at the 2022 group camp. It was really exciting to see so many students riding bikes, having a dance party, making smores and just overall being really really silly. What struck me most about the campout though was young people seeing "church" people out of church. We are all goofy, messy creatures and it's important for young people to see us that way.

Student Service: Our first student service was held during advent and focused on love. The students shared some poetry they had written as well as messages of love from the community. The student services will be an ongoing and emerging practice at least through spring. If you have ideas please let me know.



**2023: Let's look at what is
possible, dream and ignite the
gifts of all our students to
internalize the depth of beauty in
each of them.**



Just Peace/Bethel's Giving

Dee Campos-Davis

Bethel's Just Peace Theme for 2022 was Who Speaks for the Trees? What a great organizing question for our year together. We explored the question in so many ways. Thank you to everyone who participated!

Our Who Speaks for the Trees year included:

Worship services, hikes, a Lenten study of Becoming Rooted, Geology of the Gorge field trips, Creation Care Crowdsourcing ideas, Meatless recipe share, Sharing resources in the Bethel News, a work day at Eloheh, Earth Day worship service with the children, a tree talk with Jay McLaughlin at the camp out, the Blessing of the Animals, a Spirituality of Gardening workshop, writing workshops and an ongoing Writer's Roundtable. (There may have been even more! It was a full and fun year.)

The Just Peace team met regularly to plan activities, share information and action, and to direct Bethel's giving.

Bethel supported local, regional, and national efforts with \$20,165 in giving.

Bethel's giving is built around the following components:

Our Churches Wider Mission (OCWM)

Bethel makes an annual contribution of \$6,000 to the UCC's Our Churches Wider Mission fund.

OCWM provides funding in support of the church's missions at the Conference and National setting.

Bethel also contributed to UCC Special Offerings during the year and raised additional funds for Ukraine.

Community Partners Fund

Bethel recognizes the important work being done by others in our community. Funds are included in the budget (\$6,000 for 2022) to support ongoing efforts of Peace Village, Gorge Ecumenical Ministries (GEM), Washington Gorge Action Program (WAGAP) and other local organizations on issues of concern. Recommendations for spending are made by the Just Peace Team.

Organizations receiving funds this year include:

- Mount Adams Ministerial Association (MAMA) \$200
- Gorge Ecumenical Ministries (GEM) \$200
- Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) \$120
- Jubilee Dues \$100
- Faith Action Network (FAN) \$500
- Columbia Gorge Peace Village \$500
- Gorge Pride Alliance \$1,000
- Mt. Adams Resource Stewards \$500
- WAGAP \$1,500
- Portland Mountain Rescue (in David Carrier's name) \$500
- Support for local individual \$250
- Intertribal fish commission coat drive \$500

Dedicated Outreach Endowment

Bethel supported six projects from its Dedicated Outreach Endowment in 2022.

- Continued support for the new Women's Shelter through Programs for Peaceful Living/WAGAP, \$1,000
- Supported the GEM Immigration Summit, \$500
- Supported the White Salmon Bike/Walk to School day, \$250
- Contributed to two scholarships for Farmworker youth, \$1,000
- Supported soccer training for local youth, \$360
- Supported the SAGE Club at Columbia High School, \$1,000

Covid Relief Funds

In response to the Covid pandemic Bethel raised additional funds to address needs that continued during 2022:

- Winter shoes for local students, \$375
- Bike Helmets for local students, \$1,500
- The White Salmon Valley Education Foundation, \$100

Children's Climate Fund

Bethel encourages individuals to make donations aimed at offsetting their carbon emissions. We aim to have the children manage the gifting of this fund. In 2022 \$838 came into the fund. This year we sent \$500 to the Oregon Zoo for Pond Turtle recovery and \$500 to the Xerces Society for the health of our bees.

2023 Giving Campaign

Barb Young, Rick Davis, Katey Price and Lisa Mullis

This has been another year of transitions and celebrating our deep relationships with each other and the world. We bid Pastor Laura goodbye and embraced the loving care and wisdom of Pastor Andy. We moved out the back pew and moved in an art table for our kids to create and participate in the regular worship service. We have two pint-sized deacons who help their mom as a worship leader. We filled all the OWL classes — “Our Whole Lives” Life Skills and Sexuality Education. Some of us explored Mt St Helens, camped in local forests and held a Winter Solstice Walk. We have raised and donated fresh food for the local food bank. And, we’ve welcomed new families and individuals into our beloved community.

“Reimagining Bethel” was the theme of this year’s Giving Campaign. The Giving Team (Barb Young, Rick Davis, Katey Price and Lisa Mullis) launched the campaign in November. As part of that kickoff, Pastor Andy told us that Bethel was at a threshold moment. Not satisfied with living in the past, but willing to take risks and reimagine a church that draws people to a well of living water. A well that gushes with love, justice, inclusivity and hope.

By the close of the campaign 26 giving cards and donations were returned. We received total financial pledges of \$105,000. With the departure of Laura and the opening of other churches to in person worship we saw several people return to their pre-pandemic churches. Compared to last year, we had only 1 new household pledge and saw 5 people discontinue their pledges to Bethel and lost 2 givers to death. Total giving is lower than previous years and will make our Reimagining efforts all the more important.

We are grateful to every one of you for showing up and bringing what you have to offer to Bethel.

Our Whole Lives (OWL)

Pastor Andy Wade



In the spring of 2022, OWL completed another successful year of walking with 7th-9th grade students through delicate and deeply personal topics surrounding sexuality, going well beyond the sex-ed curriculum found in most public schools,

OWL takes a holistic approach, delving more deeply into issues of consent, healthy relationships, bystander responsibilities, self-care, and understanding not just the mechanics and risks of sexual activity (narrowly defined), but also of oneself as a sexual being with the agency to advocate for oneself and others.

Seven students finished the 25-week series of workshops filled with dynamic discussions and a variety of activities designed to build confidence and empathy in the situations they are likely to encounter in life.

By the time we launched the fall OWL classes, our 7th-9th grade class was over full, with 16 students, and we added a brand new, full class of 15 4th-6th grade students! This expansion is a tremendous benefit to our larger Gorge community as well as our families at Bethel. One of OWL's goals is to make this curriculum available to all, and not just to those who can afford it. To that end, tuition amounts are suggested but not pre-determined. Therefore, depending on how much of the outstanding contributions for this year actually come in, it is currently estimated that OWL classes will be fully funded with a small surplus! Big thanks to Regula Muller-Baum, who worked alongside Avery Deane to promote OWL and process enrollment forms!

While there is community interest in another 4th-6th grade class this spring, our capable lead OWL facilitator, Avery Deane Swift, is assessing whether or not they and the other facilitators will be able to take that on.

Looking forward, Avery Deane, Scotty, and I will work on a memo of understanding between Bethel and Avery Deane. We plan to have that completed before the next Bethel board meeting. We will also be exploring grants in order to better fund and expand the OWL program in our community.

Your support for this vital program is reaching and supporting our neighbors. Thank you.

Food Bank Garden

Judy Davis

This was a year of construction. Tom Pierson and crew built a beautiful new fence around the garden to keep the rabbits and deer out. Will Slope removed the posts for the old chain link fence.

Because of the fence, we had a big crop of green beans. It was also a great year for eggplants, peppers, and tomatoes. Thanks to everyone who helped construct, till, plant, harvest, and deliver fresh vegetables to WAGAP food bank.



Peterson Prairie Campout – August 26-28

Judy Davis

Thirty people (ages 6 and up) camped under the trees, cooked and ate meals, played board games, hiked to Natural Bridges, huddled around the campfire on a chilly Saturday morning, and donned glow sticks and danced in the dark.

On Saturday afternoon we had a lively discussion about forests with Jay McLoughlin, Executive Director of Mt. Adams Resource Stewards. Jay helped us see the stories of some of the trees near camp and talked about forests more generally. He asked us some questions: What do we value about forests? How could we find common ground with someone who also values them for different reasons than we do?

About twenty people (and several more dogs) joined the campers for worship and a potluck lunch on a warm and sunny Sunday. Everyone went home refreshed from time spent in the forest and in community with others from Bethel.

2023 Peterson Prairie Campout – We have reserved the group site for the last weekend in August—August 25-27. See you there.



New Policy for Use of Bethel Facilities

Tom Pierson

We want to make our church buildings and grounds more available for use by individuals and groups from the broader Gorge community. To do that, we needed a more comprehensive policy to provide for better scheduling, to ensure that planned activities and events are in line with Bethel's values, to also ensure that planned activities/events are appropriate for our tax status as a church, and to provide sufficient liability protection for Bethel. That new policy was approved by the Board in 2022.

To use Bethel facilities, outside applicants will need to fill out a written application, currently available upon request from the Bethel office administrator (Lynnette Grubb), Pastor Andy, or Moderator Tom Pierson. Applicants are responsible for reading and understanding the Guidelines for Facilities Use and, depending on the category of the applicant (individual, nonprofit organization, or business) and on the size, type, and scope of the planned activity/event, they may also be asked to provide a certificate of insurance and/or a post-event cleaning deposit. Approval by Bethel may take several weeks, depending on the type of use anticipated, so let people know to allow for some time in getting approval.

Church-related activities (such as meetings of church-affiliated groups) normally are exempt from the formal application process, and Bethel members (and their immediate families) may use our building at no charge for small private social events. Simply check with Pastor Andy for scheduling. However, if member-hosted events will involve more than 25 people or if alcohol will be served, it is requested that members also fill out a facilities-use application.

Please pass the word to friends and associates that the church building and grounds are available to non-members for community-supportive activities or events. Examples include concerts, lectures, recitals, rehearsals, meetings, classes, book clubs, activity fairs, weddings, etc. at reasonable cost. In some cases, there may be no cost to the applicant. Let's help make Bethel a resource for community engagement and connection.