



The Banner

Every person feels, knows and shares God's love

Monthly Newsletter for Bethany United Methodist Church • Madison, WI • Vol. 56, No. 12 • December 2023

Bethany Begins Phase Two of the MCCI Process

The MCCI (Missional Church Consultation Initiative) Express Day on November 9 was the culmination of Phase One in our search for what God is calling our congregation to be. Leading up to that day, for over a year our congregation has been praying our Breakthrough Prayer daily... "God of all possibilities, we are listening. Embolden us to recognize where love and hope are needed most. Amen"...a simple, yet powerful request.



On Express Day we welcomed the MCCI consulting team to Bethany. Prior to coming, the team reviewed 20 years of information they had requested from us, including our history, financial info, staffing, demographics, community and more! Throughout the day they conducted interviews with a variety of leaders from our congregation. In the evening many people from our congregation came to learn and share more with the MCCI team. In that time together we learned about the life cycles of congregations, we heard data about our surrounding neighborhood and community, and we had an opportunity to share our wishes for Bethany. They also shared that several "secret worshippers" had been sent to our church over the preceding weeks, and the consistent comments they received were about what a welcoming and friendly congregation we have!

The following day, the MCCI team spent the day together praying and discussing all that they had heard from us. Then during our worship service on November 12, they presented their "prescriptions" (useful steps our congregation could take to thrive and grow) to the congregation.

In short, their prescriptions were:

1. The "Triad Strategy": a series of three activities and events which would allow us to welcome new people and form relationships.
2. Intersection of Faith and Life: a 4- to 6-week church-wide study.
3. Addressing the Needs of Our Building: exploring a Capital Campaign.
4. The Big Serve: invite the entire congregation, all ages, to join together to serve.

The full report, including their assessment of our strengths and concerns along with more details about these prescriptions, can be [found here](#). Paper copies are available at the church or you may call the church office (608.238.6381) to have a copy mailed to you.

So, now we enter Phase Two, which consists of prayer and discernment before our Special Church Conference. Three Town Hall meetings are scheduled for members to ask questions and seek clarification regarding the prescriptions. The Town Hall Meetings are scheduled for:

- Sunday, December 3 directly following worship in the Chapel (Childcare provided)
- Wednesday, December 6 at 2:30pm in Fellowship Hall (Childcare available upon request)
- Thursday, December 14 at 7pm in the Chapel (Childcare available upon request)

On Sunday, January 7, at 11:15 a.m. we will hold a Special Church Conference for the sole purpose of voting "Yes" or "No" to this report. If we vote "yes", we will enter Phase Three where MCCI will provide us with a coach for each of the four strategies, and that coach will work with Bethany teams to implement these activities. If we vote "no", the MCCI process ends and there is no further support provided. Per the Book of Discipline, only members may vote at this meeting, and you must be present in person to vote (cab rides are available).

Over the next several weeks, please continue to pray and study about your decision so that you will have confidence that your vote reflects what God is wanting for this congregation.

PASTOR'S COLUMN

Last week our confirmation class traveled to First UMC for a joint class



with their confirmation students. When Christmas music came on the car radio there were definite opinions about when it is appropriate to listen to Christmas music! How early is too early? I'm in the early camp. I don't decorate my house before Thanksgiving, and I leave the decorations up until after Epiphany, but I do listen to Christmas music beginning November 1. Listening to Christmas music brings me joy. Yet, it can also bring moments of

sorrow. My heart feels a bit sad when I hear my dad's favorite Christmas song or a song that reminds me of my mom. Some songs remind me of Christmas when my children were young, and I yearn for those days again. Yet, I listen to the songs and try to savor the memories.

Our Advent theme this year is *How does a weary world rejoice?* We rejoice in the midst of our weariness. We rejoice in the midst of a world that is far from perfect. We rejoice knowing that God continues to be present in our world and in our lives. This Advent spend time doing things that bring you joy. Acknowledge the pain you might be feeling but also, look for the joy. Watch a child's face as they experience the season, sing some Christmas songs, bake cookies, decorate, quietly look at the Christmas lights in your neighborhood. If you haven't already picked up a devotional or Advent calendar, I urge you to do so. The art, reflections, and poetry are wonderful ways to see God in the midst of our weariness.

One of my favorite things about Advent is lighting the Advent wreath each Sunday and watching as the light grows each week, until Christmas Eve when we fill the entire sanctuary with the light of the Christ candle. Yes, our world is weary. Yet we wait in joyful anticipation of Christ's coming.



Christmas at Bethany

How Does a Weary World Rejoice?

❄️ December 3 — Hope

Christmas Cantata — The Chancel Choir and friends will present *A Weary World Rejoices* by Joseph Martin during 10:00 am worship. We will hear music and poetry that will resonate with the many feelings that accompany the Christmas season.



❄️ December 10 — Peace

Christmas Pageant — Bethany children will share a simple pageant during worship at 10:00 am. Using scripture passages and songs, we will journey with Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem to welcome their child.

❄️ December 17 — Joy

Festive Attire Day — During 10:00 am worship wear your Christmas pajamas, your new Christmas outfit, your ugly Christmas sweater or your most sparkly outfit, as we practice joy.

Christmas Caroling — Christmas carolers of all ages are invited to spread cheer through the neighborhood. We will meet at the church to practice at 3:00 pm, journey through the neighborhood, and return to the church for hot soup before going home at 5:00 pm.

❄️ December 21

Longest Night Service — Thursday, December 21st at 7:00 pm. On this longest night of the year we will pray for one another as we acknowledge that for many people, Christmas is a time of loneliness, sorrow, alienation, and sadness. This service offers a way for people to claim those feelings and still feel surrounded by the compassionate love of God.

❄️ December 24 — Love

Sunday morning worship at 10:00 am — Our theme is, *We Sing Stories of Hope*.

Christmas Eve Candlelight Services — 4:30 and 7:00 pm. Both services are designed to celebrate the birth of Christ through choir, bell choir, scripture, hymns, prayers and a special time for children.

Simple Gifts for December — “Community Action Coalition”

In the month of December, Simple Gift offerings are going to help the Community Action Coalition’s housing support services in Dane County.

The [Community Action Coalition](#) for South Central Wisconsin works to transform systems so that all people can achieve social and economic security. The coalition, which has been helping people in our community for more than 50 years, works with a range of partners and networks to apply innovative, targeted strategies to both identify and serve the areas of greatest need. These efforts are centered on the belief that food and housing insecurity is a public health crisis — and that everyone deserves a place to call home and to have food on the table.



As part of the Community Action Coalition’s housing security efforts, its case managers help people find stable and reliable shelter. The coalition also helps low-income families and individuals get back on their feet and access a higher quality of life.

These housing efforts and programs vary by county. In Dane County, these supports are centered on:

- Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF), which offers a wide range of help to veteran households with limited incomes.
- A Reducing School Mobility program that offers intensive housing services to families who have children enrolled in Leopold, Mendota, Lake View, Gompers or Lindbergh schools in Madison.
- An Early Childhood Zones program that offers intensive, limited-term housing services in Madison’s Leopold and Mendota/Northside neighborhoods.
- A Rapid Re-housing initiative that is a limited-term program where a caseworker will help one find housing and may assist with rental assistance and covering the cost of a security deposit.

And help with Section 8 Housing, which can be a vital lifeline for low-income individuals and families.

Please consider giving generously, as your support will make a difference in real and relevant ways. Donations to the Community Action Coalition’s housing security programs directly support the organization’s dedicated case managers who work diligently to find stable and reliable shelter for individuals and families facing housing crises.

Simple gifts are made by placing loose coins in the offering plates, or by putting cash or a check in mission envelopes. One can also give online by visiting BethanyMadison.org (click on We Serve and, from the drop-down menu, select Giving Financially).

Christmas Eve Special Offering

**Current
Disaster Response**



The special offering on Christmas Eve will help to support the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) disaster response efforts. UMCOR responds to natural or civil disasters of such magnitude that they overwhelm a community’s ability to recover on its own. Through UMCOR, United Methodists extend loving care to people within the United States. When disaster strikes, it is local churches that provide the first response to their communities. This basic understanding—that disaster response is local—forms the foundation for UMCOR’s US disaster training and response. When responding to a disaster in the United States, UMCOR provides training, financial assistance, expertise, community collaboration to churches and partners making them more resilient to disasters.



UPCOMING ACTIVITIES



ZOOM LINKS

Zoom links for all classes and groups are listed on the Bethany website on the Upcoming Events page. From the home page, click on the "Upcoming Events" box in the lower right of the page. Links are listed by the day of the week on which they occur.

ANNUAL CHURCH CONFERENCE

The annual church conference will be on Tuesday, December 5th at 6:30 pm in the Sanctuary. This is the time when the church votes on leadership for the coming year as well as pastoral support. All members are encouraged to attend.

UWF SUSANNA CIRCLE

The next meeting for the Susanna Circle of United Women in Faith (UWF) will be December 6, 2023 at 1:00 pm in the Bethany church library. Please bring two dozen or more cookies for our COOKIE EXCHANGE. The cookie table will be set up in the Fellowship Hall. Our program will be Christmas stories and traditions. Cecile Tuong is hostess. Please let Judy Loveless know if you will be attending 608-848-8243.

UWF AGAPE

On Monday, December 11, United Women in Faith Agape Circle will have a Christmas party at 6:00 pm in Room 228 at Bethany. Please bring an appetizer to share. Hosts will be Donna Wold and Beverly Klumph. They will provide beverages. You can also bring a donation to support the Great Dane Readers. And be ready to join in carol singing!!

UWF INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS

All members of United Women in Faith are invited to attend the installation of officers on Sunday, December 10 at 11:15 am. The installation will be a brief ceremony.

ATTENTION BETHANY WOMEN

A retreat at Pine Lake Camp is being planned for the weekend of March 2nd and 3rd for women of all ages. Please mark your calendars and watch for further information.



UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH MISSION RECOGNITION PIN

The United Women in Faith Mission Recognition Pin this year is given to Eileen Rech. Eileen chairs Lydia Circle and is the power behind UWF Salad Luncheons! She organizes us so well we think it is easy and...it's not. Thank you Eileen for all your work in support of United Women of Faith!







ANNOUNCEMENTS






UWF FAITH READING PROGRAM 2024

New books for the United Women in Faith’s Reading Program have arrived. Read at least one book for each of the five categories by the end of August to earn a Reading Program certificate. See the catalog in the library or at UWFaith.org for other books that qualify.




Education for Mission

-  *Apple: Skin to the Core*, by Eric Gansworth
-  *The House That Love Built*, by Sarah Jackson
-  *They Called Us Enemy*, by George Takei
-  *30 Days with E, Stanley Jones*, by John Harnish (Given by UWF in memory of Gerry Cotter)




Leadership Development

-  *Beautiful Country*, by Qian Julie Wang
-  *Fierce Love*, by Jacqui Lewis
-  *Our Strangely Warmed Hearts*, by Karen Oliveto




Nurturing for Community

-  *Crying in H Mart*, by Michele Zauner
-  *House of Sticks*, by Ly Tran
-  *Maid: Hard Work, Low Pay*, by Stephanie Land

Social Action

-  *Conditional Citizens*, by Laila Lalami
-  *Echoes of Grace*, by Guadalupe Garcia McCall
-  *Until I Am Free: Fannie Lou Hamer*, by Keisha Blain

Spiritual Growth

-  *The Cure for Sorrow*, by Jan Richardson
-  *Land of Silence*, by Tessa Afshar
-  *Worth It: Overcome Your Fears*, by Britt Baron.

STATEMENTS

Early in December 11-month statements will be sent out. Please check yours carefully for omissions or other errors and notify Sandra Arrington if you find any. This will allow Sandra to correct them before end of year statements are generated in mid-January. If you have questions, you can contact [Sandra Arrington](mailto:Sandra.Arrington@uwf.edu), Financial Secretary.

ALTERNATIVE CHRISTMAS GIFT GIVING





Are you struggling to come up with a meaningful Christmas gift idea for that special someone who has it all?

We’ve got a great way to both remove some holiday shopping stress and warm the heart. Simply check out Bethany’s Alternative Giving Tree, which makes it easy to give a donation to one of four worthy causes. The tree is located just inside Bethany’s main entryway, at the library entrance.

Donations may be made by check (note the cause in the memo line). Forms are available on the coffee table in the Library that you may fill out to include with your check. Or, you can give online on our [Giving Financially](#) page.

If you like, choose a card from the Alternative Giving Tree for the cause you chose to inform a recipient of your gift in their honor.

The 2023 Alternative Giving Tree options are:

-  **WI Conference Camps:** Donations will support our two WI camps: Pine Lake and Lake Lucerne. The camps provide a great camping experience for all ages and abilities.
-  **Allied Drive Food Pantry:** The Pantry exists to provide nutritious food to those who are in need and cannot, at the moment, totally support themselves.
-  **The Playing Field Emergency Fund:** Your gift provides a family in need with emergency shelter, food and transportation. It could go for basic kitchen items, needed prescriptions and medical supplies and more. Every cent of your gift is distributed by staff of the Playing Field to families who otherwise would lack the essentials that most of us take for granted.
-  **UMCOR: Disaster Response and Recovery.** UMCOR responds to disasters in the U.S. and the world by working with communities and local partners. “Early in and last out” is a guiding principle of UMCOR. 100% of your gift will go to disaster relief.

ATTENTION KNITTERS AND SHOPPERS!

With the beginning of Advent, the Mitten Tree will appear in front of the office window in the narthex, ready to be filled with mittens, scarves, gloves and hats. The warm items will be given to children and youth who are in need of them. Please hang them on the tree by Sunday, December 18

Children's News

For Children's Ministry information, contact Lisa Weaver, Director of Children's Ministries
Phone: (608) 238-6381 / Email: Children@BethanyMadison.org

All Are Welcome!

Children, youth, and adults created handprints in Sunday School classes during the months of October and November. Beautiful colors, sticker letters, and gems were used to decorate our hands. Others added their handprints during the Nov 4 Game Night or during the Fellowship Time before worship on Sunday, Nov 5.



Children's Sunday School

Fall Bible stories have featured Old Testament scriptures which follow the lives of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob and Esau. Thank you to our Sunday School teachers (Melissa J, Tom D, Kathy M, and Lisa W) as well as a cohort of adult volunteers and childcare staff members. We generally have three age groups (PreK-1st; Gr 2-3; Gr 4-6) though at times we combine groups due to special activities. In November we have been practicing our Christmas Pageant songs at the start of Sunday School, and we look forward to sharing this music with the congregation on Dec 10.

Youth News

For Youth Ministry information, contact Kathy Mohs, Director of Youth Ministries
 Phone: (608) 238-6381 / Email: Youth@BethanyMadison.org

The Youth enjoyed another wonderful Game Night on Saturday, Nov. 4th. There were some new faces and fun, food and fellowship were certainly had!



Bethany's three confirmands, along with Pastor Julie and Kathy, headed to First United Methodist Church on Sunday, Nov. 19th and joined First UMC's confirmation class for lunch and class. The next class will be held at Bethany on Sunday, Dec. 17th.

Prepping for Advent

In addition to decorating the church our youth helped decorate cookies for The Playing Field staff.



SUNDAY WORSHIP ATTENDANCE (IN-PERSON AND YOUTUBE)

Sunday, Nov. 5
 Total 139

Sunday, Nov. 12
 Total 142

Sunday, Nov. 19
 Total 150

Sunday, Nov. 26
 Total



We are a Reconciling Congregation,
 welcoming all people to be a part of
 our church family.

Information

Office Hours: 8 am - 2:30 pm, Monday — Friday

Church Office: (608) 238-6381

Email: BethanyOffice@BethanyMadison.org

Website: bethanymadison.org

Sunday Morning Schedule

Faithlink Adult Discussion Class	8:45 am
Coffee Fellowship	9:15 am
Worship (in person and on YouTube)	10:00 am
Coffee Fellowship	Following Worship

Staff

Lead Pastor.....	Rev. Julie Wilson
Pastor of Visitation	Rev. Brad Mather
Deacon	Rev. Kory Douglass
Office Administrator.....	Carl White
Director of Children’s Ministries & Music	Lisa Weaver
Youth Director	Kathy Mohs
Director of Music	Kristie Halverson
Organist.....	Sue Poullette
Director of Bell Choirs	Nick Bonaccio
Choral Program Collaborative Artist.....	Evan Lange
Membership Secretary.....	Kathy Doran
Financial Secretary	Sandra Arrington
Custodian.....	Ron Rebolz
Global Mission Partner	Temba Nkomozepe, Mujila Falls, Zambia

E-Banner Deadline: Fridays at Noon

Banner Deadline for the January 2024 Issue: December 18