



# COMMUNITY NEWS

Spring 2020





# Creativity

Mike Willbanks



As we've been exploring the early chapters of Genesis the past few months, we've seen that we have been made in the image of God. And God is a Maker. He is the God who forms and fills; who creates and cultivates. He makes things that are functional and things that are beautiful. And so part of what it means to be human is to be creative. Some of us, of course, are more creative than others. In fact, the word "creative" of late has been turned into a noun to describe a certain subsection of the population— those special artsy types who are "creatives." But this perhaps is an unfortunate development of the word, for creativity is not the domain of just a select few.

Some create experiences with food. Others create more efficient methods of getting work done. Still others use paper, ink, watercolors, or musical instruments. Regardless of what medium we work with or whether our creative endeavors are part of our paid work or free time, for Christians, our making —like everything else in our lives— is viewed through the lens of our faith.

This does not mean we only paint pictures of scenes from the life of Jesus or only write songs that are explicitly "Christian." Rather, convinced that all truth is God's truth and all beauty in some way points to the goodness of God, the Christian strives to showcase what is true and beautiful in their work.

This means the goal of our creativity is never simply self-expression or worse, self-glorification. Rather, as Andrew Peterson writes in his fantastic book, *Adorning the Dark: Thoughts on Community, Calling, and the Mystery of Making*,

Art shouldn't be about self-expression or self-indulgence. Art shouldn't be about self. The paradox is that art is necessarily created by a Self, and will necessarily draw some measure of attention or consideration to the artist.

**GOD IS A MAKER. HE IS THE GOD WHO FORMS AND FILLS; WHO CREATES AND CULTIVATES. HE MAKES THINGS THAT ARE FUNCTIONAL AND THINGS THAT ARE BEAUTIFUL. HUMANS ARE CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE. AND SO PART OF WHAT IT MEANS TO BE HUMAN IS TO BE CREATIVE.**

But the aim ought to be for the thing to draw attention, ultimately, to something other than the Self. For a Christian, that means accepting this paradox in the knowledge, or at least in the hope, that my expression, even if it is of the most intimate chambers of my heart, can lead the audience beyond me and to the Ultimate Self, the Word that made the world. In that grand chamber alone will art find its best end, as an avenue to lead the audience Home.

In this edition of the Community News, we'll explore the subject of creativity and hear from some of our own who have sought to use and develop this creative calling. Our hope is that whether you create spreadsheets or stories, pictures or programs, you will be inspired to see your work as an expression and extension of God's wonderfully creative impulse for the good of all.

# Making in the Image of God

Nate Fearer



As we read through the creation story in Genesis, I find myself reflecting on a characteristic of God that we don't always emphasize in the church —his vast and unknowable creativity. Everything currently in your focus and in your periphery as you read this is a creation by God's design, directly or indirectly. Your hand —intricate, dexterous, and capable of precise sensation— is a product of God's design. The paper you're reading from —thin, fibrous, and perfectly receptive to the stains of ink— is a processed sheet from the coniferous trees that God put on the earth. The clothes that you wear, the building that you're in, the chair in which you're sitting... everything can be traced back to God's direct creation.

He has built everything from quarks to seeds to elephants to oceans to planets to galaxies, and to universes. Each thing that he has made can be zoomed in on beyond our ability to zoom in, and can be zoomed out from beyond our ability to zoom out!

It is this same God that has designed the beautiful complexity of your mind and has listened to and cared about the callings of your heart. The scope of his creation is staggering, and the thoughtful detail tells us something about our God.



As those created in the image of this God, we are right to exercise our creativity in the ways that we are able. Personally, I have found a passion for ceramics (among far too many other things). The process of turning a clammy lump of clay into a uniform, thin-walled mug with dazzling blues and reds leaves me with a wonderful feeling. It isn't the intentional movement, the focused control, or the numerous possibilities that gives me that feeling. It's the fact of creation, the giving of purpose. In ceramics, I'm able to make something out of nothing, to the extent that one can.



God has made us with a drive to create, to improve, and to think outside of the box. This inborn creativity is not just limited to the forming of physical objects or use within the context of hobbies, but can be applied to

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software architecture, to business strategy, and perhaps to every area of life. As we practice creativity, we are given an opportunity to ascribe purpose, and we are also given an opportunity to worship our Lord, as the one who was so good as to share this foundational aspect of his nature with us. We are given the opportunity to look at the work of his hands, agree that it is good, and contribute to it in the ways that we can.

# When Creativity and Work Come Hard

Roger Edgar



Last year my dad gave me an old hand plane. For the uninitiated, a hand plane is a woodworking tool that flattens and smooths wood by taking thin shavings off as it passes over the surface of the material. It might be considered an anachronism in modern wood shops, but many woodworkers still prize a good plane—preferring curly shavings to clouds of dust, and its satisfying rhythm to the high decibel howl of its electrified alternative. A well-tuned and keenly sharpened plane is a joy to use. The specimen my dad gave me, pulled from the aftermath of a neighbor's garage fire, had all the moving parts seized with rust and was not good for much more than a doorstop.

I really enjoy woodworking. So, I proceeded to disassemble, soak, scrub, strip, japan, bake, grind, lap, scrape, sand, finish, buff, sharpen, hone, wax, assemble, and adjust. After more hours than I bothered to tally, I have a serviceable tool. No reasonable economic calculation justifies the hours spent to bring this thing back to life. It was entirely penny-wise and pound-foolish, but economic considerations weren't really the point of this exercise. I enjoyed the process of applying hand, skill, and mind to completing the task, then stepping back to recognize and declare that it was good. It was particularly satisfying to beat back chaos and decay by restoring a corrupted thing to its original intended purpose—and in the final analysis I benefited from the addition of a decent tool to my home shop.

As we have been studying the creation account in Genesis and exploring the meaning of our nature as God's image-bearers, I am meditating on the idea that God's working and works manifest his glory, and our working and works redound to both his glory and to ours. We have the joy and the privilege to partner with God in his creative and restorative work in all of its wondrous variety. God created creators and blessed us with work to do—ways to apply our creativity. It was a fresh insight for me on this reading of Genesis how he made humanity essential to his own creative purposes:

*When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the land, and **there was no man to work the ground**.... (Genesis 2:5)*

Of course, God did not require man's help to complete his creation, but he saw fit to employ him in order to bring greater glory to Himself—and to us.

Both our glory and our work have been cursed and tainted as a consequence of the fall. The result being that much of our work, even our creative work, is often now characterized as toil—sweat of the brow kind of stuff. (The effects of the curse are most evident when attempting plumbing projects. Those are best left to professionals who are actually saints masquerading in dungarees!)

When our work and creativity are challenged by these circumstances resulting from the fall, Paul's exhortation to the Colossians to us is helpful:

*Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. (Colossians 3:23-24)*





# Teaching Children Creativity

Rhonda Yager



*"The heavens declare the glory of God, the skies declare the work of your hands."* (Psalm 19:1)  
This verse hangs on a poster in the art room where I teach at Providence Elementary School. Teaching art to students in elementary school would be enjoyable nearly anywhere for me but being at a school where we can attribute the colors of a gorgeous butterfly or the patterns of a beetle to our Creator is really quite awesome.

I usually ask a couple of questions at the beginning of a school year. The first one is 'Who is the greatest artist of all time?' I've heard some funny answers (even a few students that claim they are the greatest) but after a hint, most will declare 'God!' It's a pretty cool image when we stop to visualize God as an artist who paints sunsets with a giant brush, sculpts mountains from clay, or forms tiny sea creatures with crazy, perfect detail.

Another question I ask students is, "Why do we as people like to create? Why do you like to paint a picture, build a sandcastle, bake a cake, or create a lego sculpture?" Most answers revolve around having fun or making something that wasn't there before. We try to have a discussion (a short one, because they are fidgety and want to get to the art!) about how we are made in the image of our great creator-artist. Since he loves to create, we also have that same love and desire.

I believe we can take this a step further and use creating as a form of worship. We can stop and pause from our busy lives and spend time to reflect and adore our Creator. We do this intentionally in our art room during our 45 minutes a week together using paints, pastels, and lots of fun materials, all while listening to classical music.

Young children enjoy the process of just sitting and making something but, somewhere along the line, we grow up thinking our artistic endeavors are a waste of time if the final outcome isn't worthy of a museum wall. My encouragement to students is to come into the classroom, take a deep breath, relax, and enjoy creating. I also have to remind myself to relax and take a deep breath when a student has drawn marker on their face or squeezed the entire bottle of glue onto the table! Often there is a bit of chaos and mess, but what fun it is to see kids choose colors or arrange shapes and create art for the pure joy it brings them. Just a few days ago a second grader repeatedly said 'This is the best, I love art, it's my favorite!'

I definitely agree.



# Creating Stories

## Anna Jordan

In her book *Walking on Water: Reflections on Faith and Art*, Madeleine L'Engle wrote "Jesus was not a theologian. He was God who told stories." I love this description of Jesus. I really believe that God has always and will always continue to communicate with us where we are, in our humanness, and he designed us for story. That's why he gave us such a big, sweeping narrative and allowed us to step inside of it. And because we are a creation fit for narrative, it makes sense that stories help us understand ourselves, other people, and the world more fully.

Hi, my name is Anna, and I'm a writer.

From the time I was a little girl I've loved crafting narratives, creating characters, and imagining new scenarios. I'm always writing dialogue and character descriptions in my head. Unfortunately, this often happens while I'm driving, and is probably the reason why I so often cruise right past my freeway exit.

On my first day of graduate school, one of the professors asked all of us in my cohort to go around and say why we decided to pursue an MFA in creative writing. People at pretentious art schools always have pretentious art school answers for this, but if you've met me, you can safely assume I said nothing of the sort. I simply said, "I have stories inside, and I need to let them out." And I have.

I've had the privilege of writing for quite some time now, and I say privilege because I really believe that writing is both a privilege and a gift. But I also know that I'm not the only one with stories inside. If we could circle back for a moment to the idea that we are made for story, it would follow then that we all have stories inside of us. We have lived experiences and imagined happenings that bounce around inside our brains, and in addition to capturing my own romping thoughts and pinning them down to the page, I get to help others do the same.

Although I spend a fair amount of time on my own writing, I also teach creative writing both online and in person. As an adjunct professor at Westmont College, I am able to come alongside undergraduate students and help them find their voices, and in many ways, begin to understand their own stories for the first time. Together, we all gain a better understanding of what it means to tell the truth. We talk about how Madeleine L'Engle also wrote that "We were made to be co-creators with our maker," and that in writing our own stories (fiction or nonfiction), we are doing the work of both co-creating and understanding creation. At least once during each semester, I lead my students on a hike to further reinforce this point. (Want to tap into creativity? Spend time in creation.) Sometimes this goes over well. Sometimes this experience leads them to tales of lament (I made them walk too fast, hiking is hard, sweating is terrible... it's still worth it.)

I love my time with my Westmont students because I get them. I was once one of them, and the culture of Westmont and Santa Barbara has shaped so much of who I am. However, I'm also glad that I get to come alongside students who are wholly different than I am. As an online professor at Southern New Hampshire University, I instruct adult learners —truckers, grandmothers, veterans, EMTs, people from all walks of life— as they come back to school and learn how to tell the stories



that have been growing inside of them for years.

The students' final reflection papers often bring me to tears, but the papers of my adult learners move me more than any others. I love to read about the way the words they've written feel like catharsis, and I am thrilled to discover how the books and narratives they've read over the course of the term have spoken a truth they always knew but couldn't ever figure out how to articulate. Actually, this is the response I'm eager to find in all my students everywhere. Because these sensations, catharsis and discovery, go hand-in-hand when we find a story (either inside of us or outside of us) that tells the truth. The revelation of truth is the best part.

Because there are so many platforms for showcasing and publishing work these days, people often moan to me that whatever creative venture they're working on isn't worth it because it's not good enough for public consumption. Within the context of all my writing and teaching and talking about creativity, I work to dispel that myth. Yes, I share a good amount of my written work, but I also keep a solid chunk of it for myself. Our lives are not designed to be performance pieces, and our creative efforts don't have to be either. I write because I want to better understand both God's big story and the tiny piece of the narrative that is mine to live, and I encourage others to write for the same reason. We all have stories planted inside of us by our Creator, in whose image we are made.

## Art: "Finding Cosmos Out of Chaos"

Shannon Saleh



I find it ironic that when asked to write about creativity, I find I have no immediate words of any sort that might be considered creative or even decipherable. And yet, I begin.

Approaching this short missive feels, at its onset, familiar to the process I use every time a creative opportunity presents itself. I gather information. Pray that it will sort itself out in my gray matter. Sit. Wait. Work a little. Try to be patient. Learn to get out of the way. And let what is meant to bless others come to the surface when the Lord wills it to do so. It is the practice of working when I feel uninspired, and trusting that the grunts and groans of my neurons will eventually fire in a succession that illuminates what is to be constructed, and shared. Whether working on a song to be sung, a dance to be choreographed, a play to be produced, or a class period to be taught, each minute requires buy-in, attention, and stimulation to both the head and heart for its recipients and out in the audience, lest someone lose interest.

So much of my daily and privileged work has been the arrangement of sight and sound to encapsulate a message for the experience of the performers, and equally for the experience of their audience. It is a unique kind of art, I think. But like all art, subjective. This pursuit of communication is in the form of beautiful and pleasing vocal balance, movement and formations of people that create on-stage pictures, and the ebb and flow of a performance piece that must take the audience on an intended journey. It requires a 360-degree vision, which is a challenge and a delight. All of this is in pursuit of the purpose of Art: connecting us to our own hearts and to the hearts of others and realigning our hearts to our Creator.

I wouldn't have been able to name the calling to be creative until I read Madeleine L'Engle's *Walking on Water*, in which she talks about the concept of Art being the finding of cosmos out of chaos. Chaos is the best descriptor of my time teaching junior high and now high school performance. Years and years made up of myriad moments of chaos, noise, lack of focus, big feelings, insecurities, and





aspirations. And out of that, when the curtain goes up, the beauty of cosmos; an ordered universe that transcends our two feet on the ground, even for just a moment, and lifts our faces to the Creator Himself. This act is a direct reflection of the ingenious God who made us in his image, both to replicate the act of creating, and to appreciate the artistry in that act.

In all of the moments in classrooms and rehearsal spaces, I have learned that "...there is nothing so secular that it cannot be sacred." I have found solace in knowing that God uses secular minutia in our daily lives to live out his sacred purposes. So much of what we live is, in fact, minutia. And our response to every one of those tiny moments either declares his importance, or

decreases it in the eye of the beholder. The integrity of the moments that contribute to the creation of art hold even more importance than the artistic product.

One of my greatest delights in the Lord is that he historically chooses the most unqualified people to do his work. That has always been a vast relief to me in the many moments I have felt like a fraud in my career. Having created psychology and the intricacies of the mind, spirit and body, it never ceases to amaze me that he allows me to participate in his work knowing all of my inadequacies in all of those categories. In fact, trusting that he will provide in the artistic process when I am tired and dry and someone in my house needs a snack, a sock, or an intentional conversation, is a great leap of faith every time I say yes to another project. Though it does not exempt me from the labor of the process, it does remind me that the original creator of the universe has seen fit to place me here at this time with these people in this endeavor and that I will have no success, not even with my utmost effort, if it is not his will that I do so. In the times that I have taken the helm without his blessing, the "successes" by worldly measure have felt precarious at best, and I am convinced that those successes do not weigh in the hearts of participants in the same way the experiences do when I am operating in the sacred pocket of his will for me.

We humans "create" all the day long, often forgetting that we are living out a piece of our image-bearing nature when we do so, and reveling in our gift sets feels dangerous and shallow without acknowledging the very creator of our minds. Ecclesiastes 9:10 says that whatever we do, we are to do it with all of our might. And 1Timothy 4:14-15 tells us not to neglect the gifts we have, but to immerse ourselves in them so that all can see our progress. What better encouragement to work tirelessly in all of the small moments in whatever gift sets we have been given?

To live in a way that "One's life would not make sense if God did not exist"; that is the goal. (from *Walking on Water*, by Madeleine L'Engle) To pour out minutes and hours and conversations and energy and intention as if they were infinite, and pray that it will matter in the way it should for the Kingdom: that is my hope.





# Creation, Not Isolation

Emily Letsinger

Creation is not a solitary act.

A prevalent conception of the creative individual is that of the artist alone, shut away from the world and all its distractions so that they may pour out their creativity unfettered. Though perhaps more commonly attached to the musical genius writing symphonies or the artist with a private gallery than the grandmother knitting her grandchildren's slippers, this idea is still a persistent representation of what it means to be a true artist.

Now don't get me wrong, I am an introvert through and through. I love spending time in the empty chapel with the grand piano, each note stirring the silence to life, or nestled in the nook at the coffee shop with my sketchbook and my headphones, off in a world of my own. For a long time, I subscribed to the myth of the lonely artist. It was all a bit romantic, wasn't it? All alone in that mountain cabin or house by the sea, surrounded by nothing but your art and the natural world, generating works of splendorous beauty. But to believe in this image of the artist, to identify with it, would be to deny God's intentions for creativity.



Creativity is an essential way in which we reflect the image God, and none of what we create is done in a vacuum. Just like God is a relational God, we, his image-bearers, are a relational people, and I would be remiss to ignore this. In particular, I think of the influence that my Christian community had in encouraging my own creative endeavors, and in turn, the influence that I've begun to see my creations have on others.

I'm sure we can all remember those people who, when we were young, spotted the spark of some talent or ability and encouraged us to pursue it. I think of my Papa, who nurtured my burgeoning understanding of perspective in illustration; or Grandma Rogers, who taught me how to sew; or Grandma Letsinger, who took the pencils and yarn out of my hands and gave me my first knitting needles; or my

piano teacher's husband, who first noticed that I liked to 'make up songs' and gave me my first lessons in composition; or my fifth grade teacher who read my stories and encouraged me to keep writing. I could go on, listing all the people who encouraged me along the way, but there are too many to name.

Creativity needs community to flourish. I think we were designed this way, for each of us to share in the creative process, everyone playing a part. That part might be encouraging a child to keep doodling on loose sheets of paper, or it might be singing in a chamber choir pulled together by a composer, or it might simply be receiving the finished work of art and using it. I have wondered what God must have felt when he gifted his creation to humanity, but I imagine it must've been similar to the elation I feel when sharing my own creation with the person (or people) for whom it was intended. This, too, is a gift from God; the pleasure of a work well-accomplished.

Now that I've gone on about the importance of community for creativity, I must say that I believe there is also a place for solitude. Solitude is necessary to really focus in on the work of creating. But solitude is meaningless without community. It is from relationship that the desire to create is often born, from the guidance of others that artistic skill is honed, and from the input of a community that creativity is directed and refined. Without these components, solitude cannot play its intended role. A musician with no one to play or listen to their music, an author with no one to read their words, an artist with no one to view their work—this would be meaningless. God wanted to share the beauty of creation with us; likewise, we yearn to share our creations with each other.

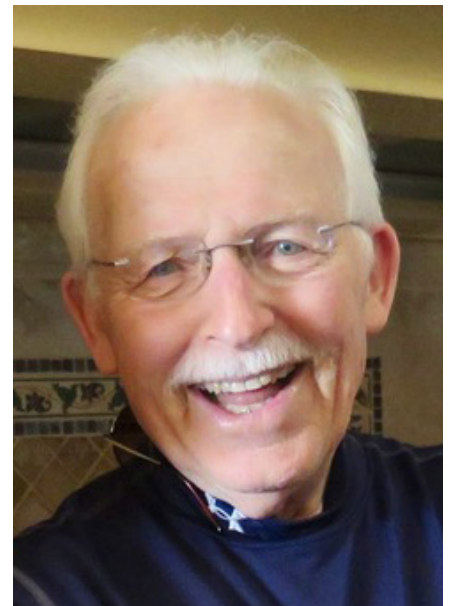
After all, creation is not a solitary act.

## YOU: A Unique Expression of God's Boundless Creativity

D.C. (Don) Collier

"Prone to leave the God I love:  
Take my heart, oh, take and seal it  
With Thy Spirit from above."

Those lines from the old hymn, *"Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing,"* speak of a universal human predisposition —wandering away from God. Since becoming a Christian rather late in life [mid-thirties], I've always felt like something of a misfit among my Christian brethren. Comedian George Gobel once quipped, "Did you ever get the feeling that the world was a black tuxedo and you were a pair of brown shoes?"



I often find myself surrounded by scrubbed, well-behaved, gleamy-teethed teetotalers whose worst "sin" was skipping out on an occasional Bible study. Most came to faith early in their lives and never deviated from their Christian commitment. I greatly admire such diligence.

After my conversion, I took to my new life of faith with great enthusiasm and experienced a mysterious joy that inexplicably bubbled up from somewhere deep within. But along the way, some of my old worldly habits returned with a vengeance and, a few ignominious falls into sin later, I began to question whether I was a Christian after all. I was experiencing that "proneness to wander," which I thought had permanently vanished. I was a Christian, but a "carnal" one...which brings me to God's infinite creativity.



## The curious mixing of the divine and the human

I used to think there was one perfect will of God for my life and, if I NEVER deviated from it, all would be well. But I did deviate from it—thousands of times—knowingly and unknowingly. So how does this work? God has his will, I have mine.

An article in *The Wall Street Journal* seemed a perfect illustration of the way God works with us—that is, respecting our free will but at the same time accomplishing his sovereign control over the universe. In the article, the great jazz pianist Herbie Hancock reflected on the genius of his mentor, Miles Davis:

“Mr. Hancock recounted one extraordinary moment in Stockholm in 1967, during a performance by the quintet. ‘This night was magical,’ he remembered. ‘We were communicating almost telepathically...and then I played the wrong chord. It was so, so wrong. In an instant, time stood still, and I felt totally shattered. Miles took a breath. And then he played this phrase that made my chord right. It didn’t seem possible. I still don’t know how he did it. But Miles hadn’t heard it as a wrong chord—he took it as an unexpected chord. He didn’t judge what I played...he turned poison into medicine.’”

## Your invitation to BE a miracle

Sometimes, in order for us to develop our own creativity, we need to allow God to continue his in us. We are reminded of a verse in scripture that those who belong to God are drawn up into a similar transformational ecosystem, where everything related to their lives is given eternal meaning and purpose:

*“He knows us far better than we know ourselves and keeps us present before God. That’s why we can be so sure that every detail in our lives of love for God is worked into something good. God knew what he was doing from the very beginning. He decided from the outset to shape the lives of those who love him along the same lines as the life of his Son. The Son stands first in the line of humanity he restored. We see the original and intended shape of our lives there in him. After God made that decision of what his children should be like, he followed it up by calling people by name. After he called them by name, he set them on a solid basis with himself. And then, after getting them established, he stayed with them to the end, gloriously completing what he had begun.”* (Romans 8:26-30 MSG)

## Hard to wrap your mind around

For most of us, truth be known, the notion of our lives being a thing of beauty is too much of a stretch. In my work at the Santa Barbara Rescue Mission’s addiction recovery program, I constantly encounter men who have made a lifetime of horrible decisions leading to devastating consequences. They are often discouraged and unable to see a way out. They ask how God can possibly fix their mess. That’s where God’s boundless creativity comes in...IF we’ll let him.

*“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? **Come to me.** Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”* (Matthew 11:25-30 MSG)

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To read more from D.C. Collier, check out his weekly column entitled, “Faith In Deed” in *Noozhawk*, or read his articles are at [https://www.noozhawk.com/dc\\_collier](https://www.noozhawk.com/dc_collier).



## Try Alpha. Explore. Jim and Della Peterson

What is Alpha? Sounds like a new super food! Explore what? A new meditation therapy group? Alpha is good for the soul, and you can experience a positive outcome of making new friends... But no, Alpha is neither a new food group or a New Age trendy group. Alpha is a

curriculum that has been used internationally within multi-denominational settings since the mid 1980s. Alpha's curriculum is about the Christian life and is geared for people who want to explore Christianity. Alpha has a series of 15 sessions exploring the Christian faith in a relaxed and informal environment. Each talk looks at a different question around faith and is designed to inspire conversation. Alpha typically runs over ten weeks, with a weekend away.

Over the last 16 years Jim and I have led Alpha in our home. We have been so encouraged by how the Lord has touched people and has brought them into a living relationship with Himself. I wanted to share a few personal stories from people in our church who have participated in Alpha.

### Pete Ehlen

"I got involved with Alpha after going to church for about a year or so. It was a time in my life when I was in need of answers and direction. The atmosphere at Alpha was supportive and not demanding. There was a lot to learn, so I took the course more than once. Having others in the group who were looking for answers was helpful. We found a place where we could put ourselves out there and not be judged. It was very enlightening."

### Jill and Richard Mosher

"When we were searching to find a place to learn what being a Christian was all about, we were fortunate to find Jim and Della Peterson who were doing an Alpha group in their home. We had been to various churches, but felt overwhelmed, confused and uncomfortable. Our introduction to Jesus using Alpha was amazing. We would meet with others for a home cooked dinner and watch a DVD, which was followed by a very safe and open discussion about Jesus—who he was and all he did. All questions were encouraged. We know that meeting our friends, Jim and Della, wasn't an "accident". Under their direction, we learned about Jesus and his love. Having him in our hearts has enriched our lives then and now. I remember when searching for a church to belong to, we complained to our daughter that we weren't finding one. Her response was, 'Then you haven't found the right one. Keep searching.' This is why we say finding Jim and Della and Alpha was not an accident."

Santa Barbara Community Church currently offers Alpha on Sundays at 6pm in the Upper Room. With 16 leaders and about 30 people attending, one will not be alone in "trying Alpha" and exploring the Christian life together. Come join us! Contact Lisa King to sign up at [king.lisamarie@gmail.com](mailto:king.lisamarie@gmail.com).

## Did You Know...

! ...that Karen Williams hit the big time in New York City over the holidays, performing as a union hand bell ringer in the Rockettes Christmas Spectacular at Radio City Music Hall?

! ...that Amanda Kennedy is a licensed commercial drone pilot?

! ...that the Edgar/Yager homegroup enjoyed a festive Christmas dinner together including Ghost Chili Cheesecake and Tuna Fish Peanut Butter Cheesecake for dessert?

! ...that Gui and Fe Peres (from Brazil) became American citizens on October 8th?

! ...that Mario Cobian (from Mexico) became an American citizen on August 22nd?

! ...that Joanne Herdrich was an aerobics instructor at the very first LA Fitness Center in the 80s?

! ...that Pam Nguyen is a huge Cubs fanatic? She listens to every Cubs game including all their spring training games. And she cried when they won the World Series.

! ...that Kim Grant had Sean King in her Sunday School class when he was a boy growing up in our church and now he has her daughter, Molly, in his English class at San Marcos High School?



## Demystifying Membership

Benji Bruneel

One of the great joys of my role is to have the so-called “Membership Interview” with those who have recently participated in a Foundations lunch. As you have likely heard any time we have announced Foundations, that lunch gathering is part of the “pathway to membership” at SBCC. After attending one of those lunches and submitting the application, the next step is the “Membership Interview,” which doesn’t mean what you probably imagine it means.

Most often, when I begin a “Membership Interview,” the person I’m sitting across from or on the phone with asks me, “So, what questions do you have for me?” I usually laugh and say that the purpose of this conversation is the exact opposite: to allow those applying for membership to ask any lingering questions they may have for me. This approach has led to fruitful discussion of topics as wide-ranging as baptism, shared leadership in the church, homegroup participation, and much more. This approach allows people considering becoming members of SBCC to articulate any questions that have come up as they learned about the history of the church, SBCC’s approach to ministry, and the specifics of the membership covenant.

The membership covenant itself is a new and helpful addition to our membership process. We have often claimed that membership in a church is unlike membership at a country club or Costco...and have sometimes left the impression that the church has even less specific expectations than those other places! But, we often refer to the church as a family and being part of a family comes with both privileges and responsibilities. To that end, the membership covenant seeks to spell out what members can gladly expect from church leadership and from other members while also stating what expectations will, in turn, be placed on new members. These expectations are not burdensome, but the kind of joyful practices that help create and foster unity in our church family! The expectations of the membership covenant are listed here:

- I will pursue God in my daily life through practices such as Bible reading, prayer, and fellowship.
- I will submit to the authority of God’s Word and seek, by God’s grace, to live a life that pleases him.
- I will make weekly corporate worship a priority.
- I will participate in a small group gathering where I can practice the “one anothers” of the Christian life.
- I will gladly give of my time, talents, and financial resources for the expansion of God’s kingdom.
- I will find a place to use my gifts to love and serve in the name of Christ.
- I will seek the unity of the church for the sake of the gospel.
- I will pray for my church family and its leaders regularly.

By assenting to these expectations—while also learning of the commitments one can rightly expect from other members of the church family—each person who signs the membership covenant is agreeing to live out church life in a certain way.

### Welcome To Our Newest Members

DEJA ALLEN

MITCHELL AND ALI BOGATZ

BENJAMIN AND FELICITY DONALD

STAN AND JUDY GAEDE

DIANE LEMONS

MILES AND SARAH LUDER

CALEB AND ERIN NERSTAD

CODY AND TOMI UNDERWOOD



At SB Community, we have always expected those who call Santa Barbara Community Church their church to be committed to the body, to every-member ministry, and to mutual submission and unity. Together, we have the joy of celebrating when people decide to commit fully to God’s family here. Are you interested in learning more about membership? Please contact Deana Gilman at [deana@sbcommunity.org](mailto:deana@sbcommunity.org) or (805) 687-7797.

## Staff Picks: Books & Podcasts

### Joanne Herdrich

*Fearfully and Wonderfully: The Marvel of Bearing God's Image* by Dr. Paul Brand & Philip Yancey. A surgeon and theologian collaborate to display God's intricate design of our bodies and draw comparisons to the church as the body of Christ. You'll find it fascinating and awe-inspiring.

### Caleb Bagdanov

*How We Read the Bible: 8 Ways to Engage the Bible With Our Students* by Matt Laidlaw. While this book is written to help adults engage the Bible with teenagers, I think it is a helpful resource for anyone looking for practical advice on reading and engaging the Bible.

### Donna Sugano

*Grace Based Parenting* by Tim Kimmel. This book profoundly affected me as a parent and shifted my perspective in how I approached everything from discipline to everyday conversations. It's the big picture book you need to help you have a framework for all the decisions that parenting brings.

### Karen McLean

*Suffering Is Never for Nothing* by Elisabeth Elliot. A beautiful perspective on the inexplicable link between suffering and love from a woman who faithfully endured significant suffering in her life and came to know and experience the love of Jesus in profound ways.

### Erin Patterson

*This Cultural Moment*—podcast ([thisculturalmoment.com](http://thisculturalmoment.com)). A collaboration between Bridgetown Church in Portland, OR and Red Church in Melbourne, Australia, this podcast focuses on understanding our post-Christian world and what it means to follow Jesus in that context. Begin with Season 1, Episode 1—“What Is Post-Christian Culture?” and go on from there.

### Mike Willbanks

*Adorning the Dark: Thoughts on Community, Calling, and the Mystery of Making* by Andrew Peterson. It's a wonderfully engaging autobiographical reflection on how this author/ songwriter discovered and lives out his vocation as a creative.

### Benji Bruneel

*The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*, by John Mark Comer. Comer's vision of the unhurried life that has space to consider God's calling to become more like Jesus and find true rest in our Savior is challenging, encouraging, and hopeful.

The picture of a covenant also helps to answer the, “Why?” of membership. When one enters into a covenant relationship with a group of other people they are willingly committing to that group of people and that people is willingly opening their fellowship to include someone else. Along with that open invitation comes the two-directional expectations we already considered. Though the blessings of hanging around a church ought to be plentiful, church membership makes a different statement about the importance and value of this heightened covenant relationship. Anyone who has not actually made that covenant is communicating—perhaps unintentionally—that they either are unwilling to commit to bless or unwilling to commit to belong and submit to the covenant community in the ways expected of its members.

The language of membership is a key way that the authors of the New Testament talk about connection to the church. Because the church is a people and not a place, those who are part of the church become members of one another, like parts in a body. (See, for example, Paul's inviting language about members belonging to one another in Romans 12:4-5 or 1 Corinthians 12:12-31.) In the body, the members belong and function together in ways that build up individual members and the body as a whole.

Now, I know that many reading this article have been around SBCC for a long time and may even believe that they are already officially members. Sometimes, that is the case; other times, it's not. If you're uncertain of your membership status, you can log in to Community Connect to see. Or, you can call the church office to ask. If you discover that you're not a member and have believed that you are, let's talk! Your pastors and Elders would love to help get you to the next step in finalizing your membership.

Or, maybe you've hung around for long enough to think of the process of official membership as unnecessary in your case. If that's you, the rest of the members of this body would love for you to join us in this covenant relationship in which we willingly submit to, serve, and encourage one another toward greater faithfulness to Jesus.

Perhaps you are newer to SBCC and have yet to participate in a Foundations lunch. If that's the case, we would love to see you at the next one! Come join others in a fun environment for learning and exploring church life together. If, after learning about this group of believers called SBCC, you want to throw in your lot with us, we would love to have you as a part of the family. And, who knows, I may even be the one to have the privilege of participating in your “Membership Interview,” so get your questions ready!



# MINISTRY

## Community Connect

Community Connect is SB Community's online two-way communication vehicle for our church family! It is an internal contact and photo directory, a group communication tool, a place to register for events, and more! Parents can see the groups in which their children are placed (though minors cannot be seen in the system by anyone but their families), a church-wide calendar can be viewed, and giving history can be looked at. You can even make a gift online via Community Connect. We hope this "Getting Started" instruction sheet helps you to connect!



### GET STARTED...

If you have never used Community Connect, SBCC's online community and information tool, start by requesting a login at <https://sbcommunity.ccbchurch.com/goto/login>.

#### UPDATE YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION

**Under Your Name, Click EDIT PROFILE>BASIC**

Edit your phone number, email address and other basic information. Edit it once and every group you belong to will have your current information.

#### UPLOAD YOUR PHOTO

**Under Your Name, Click EDIT PROFILE>BASIC**

Though your "family photo" is set by us, you can upload your favorite personal photo. Please include a photo of YOU, not your dog or your car. With over 2000 people in Community Connect, we like to put a face with a name.

#### UPDATE YOUR PRIVACY SETTINGS

**Under Your Name, Click PRIVACY SETTINGS**

Your privacy is important and will be treated with care. It's easy to select the information you want (and don't want) to share with others in Community Connect. For more information about privacy download information from the Welcome page in Community Connect.

#### SET UP YOUR FAMILY PROFILE

**Under Your Name, Click EDIT FAMILY PROFILE**

Though you can fill in as much information as requested, the most important items are your FAMILY LAST NAME, your EMAIL address, and your CONTACT PHONE which should be your cell phone. Make sure your mobile carrier chosen in your communications settings.

#### SELECT YOUR COMMUNICATION PREFERENCES

**Under Your Name, COMMUNICATIONS SETTINGS**

You have the option of choosing how people in your group(s) communicate with you. Choose to receive text messages, a weekly summary of group activity and emails from other members in your groups. And while you are there, be sure to enter a cell number and your mobile carrier so that you can receive text messages about things that come up.

#### SET UP ONLINE GIVING

**Click GIVE**

In addition to mailing in or bringing gifts to church, SBCC accepts online contributions and payments for things such as camp, retreats, conferences, etc. You can make a one-time contribution, or you can set up recurring gifts on a schedule. Click GIVE from the sidebar menu or the icon on the homepage of Community Connect. You can also visit <http://sbcommunity.org/about/giving/> for more information about giving to SBCC or download our Church App for 30-second gift-giving.

#### CONNECT!

**GROUP Memberships are Listed on your welcome page**

You can easily communicate with your group leaders and fellow group members through each group listing on the welcome page. Use the messages tab to send off an email to one or all of your group members.



## UPCOMING EVENTS

Alpha @ 6pm	Sundays
Wednesday Prayer @ 6:45am or Noon	Wednesdays
Tennebrae	Apr 10
Easter	Apr 12
Annual Church Retreat	Apr 17
Secret Church	Apr 24

VISIT [WWW.SBCOMMUNITY.ORG](http://WWW.SBCOMMUNITY.ORG) FOR DETAILS

## Ministry Commitments

### Our Giving In January

2020 Monthly Giving Commitment...	\$236,269
Giving Commitment through January '20...	\$236,269
Received in January '20...	\$260,126
Total Received in 2020...	\$260,126
Total 2020 Annual Commitment...	\$2,835,236

## How to Give to SB Community Church

There are a number of ways to give financially to our church:

- Giving Boxes are available in the church entryway for checks and cash.
- Mail checks to SBCC at 1002 Cieneguitas Rd, SB 93110.
- SBCC's app can be downloaded to a smart device featuring a simple "Give" button.
- Text "sbcommunity" to 77977 to easily start the process for e-giving. Once set up, giving (or paying fees) takes just 3 seconds!
- The "Give" tab at [www.sbcommunity.com/give/](http://www.sbcommunity.com/give/) has a giving button and more info.
- Recurring gifts can be set up through our website or through your bank.

Questions? See [sbcommunity.org/give](http://sbcommunity.org/give) or email Kathy Roberts, [kathy@sbcommunity.org](mailto:kathy@sbcommunity.org).

## MORE ABOUT SANTA BARBARA COMMUNITY CHURCH

Download our **church app**, login to **Community Connect**, or visit [www.sbcommunity.org](http://www.sbcommunity.org) for information about what we believe, church life, missions, service times, ministries within our church body, sermons, small groups, classified listings, staff and elder contact details, events, and more.

**Contact SB Community** at (805) 687-7797 (Office) or 1002 Cieneguitas Road, Santa Barbara, CA 93110  
**Sunday service times** are at 8:45am, 11am and 4pm.

SANTA BARBARA  
COMMUNITY  
CHURCH