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# 2021 ANNUAL REPORT



## BETHEL CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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# Moderator Report

Debra Pennington Davis

In 2021, Bethel continued to adapt to the changing landscape of pandemic life by holding close to our Bethel values of love, welcome, and community. In 2022 your board worked to balance health and safety with our need to connect with each other and experience God's care through our congregational relationships. We embraced flexibility and looked for opportunities to build community and care for each other in expected and unexpected ways.

The 2021 Bethel Board of Directors included:

Officers : Debra Pennington Davis, Moderator; Martha Jane Johnson, Vice-Moderator; Katey Price, Secretary; Judy Davis, Treasurer;

Past Moderator: DeLona (Dee) Campos-Davis

Members-at-large: Paul Pennington, Martha Jane Johnson, Gary Ward, and Charlie Moore.

Deacon's Representative on the Board: Kathy Williams.

The Board is tasked with running the business affairs of the church as a nonprofit organization. The Board supervises church programs and cares for and maintains the property of the church. The Board also recommends the annual budget, prepared by the Finance Committee, for approval by the congregation. Finally, the Board develops policies and procedures to aid in church governance and function, and appoints representatives to the Central Pacific Conference of the UCC and to other congregational, denominational, non-denominational and interfaith groups as needed. Even in a pandemic, your board kept these important tasks going.

Bethel is a vibrant group of people doing and being Love together. The following list are some highlights of our year together.

- Continued and expanded our financial support of Community Partner organizations.
- Replaced the east retaining wall and completed a large landscaping project to promote safety and a sense of welcome.
- Supported the Deacons and Pastor Laura in shifting from all-Zoom worship to hybrid worship, caring for the needs of those who attend virtually and those who attend in-person.

- Welcomed members of our virtual community into our leadership teams as deacons and board members.
- Supported the expansion of our virtual community with additional tech equipment and hiring and training tech support for worship.
- Supported our Our Whole Lives (OWL) sexuality education program, offered in-person at Bethel, with a class for teens and a class for adults. We are building a team of highly qualified and capable facilitators who are dedicated to the program.
- Offered fellowship events such as:
  - Peterson Prairie campout
  - Llama camping trip
  - Virtual tour of NY Met Museum of Art
- Updated our “Safe Church” policy.
- Sent delegates to the annual UCC Fall conference, held virtually.
- Supported ongoing education and advocacy in support of Black lives. Supported education about white supremacy and racial justice.
- Began our pastoral transition process:
  - Met with our conference minister for guidance.
  - Conducted exit interviews with Laura to learn from her experience and wisdom as our pastor.
  - Conducted a search for a transition pastor.
  - Sent Laura into her new chapter of life with love, gratitude, and celebration.
  - Welcomed Andy as our transition pastor!

It has been an honor serving as your Moderator. Thank you for your loving care of each other, our building and programs, and the needs of our larger community.

# Pastors Report

Pastor Andy Wade

I've been back with Bethel for just over one month. While I don't have much to report on personally, looking back over pastor Laura's report from last year, well, it's been quite a year. It seems no sooner had you welcomed Laura as your new pastor than the pandemic swept in with a vengeance. Yet you weathered the chaos of 2020 well and had hoped that 2021 would see life return to some kind of normalcy.

As 2021 moved from spring to summer, it began to look like we might actually be through the worst of this. We were all tired and Bethel was ready to move back to in-person worship and smaller gatherings together. You all caught a glimpse of it, then Delta hit, followed closely by Omicron.

You are a strong community, a resilient community. But it's OK to feel tired and frustrated. It's been a very long two years. You've adapted well to the challenges, not just to Zoom and hybrid worship, but more importantly, you've stepped up your care and love for one another. While many churches have lost members during this pandemic, Bethel has grown. Do you recognize just how amazing that is, just how amazing you are?

I am honored to be back with you and to serve as your transition pastor. I realize that changing pastors in the midst of a pandemic adds challenge on top of challenge. Hang in there, we'll get through this together.

As I gaze into 2022 I'm filled with excitement. I'm excited to be with all of you, and I'm excited to see where God leads us this year. One direction we're already being led is through the Just Peace "Who Speaks for the Trees?" initiative. This will be a stimulating year exploring many facets of creation care, environmental justice, and our relationship with it all.

Yes, we're still in the thick of things, but we're not alone. Together, we will not only face the uncertainties 2022 might hold, we'll thrive. Good things, God things, are ahead.

Walking in love and solidarity with you all.

Andy

# Treasurer's Report

Judy Davis

## Operating Budget

We weren't sure what to expect when we developed a budget for 2021, but we took a stab at it. We got some things right. Our estimates for the pastor, insurance, utilities, and supporting other groups here in the Gorge and around the world were on track. We got some things wrong. Some were good surprises; some were not.

We were happily surprised by your generosity. Pledgers contributed 1.2 times what we anticipated. Plate income was 2.4 times what we budgeted. See Table 1.

**Table 1: Summary of Bethel Operating Budget Income -2021**

<b>Income</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Budgeted</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Pledge	145,656	119,324	26,332
Plate	14,378	6,000	8,378
General Endowment	37,614	35,015	2,599
Outreach Endowment	9,610	10,956	(1,346)
Other	2,470	3,000	(530)
<b>Total</b>	<b>209,728</b>	<b>174,295</b>	<b>35,433</b>

On the expense side, we spent more than predicted on worship and property. See Table 2. We purchased audio-visual technology for hybrid worship. We received a gift of \$5,000 (accounted for in Special Funds section) to upgrade the equipment, but we covered some of these expenses out of the budget. We also didn't know we would need to replace a retaining wall or that the project would cost over \$26,000. With Covid, we spent less than budgeted on things like childcare, musicians, and cleaning (our provider quit and it took time to find another).

**Table 2: Summary of Bethel Operating Budget Expenditures -2021**

<b>Expenditures</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Personnel	105,343	114,400	(9,057)
Administration	14,959	16,300	(1,341)
Worship	3,399	2,700	699
Education/Hospitality	983	1,900	(917)
Outreach	21,610	22,956	(1,346)
Property	35,817	16,000	19,817
<b>Total</b>	<b>182,111</b>	<b>174,256</b>	<b>7,855</b>

We ended the year with budget surplus of about \$24,000.

### **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 2021.

**Table 3 – Summary of Bethel Special Funds - 2021**

<b>Fund</b>	<b>Beginning Balance</b>	<b>Credits</b>	<b>Debits</b>	<b>Ending Balance</b>
Our Whole Lives (OWL)	2,888	4,200	2,328	4,760
Covid Fund	1,907	2,780	2,711	1,976
Children's Climate Fund	591	1,261	591	1,261
<i>UCC Offerings</i>				
Christmas Fund	256	814	1,070	0
One Great Hour of Sharing		340	340	0
Strengthen the Church		205	205	0
Neighbors in Need		333	333	0
Kathy Thomas Memorial		1,015		1,015
White Salmon Pool		3,050	3,050	0
Audio Visual Tech Upgrade		5,000	5,000	0
Misc. Donations	117	170	287	0
<b>Total Special Funds</b>	<b>5,759</b>	<b>19,168</b>	<b>15,915</b>	<b>9,012</b>

**OWL.** Bethel offered Our Whole Lives classes for eighth graders and adults. We supported the program with funds from the Dedicated Outreach account in the budget and with contributions from participants.

**Covid Fund.** We set up a fund to support programs and people affected by the pandemic.

**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 four special offerings of the UCC.

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

**White Salmon Pool.** We did a fund-raising campaign to support the community's effort to build a new pool. We raised \$3050 and matched that with \$2500 from the Dedicated Outreach account in the budget.

**Audio-Visual Tech Upgrade.** We received a \$5000 gift dedicated to upgrading our technology for hybrid worship.

## Finance Committee

Paul Pennington

All Bethel's endowment money is invested in three different Vanguard mutual funds (see table below.) We have two separate endowments: A General Endowment and a Dedicated Outreach endowment. The General Endowment is invested in the two Target Retirement Funds; the Dedicated Endowment is invested in the Social Index Fund.

- Each year, Bethel budgets 5% of our General Endowment for the operations account. In addition to general operations, this supports Bethel's Community Partners and the UCC's Wider Mission (OCWM.) Together these two commitments were budgeted for \$12,000 in 2021 (~7% of Bethel's overall budget.)
- Each year, Bethel budgets 5% of our Dedicated Outreach Endowment to support new endeavors in the Gorge. These endeavors are selected by our Just-Peace Committee. The endeavors have goals consistent with our mission – peace, justice, diversity, etc. Last year we budgeted \$11,000 for dedicated outreach (~6% of our total budget.)

Our Vanguard mutual funds did extremely well in 2021. Market gains were \$145,400 from Jan. 1, 2021 through Dec. 31, 2021 (15.8% gain.) We withdrew a total of \$44,860 from the three funds (4.9%.) Bethel's net gain in our total endowment was just over \$100,000 (11% net gain.) That is, Bethel's endowment increased by \$100,000 despite spending ~\$45,000. However, the stock market is currently volatile. In the first two weeks of January 2022 our total endowment has decreased by ~\$20,000 (2%). We will continue watching closely.

**Bethel Church Endowment – \$1,001,400 as of January 1, 2022**

Symbol	Name	Expense	Balance	Gain 2021	%	Category & Stock Style
NA	Money Market Account	NA	\$574	NA	NA	NA
VFTAX	Social Index Fund	0.14%	\$276,100	\$61,400	27%	U.S. Growth Stocks / Large Cap
VTHRX	Target Retirement 2030	0.14%	\$333,100	\$36,700	11%	Changing Mix of U.S. Stocks & Bonds
VTTHX	Target Retirement 2035	0.14%	\$412,000	\$47,200	13%	Changing Mix of U.S. Stocks & Bonds
	<b>Total</b>		<b>\$1,021,800</b>	<b>\$145,400</b>	<b>16%</b>	

Vanguard Target Retirement Funds are a diversified portfolio of stocks and bonds that adjust their asset mix over time. They incrementally decrease stocks and increase bonds as each fund's target retirement date approaches.

Vanguard's Social Index Fund tracks the stocks in the FTSE4Good US Select Index. The stocks in the index are screened by environmental, social and corporate governance (ESG) criteria. They exclude companies in the adult entertainment, alcohol, tobacco, weapons, fossil fuels, gambling, and nuclear power industries. They exclude companies that have violations of labor rights, human rights, or anti-corruption, and environmental standards.

They exclude companies that do not meet diversity criteria. They are a market cap weighted index of large- and mid-capitalization stocks

## Property Committee Work Report Martha Jane Johnson and Chris Heald

Retaining wall construction project: Old wall removed/replaced with heavy duty cement blocks, steps to parking lot, constructed, parking lot asphalt trimmed, juniper roots removed, slope prepped for landscaping. Contractor: Preto Landscaping

Landscaping project: Designed for erosion control, drip irrigation, & drought resistant plantings on retaining wall slopes. Contractors: Windswept Landscaping & Sys Landscaping Services

Harmon started the project to add steps along the bank by the west emergency exit from the sanctuary. Blocks to match the retaining wall purchased and ready for installation.

MakerSpace improvements: Signage, raised veggie beds, new door etc. Thank you to our talented carpenter Jack Perrin.

Flower and Food Gardens maintained by Judy, Natasha, Teri and many others. Thanks for your helping hands and green thumbs!

Spring & Fall Clean Ups with much help from members and their families.

Continued technical improvements to hybrid capabilities for services, meetings. We learn as we go!

Property Committee To Do List for 2022 has been roughed out. The parking lot resurfacing & striping will be the main project.

The Property Committee is breathing easier now that the retaining wall is almost complete... we will finish the railings for the new steps and secure the safety parking bumpers in the Spring. Many thanks to everyone to helped with this giant undertaking, as well as the many, many tasks both inside and outside our beautiful “church with a view”!

# Deacons

Marcie Heald, Richard Davis and Barb Young

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

- A. The 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. The 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, Jim Tindall, Kathy Williams, Warren Smith, Rick Davis and Will Swope. Deacons met for a team building and a program planning retreat in June at Will Swope's house.

The ongoing Pandemic required the Deacons to continue finding creative ways to serve the needs of Bethel community.

Bethel cautiously moved into in-person worship as well as continuing on Zoom. The Deacons monitored the latest Covid restrictions per the Health Department and UCC guidelines. In person congregation size was limited as well temperatures taken and tracking information kept. These guidelines were adjusted throughout the year per current information on best Covid precautions. Masking has always been insisted on at Bethel. With hybrid services, one Deacon is in the church building and the 2nd Deacon on Zoom.

Outdoor activities were encouraged to be organized. Deacons assisted Pastor Laura in much of the planning and follow through. Small outdoor groupings for meetings and socializing happened. Hikes planned and taken. Ash Wednesday was celebrated in the evening gathered around an outdoor fire pit. An Easter egg hunt on the south lawn was planned with the youth. A beginning of summer kick ball game and a hot dog lunch were planned by the Deacons and youth for June. A memorial service and small reception for Kathy Thomas was held on the south lawn in August. A fall campout, blessing of the animal's service and winter solstice walk were supported by the Deacons.

Confidential and supportive care for Bethel members and friends was encouraged under Pastor Laura's leadership.

A generous gift allowed Bethel to purchase cameras and new sound equipment to enhance Zoom worship. Our youth, Luke, Sara, Matt, Eli and Kylan provided tech support to the technologically challenged deacons. On going training of the Deacons is planned.

The Deacons are grateful for Pastor Laura's guidance, support and assistance this past year. We look forward to working with Pastor Andy in 2022.

## Children and Youth

Marcie Heald

When 2021 began the schools were still closed and Bethel worship was still on Zoom.

Pastor Laura and I had been trying several different strategies to involve and encourage our young people. We were very thankful that families were showing up on Zoom. The children would offer prayers and conversation. Pastor Laura offered ways for the children to participate in the worship services, especially on the last Sunday of each month.

Several craft options were offered in early Spring with the supplies delivered to students.



Thankfully at mid-February, the Gorge went into a deep freeze. Perfect for making ice Valentine hearts to hang outside. During Lent, supplies were delivered for "tissue paper" stained glass crosses. Just as perhaps our school teachers have found; doing a craft in a group in person is more fun than in isolation.

As people were getting vaccinated and Covid counts lowering, Bethel eased back into hybrid worship, with some outdoor activities. Bethel had an Easter Egg hunt on the south lawn that was well attended. A garden planting party with the children happened in our Food Bank Garden with Judy Davis direction. There was also an end of school year activity with Kick Ball and hot dogs in June.



The Fall of 2021 opened with high hopes. A “kick-off” to the Sunday morning program started with the children gathering in the basement for a review of the many stories in Godly Play. Then shuffleboard, bowling and pizza followed. Makerspace with Jack was planned for 2 Sundays a month. With a Godly Play lesson once a month, and children encouraged in worship the final Sunday of each month. October also had the “Blessing of the Animals”. Pets were brought into church and proved both interesting and delightful!



December brought Advent candle lighting and Christmas tree decorating. The Christmas program was offered with the Posada view of Mary and Joseph searching for a place in Bethlehem for Mary to give birth to Jesus.



Several youths helped in preparing and clean up of Bethel's Solstice Walk. Thank you to Regula, Matthias, and Anna Muller and to Kylan Mullis for all their help!

The teenagers at Bethel have become our Zoom wizards. They make it possible for Laura to focus on the worship, while keeping our Zoom congregation connected.



We continue to navigate all options as Bethel and the community deal with Covid. Our young people are a vital and appreciated part of our Bethel community. Thank you to all the parents who also have supported the youth programs.

## Just Peace/Bethel's Giving

Dee Campos-Davis

The Just Peace team met regularly throughout 2021 to direct Bethel's giving, and support local issues. Much of our focus went to supporting youth to live full, healthy lives in challenging times. Additionally, we began planning for Bethel's 2022 Just Peace Theme and focus: Who Speaks for the Trees?

Bethel supported local, regional, and national efforts with \$23,189 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 four UCC Special Offerings during the year.**

OCWM \$6,000

One Great Hour of Sharing \$340

Strengthening the Church \$205

Neighbors in Need \$333

Christmas Fund \$1070

### **Community Partners Fund**

Bethel recognizes the important work being done by others in our community. Funds are included in the budget (\$6,000 for 2021) 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) \$700

Godly Play Foundation \$100

Lyle Longhouse \$500

GEM Dues \$200

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) \$100

Jubilee Dues \$100

Faith Action Network (FAN) \$500

Columbia Gorge Peace Village \$1000

WAGAP \$1,500

HR Warming Shelter \$500

Lutheran Immigrant/Refuge Services \$500

Propane Gift Cards \$300

School Wellness Center, special items \$70

### **Dedicated Outreach Endowment**

Bethel supported seven projects from its Dedicated Outreach Endowment in 2021.

- 1) Continued support for the new Women's Shelter through Programs for Peaceful Living/WAGAP, \$1,000
- 2) Continued funding for the White Salmon based Our Whole Lives (OWL) sexual education program for teens and new adult courses, \$2,750
- 3) Contributed to the development of a new White Salmon Valley Pool with \$2,500 from the endowment to match \$3,050 given by Bethel members (total gift, \$5550)
- 4) Supported mental health care for students through the school Wellness Center, \$2,000
- 5) Supported soccer training for local youth, \$360
- 6) Contributed to Cultureseed's fundraising for a van to transport teens for outdoor recreation and leadership programs, \$500
- 7) Sent additional money to the Hood River Warming Shelter for shelter supplies, \$500

### **Covid Relief Funds**

In response to the Covid pandemic Bethel raised additional funds to address needs that continued during 2021:

Books for local students, \$350

White Salmon School Wellness Center, \$1,000

Museum Virtual Program, \$300

Individual family, \$261

St. Vincent dePaul's supplies for winter for homeless, \$500

Health Care Workers gift baskets, \$300

### **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 2021 \$1261 came into the fund. We did not distribute any funds this year, but plan to do so in 2022.

## Food Bank Garden

Judy Davis

We continued to grow vegetables for the WAGAP Food Bank despite problems with deer, rabbits, and weather. We added more deer fence and think we solved that problem. The rabbit fences were partially successful. There wasn't much we could do about the weather, especially the heat in June. The tomato crop came in bursts, the peas were abundant but didn't last long, the bean plants got eaten. It was that kind of year. We had more work parties than the previous year, but harvesting was often a solitary activity. Thank you to everyone who helped prepare beds, plant, weed, harvest, and spread new mulch in the pathways.



## Peterson Prairie Campout

Judy Davis

The campout was back this year. We ate pancakes, fresh fruit, hot dogs, cookies, and lots of other goodies. Some hiked the adjacent trails. Kids ran around and used lots of stickers and the paper airplane design book at the craft table. Saturday afternoon we enjoyed the wedding of Paul Pennington's niece and the opportunity to visit with the couple's family and friends. We danced in the dark on Saturday. We communed with trees. We were blessed to have this extended time together in a year when we have so often been apart or on Zoom.



**Please put August 26-28, 2022 on your calendar  
for the next campout.**

# Bethels Pastoral Relations

Tom Pierson

Bethel's Pastoral Relations Committee has a three-fold mission: (1) to be the pastor's confidential support team in any matters related to the pastor's job, (2) to be a thought partner and sounding board for new ideas for future directions, and (3) to act as an advocate for and advisor to the pastor if contentious issues ever arise between the pastor and the Board or between the pastor and members of the church community.

The 2021 PRC was co-chaired by Pam Tindall and Tom Pierson, and other committee members included Regula Muller, Sue Pennington, and David Carrier, although Sue needed to drop off in the summer to focus on other responsibilities. The PRC met monthly throughout the year, and a variety of issues were discussed and resolved. The committee's final duty (with the help of Judy Davis and Sue Pennington—in total the Search Committee that found Laura) was to plan and put on Pastor Laura's farewell celebration, which was held virtually (due to COVID-19) on January 13, 2022.