

BCC

Bellingham

Covenant Church



CHURCH BROCHURE



Introduction

Thank you for your interest in the lead pastor position at Bellingham Covenant Church.

We are looking for someone who is gifted at preaching and teaching Scripture with loving boldness in a way that is both theologically sound and culturally relevant, and who is passionate about equipping and empowering others to do the work of ministry.

We invite you to submit your application by **September 30, 2019**.

This brochure provides a high-level view of BCC geared toward pastoral candidates. More information about our history and our denomination (the Evangelical Covenant Church) can be found at our website:

www.bellinghamcov.org.

As a Covenant church, we believe that God calls gifted men and women to all levels of church leadership.

If you would like to apply for this position, we invite you to send a Covenant Minister's Profile Form to transition@bellinghamcov.org.

This form can be accessed through the following web address:
www.bellinghamcov.org/transition.

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RECENT HISTORY



Our congregation was founded in 1905 and originally met in downtown Bellingham. In 1965, we moved north, to a facility on Sunset Drive. In 2003 we moved north again, to a facility on Bakerview Road. In 2005 we called Paul Petersen as our lead pastor. During his tenure, we hired a full-time associate pastor and full-time youth pastor. We planted Lettered Streets Covenant Church (located in Bellingham's Lettered Streets neighborhood) in 2009.

VITALITY PATHWAY

In 2014, we began participating in the ECC's congregational revitalization initiative, the Vitality Pathway. We began by taking the PULSE survey to gauge where we saw ourselves in terms of the 10 markers of a healthy missional church (centrality of the Word of God, life-transforming walk with Jesus, intentional evangelism, transforming communities through active compassion, mercy, and justice ministries, global perspective and engagement, compelling Christian community, heartfelt worship, sacrificial and generous living and giving, culture of godly leadership, and fruitful organizational structures). With 130 respondents, we rated ourselves highest on life-transforming walk with Jesus and culture of godly leadership, and lowest on intentional evangelism and transforming communities through compassion, mercy, and justice ministries. As part of the Vitality Pathway, we created a vitality team separate from the lead team to help us think about how to increase congregational health.

Soon after we began the vitality process, our associate pastor felt called to transition into a lead pastor role and left in late 2014. Instead of replacing him with another full-time associate, we decided to work on our identified areas of weakness by hiring for three part-time positions: a director of Christian formation and congregational life, a director of local and global outreach, and a director of children and family ministry. These positions were filled in June 2015. In addition, our children's ministry director also became the director of BCC's preschool.

PULSE SURVEY

In January 2018, we decided to take another PULSE survey to gauge how we had progressed in terms of the 10 healthy missional markers. The 154 respondents believed that we had made progress on every marker, with culture of godly leadership and life transforming walk with Jesus still at the top. Intentional evangelism was still at the bottom, just behind sacrificial and generous living and giving. One important byproduct of the Vitality Pathway has been that the language of “10 healthy missional markers” has become part of the culture of our church. While we know we fall short in some ways, we have gained greater clarity on our goal.



MOVING FORWARD

When we began the Vitality Pathway in 2014, we saw ourselves as a stable church. While we have made important progress in the last five years, we still believe that we have room to improve in our overall goal of becoming more healthy and more missional. While we are not a church in crisis, we know that a stable church can bring its own challenges. Under the leadership of our interim lead pastor, we have been focusing on the missional marker of fruitful organizational structures, asking how we can become more streamlined and effective in the ways we pursue our mission.

MISSION

(Mission Statement Adopted 2008)

We desire to embody a biblical community rooted in the life and the message of Jesus Christ and choose to follow him with our heart, head, and hands.



We share a deeply meaningful experience of knowing God in Jesus Christ. We are a group of people striving to love God and our neighbors (Mt 22:37-40) and join in with God to complete His mission on this earth (Mt 28:18-20).

As a church we intentionally seek to welcome everyone and share our lives together. We value authentic relationships and hope to create a community of belonging. We are purposely intergenerational and above all seek to be a place of spiritual growth and development.

MINISTRY VALUES

We have several mature leaders in the congregation, including some current and former Covenant pastors. Several of our people are involved in ministry outside the church as well. The presence of mature leaders has helped foster an entrepreneurial spirit, with many people feeling free to start new initiatives.

It has also enabled us to have preaching, teaching, and group facilitating that is of high quality and doesn't depend exclusively on the skills of the lead pastor. At the same time, though, we acknowledge that some newer people have had trouble knowing where they fit in and how to grow into a leadership role. Here are some of the values that characterize our ministry culture.



Centrality of the Word

As a Covenant church, we try to order our common life in accord with the six Covenant Affirmations, but the first one (“the centrality of the Word of God”) has a special place in our community. It is our practice to stand when the Scripture is read before a sermon, acknowledging that we are not just about to hear a talk, but that we are inviting God to address us through his Word.

Our sermons tend to be based primarily in a single biblical text, even in series that are more topical in nature. In 2016–2017, we went through a nine-month sermon series that was intended to familiarize us with the overarching narrative of the Bible and emphasize that it is a story of which we are a part. In the fall of 2017, we went through the Community Bible Experience, where our small groups read through the entire New Testament together. The Bible is a central part of our Christian formation, both in adult and children's classes.

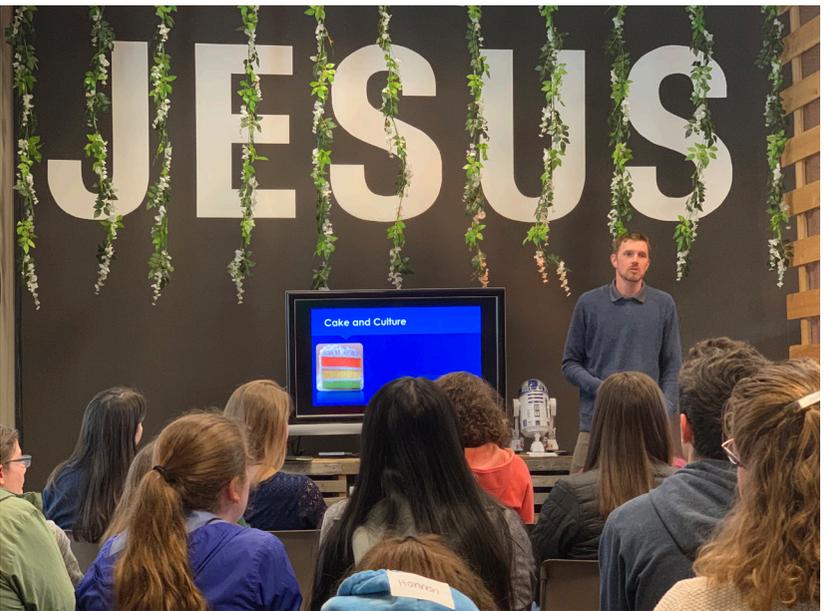
Unity in Christ

We believe that our union with Christ unites us with other believers in a single body. This value plays out primarily in our desire to be intergenerational. We live in a world that tends to silo us into generational groupings, and we believe this is unhealthy for the body of Christ. Because of this, we have a single blended worship service that all attend, and we work to create opportunities where people of different ages can interact and learn from each other. Once a year, for example, we have short-term small groups during Lent where we all study the same thing. Also, in the summer of 2019 we planned a short-term mission trip to Sweden that included both youth and adults.



We also tend to emphasize unity in Christ when it comes to political issues. Our congregants hold a variety of political opinions, and we have tried to prevent the contempt and resentment in the wider political culture from dividing us. Whenever we discuss events in the wider world, we are careful to remember that what we have in common in Christ transcends our political differences, and that from the standpoint of the kingdom of God all political ideologies both affirm good things and fall short of being able to fully describe the world and fix its problems.

We value unity not just in our congregation, but when it comes to the wider church. Around Pentecost every year, we participate in a joint worship service with several other area churches. We tend to not see ourselves as in competition with other churches and ministries, but like to partner with them for the sake of the gospel in Whatcom County (there is a local ministerial association that fosters this cooperation). We're more focused on the Cross and conversion than mainliners tend to be, and more interested in justice issues than fundamentalists tend to be, but are willing to work alongside either in places where their beliefs line up with ours.



Hospitality

In our communal life we like to make others feel welcome, like they are part of our family. This value is played out every Sunday in our greeting time during the service and when we invite newcomers to have a free drink at our espresso cafe. It is unusual for a visitor to be standing by themselves in the foyer after the service. If they stick around, someone will usually approach them and start a conversation. Periodically we also organize share-a-suppers, in which people sign up to have dinner in each other's homes.

Our value of hospitality also extends to the way we use our building. We welcome several local groups and ministries to use our facility during the week. We also like to invite the community into our building through our BCC preschool and annual events like a holiday bazaar in the fall, garage sale in the spring, and vacation Bible school in the summer.



Beauty

We live in a beautiful part of the world, and we believe that the beauty around us points to our creative and loving God. We take pride in our beautifully designed building and the landscaping on our campus—our building quite deliberately looks like a church. In our sanctuary, we like to feature stage displays during various liturgical seasons. In the foyer outside the sanctuary, we have an art wall that features visual art created by our members.

We believe that enjoying the beauty of the world around us involves caring for creation. Many of us enjoy the beauty of creation by camping and hiking in the summer and skiing in the winter, and many faithful attenders are away several Sundays a year because of their desire to connect to God through his creation.



RHYTHMS OF WORSHIP

On a typical Sunday at BCC, our worship service begins at 9:30. It normally includes a variety of classic and contemporary songs played by a worship band, Scripture readings and recitations of prayers from throughout the Christian tradition, announcements, an offering and a sermon. Children third grade and younger are normally dismissed for children's worship at some point before the sermon.

LIFE TOGETHER

After the service is what we call "Life Together" hour from 11 to noon. We open our espresso cafe and offer educational opportunities for adults and children. Some Bible study and community groups meet in the church during this time, and people also feel free to have conversations in our foyer and cafe area.

DURING THE WEEK

During the week, our building is used by Bible Study Fellowship (Tuesday and Thursday), the Boy Scouts (Tuesday), and several church groups such as a Monday morning mom's group, several Bible study groups throughout the week, a painting guild, Love INC budget counseling, youth group on Wednesday nights, and a group that plays pickleball in our gym in addition to occasional events like weddings and memorial services.



SERVICES AND SERMONS

We usually take communion by intinction twice a month. Once a month, we also offer what we call “prayers for healing” after the sermon. During prayers for healing, we have kneelers at the front of the sanctuary where people can be prayed for by a pastor or staff member. As they feel led, other members of the congregation come and lay hands on the person asking for prayer. While as Covenanters we recognize only baptism and the Lord’s Supper as official sacraments, prayers for healing plays an almost sacramental role in our life together.

While our sermons tend not to be drawn from lectionary texts, we do observe seasons of the Christian year: Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Eastertide, and Pentecost. We also observe occasional days like Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, and Christ the King Sunday. We do not have a traditional-looking sanctuary and do not generally use traditional liturgical colors for the seasons, but we do use the arts to have our stage reflect some seasons of the year. We have also incorporated sidewall projection into our worship that changes with the seasons of the year.

ADDITIONAL RHYTHMS

Other regular rhythms include events like a spring garage sale, campus clean up, and a fall holiday bazaar. In recent years we have also adopted a multi-week spring mission emphasis, in which the congregation is encouraged to focus on mission and give to special causes that are not in our annual budget.



LEADERSHIP & GOVERNANCE

As a Covenant church, we have a congregational model of governance. Within that congregational model, in 2005 we transitioned from a council model to a lead team model in which the congregation has vested authority for oversight and vision with the lead team. The current lead team is made up of nine members including the lead pastor, who serves ex officio. Lead team members may serve up to two consecutive three-year terms, and lead team members elect a chair, vice chair, treasurer, and secretary from among themselves.

FRUITFUL ORGANIZATION

As mentioned under “Recent History,” during this interim time we have been evaluating our organizational structure and asking how it could be made more fruitful. We hope to continue with the lead team model, but be more deliberate about how things are communicated and who is responsible in all areas of ministry. Without this clarity, responsibilities tend to fall on the lead pastor and administrator. At best this situation limits our church’s effectiveness, and at worst it can lead to burnout for those who take on responsibility.

STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Our current staff includes a Transitional Lead Pastor (full-time), Youth Pastor (full-time), Administrator (full-time), Pastor of Christian Formation and Community Life (16 hours/week), Director of Local and Global Outreach (16 hours/week), and Director of Children and Family Ministries (20 hours/week).

Our Director of Children and Family Ministries is also our Preschool Director (20 hours/week). We also have part-time positions in the areas of building and grounds, administrative support, and middle school and 4th and 5th grade ministry.

In addition, there are a number of ministry teams that consist of volunteers in areas like worship, women’s ministry, small groups, the library, care ministry, and our cafe.



Transitional Lead Pastor
Pastor Dave Benedict



Youth Pastor
Jeff Grosskopf



Adult Christian Formation
Pastor Janet Russell



Local & Global Outreach
Steven Shetterly



Children’s Director
Hannah Cranny



Administrative Assistant
Kris Henderson



Administrative Support
Charity Garza



Director of Building & Grounds
Brian Aronson

SIZE & DEMOGRAPHICS

In the first four months of 2019, the average Sunday worship attendance has been about 260, including children. Each Sunday we average about 40 children third grade and younger, 10 fourth and fifth graders, 13 middle schoolers, and 13 high schoolers. We have 245 currently active members in our database. Our attendance has varied between about 240 and 280 people per Sunday over the last ten years.

Our size places us squarely within a medium-sized church paradigm, and we struggle with the pressures all medium-sized churches face: we want to feel small enough that everyone can know each other, but we want to feel big enough that there are options for involvement and that we do things with excellence. While we have not seen decline in recent years, we know that we are an aging congregation and want to look for ways to include more young people and families in our life together.



OUR LOCATION

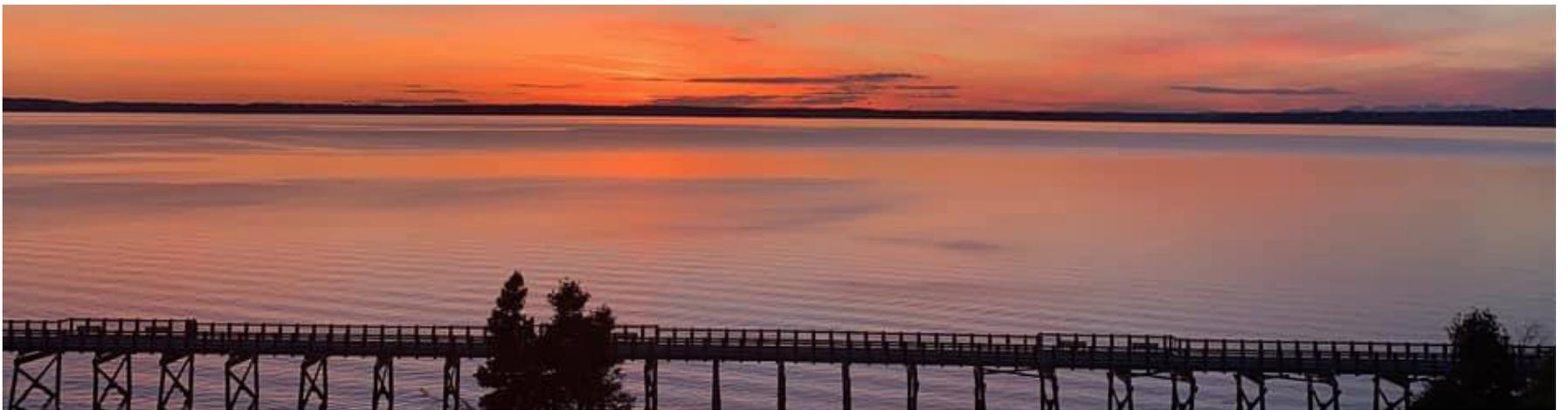


Nicknamed the “City of Subdued Excitement,” Bellingham is a city of around 90,000 located between Seattle and Vancouver, BC. Many people are drawn to Bellingham and Whatcom County for its mild climate and high quality of living, and the cost of living is also high compared to other communities our size: the median price for homes sold in Whatcom County was \$382,800 in 2018. Bellingham had the highest median price at \$449,450, while the Mount Baker school district had the lowest at \$224,000.

Education is a major shaper of Bellingham culture, with Western Washington University, Whatcom Community College, and Bellingham Technical College all within the city limits. Between Bellingham and the Canadian border is what local residents call “the county.” Historically this has been made up of farming communities, but in recent years there has also been an increase in industrial jobs (with the BP Cherry Point refinery a major employer) and people who commute into Bellingham. Still, there is a cultural difference, with county residents tending to be more conservative than progressive Bellingham. Situated as we are on the north side of the city, BCC draws from both, and on any given Sunday you will see everything from pickup trucks to Priuses in the parking lot.

THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

The Pacific Northwest is more secular than many other parts of the country, and could accurately be described as “post-Christian.” In Whatcom County, there are many people (42.5% in 2017) who mark “none” on surveys when they are asked about their religious affiliation, but it is important to point out that not all of these are firm atheists. Rather, many would call themselves “spiritual but not religious,” attempting to find meaning in nontraditional faith expressions and ideologies. Some grew up in the church and have some biblical knowledge, but many, especially younger people, did not and have no clear understanding of basic Christian doctrines like sin and salvation.



WHATCOM COUNTY

In Whatcom County in 2017, 17.4% of people identified themselves as Catholic or Orthodox, 14.4% identified themselves as part of a mainline Protestant denomination, 11.6% identified themselves as part of non-mainline Protestant denominations, and 14% identified themselves with another religion besides Christianity. Yet just 28.9% of all people said they were involved in a religious community.

As with much of the Pacific Northwest, there is decreasing cultural incentive here to identify oneself as a Christian, and as a result there are relatively few “nominal” or “cultural” Christians. Those who identify themselves as Christians tend to be serious in their commitment to grow as disciples and to find ways to make the gospel truly good news to their non-Christian friends and family.

While some might find it discouraging that Christians are a lower share of the population here than elsewhere, we believe (and we want a pastor who believes) that people cannot live without a sense of meaning, and the gospel of Jesus is the best source of meaning there is. We want to preach grace to people who are burned out on the variety of ways they are encouraged to justify themselves in our culture, and truth to people who are longing for meaning in their lives.

OUR NEIGHBORHOOD

We moved into our current building in 2003. It is on busy Bakerview Road, on the north side of Bellingham. Because of our building's easy accessibility from the north, we tend to draw congregants both from Bellingham and from northern Whatcom County.

The north side of Bellingham has seen a lot of growth over the past decade, and that is forecasted to continue. The neighborhood where our building is located, the King Mountain neighborhood, was once a rural area but was annexed to the city in 2009 and is likely to see an upsurge in housing development over the next several years.



OUR BUILDING

We are in the final stages of paying off the mortgage, though we know that as the building ages we will need to continue investing in maintenance. Our mortgage is not part of our general fund budget.

Our sanctuary can seat around 380 (there were 367 on Easter 2019). It was built with classroom spaces through the walls on either side. When the building was constructed, we anticipated that if our congregation continued to grow, we could expand the sanctuary by knocking out the walls and then building on additional classroom space.

When we were faced with a growing congregation in 2009, however, we decided to plant a church instead. A major decision we will face if we continue to grow is whether we will expand the sanctuary, plant another church, or start a second worship service.

Bellingham Covenant Church



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