



The Weekly Chalice

November 21st 2024

Sumner First Christian Church | 432 Wood Ave, Sumner, WA | sumnerfcc.org

Kate Bowler was 35 when she was diagnosed with stage four colon cancer. She was at the pinnacle of her career as professor of the history of Christianity at Duke Divinity school. She was married and had a precious baby boy. Her diagnosis was grim, with only a 14% survival rate for those with the type of cancer she had. Her type of cancer was also rare, in that it was a subset within typology that could potentially respond to trial immunotherapy. Bowler explains that it was her connection with others that gained her access and the means to afford entering the trial treatment. She has responded well and nine years after her initial diagnosis, receives scans every six months to monitor for recurrence.

I have been so drawn to Bowler's story and work. She writes with a vulnerability and authenticity that we are taught to deny and hide. In my work as a minister and a chaplain I have seen the hard truth about our soft flesh and now, as a middle-aged human being, am understanding my own mortality. We are enculturated to deny this part of our existence, to always strive for happy and to push down any hint of melancholy or existential angst. I think this too is why I am drawn to Bowler's work--she gives permission and language to talk about this part of human life and she approaches it from a theological viewpoint I really resonate with.

In a 2022 interview with Maya Shankar, Bowler describes one of her research specialties as a historian of Christianity--the prosperity gospel. Bowler explains

that the prosperity gospel, sets up beliefs about the power of the mind to change your life. That if you have the right kind of positive words and the right kind of mental attitude (and as a budding Cognitive Behavioral Therapist, this gives me pause), that you can bring health and wealth and overall happiness, like during your life here on earth. And that's always the kind of like caveat because Christianity typically has a kind of asterisks beside is that says, yes, God is good. Yes. God is loving. Yes, God wants wholeness and love for you. but you may not get to see all of your hopes come to fruition, that all the good things then get kind of deferred to an afterlife. But the prosperity gospel has what we call like an over realized sense that all things will happen now for us who believe. So, it's a really incredibly confident set of beliefs that says that you don't need to suffer. You don't even need to be lucky because there will always be a way for you to figure out how to land on your feet."

And the problem is that good, faithful people won't always land on their feet. There are moments where things will not work out in a way that we feel "we deserve" when we are good, just, faithfully observant people.

And this leads me to crux of my personal theology--that God is love...that, as Jesus taught his disciples, others will know we are followers of Christ and that we love God by how we love. (Continued)...

Bowler says, "I think the problem with the Everything Happens for a Reason is that hyper synthetic coherence that it demands that everything have. On the other hand, I do believe in a big story about love, in which in our worst moments, we are promised the love of one another, that we can show up and be the person that brings socks and dumb presents.

I have such an intense belief now that love is one of the only guarantees in the awful times...because on the other side of hyper causality is not nihilism or despair, its just more empathy for one another.

If we really know that there is not a fail-safe-rescue plan for everybody's pain, I think we would sure as hell show up a little faster for one another and believe in systems and good policies that prevent so much of human suffering in the first place.

We have outsourced solutions to each other's pain when we forgot that we belonged to each other. If we pour into each other the knowledge that you will never be really truly alone, that there is love waiting for you, I don't think we'll need quite so many reasons anymore."

"Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God..." Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love." 1 John 4: 7-21

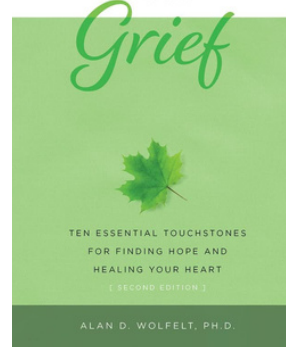
-Rochelle+



The Weary World Rejoices

Advent, the four Sundays leading up to Christmas, begins on Sunday, December 1st. This year we will be exploring the theme of *The Weary World Rejoices* from Kate Bowler. If you would like to follow along, there is an [individual guide available online](#). We will print a few copies as well for those who need print editions. We hope you will join us as we search for joy even in the midst of weariness and fatigue.

UNDERSTANDING
YOUR



Our next grant gatherings: Pausing for Grief During the Holidays

The next in our NBA-funded series of gatherings will take place in December and will center around grief and the holidays. Many losses and life transitions can induce grief.

Our gatherings will focus on bereavement caused by the death of a loved one.

"Grief waits on welcome, not on time," writes Dr. Alan D. Wolfelt in his book *Understanding Your Grief: Ten Essential Touchstones for Finding Hope and Healing Your Heart*. This book will be our guide as we seek to create a safe and comfortable environment in which to explore and share. **All materials and catered meals will be provided. Groups will be limited to around 20 people. [Register now](#) to save your spot.**

**Thursdays, December 12th & 19th
5:30-7:30 pm**

**Fridays, December 13th & 20th
12:00-2:00 pm**

**CHILDREN
WORSHIP &
WONDER**

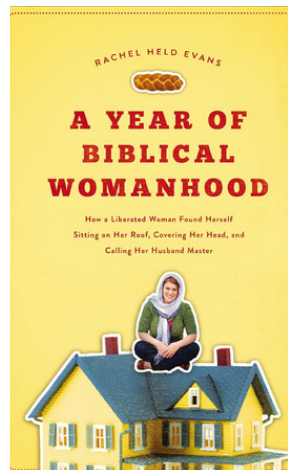
Join us for Children
Worship and Wonder,
Sunday, December 1st @
9:00 a.m. All children are
welcome!



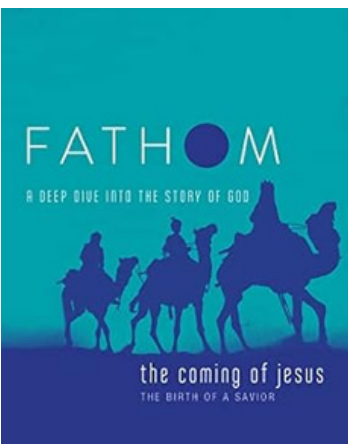
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 12:00 pm AA	2 12:00 pm AA
3	4	5	6	7	8	9 9:00 am – 12:00 pm SCP Clean Day 12:00 pm AA 10:00 am – 12:00 pm Gwinwood Annual Meeting @ Retreat Center (Lacey)
All Saints Sunday 9:00 am Children's Worship & Wonder 10:30 Worship Service Elder Meeting after Service	12:00 pm AA	10:30 am Prayer Group 12:00 pm AA 6:30 pm AA	10:30 am Al Anon 12:30 pm AA	Open Art: 2:00-3:30 pm 5:30-7:00 pm 12:00 pm AA 7:00 pm GA	12:00 pm AA	
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
9:00 am Fathom Youth 10:30 Worship Service Board Meeting after Service	Veterans Day 12:00 pm AA 6:30 pm SCP Board Meeting	10:30 am Prayer Group 12:00 pm AA 6:30 pm AA	10:30 am Al Anon 12:30 pm AA	12:00 pm AA 7:00 pm GA	12:00 pm AA	12:00 pm AA
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
10:30 Worship Service	12:00 pm AA	10:30 am Prayer Group 12:00 pm AA 6:30 pm AA	10:30 am Al Anon 12:30 pm AA 6:30 pm Book Club via Zoom	Open Art: 2:00-3:30 pm 5:30-7:00 pm 12:00 pm AA 7:00 pm GA	12:00 pm AA	12:00 pm AA
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
10:30 Worship Service	12:00 pm AA	10:30 am Prayer Group 12:00 pm AA 6:30 pm AA	10:30 am Al Anon 12:30 pm AA	Thanksgiving 12:00 pm AA 7:00 pm GA	12:00 pm AA	12:00 pm AA



Our next **youth/young adult Bible Study** will be **Sunday, December 15th @ 9:00 a.m.** We are moving into the prophetic words about the coming of Christ. This will prepare us for the season of Advent & Christmas. If you have questions, please contact Pastor Rochelle (Pastor@summerfcc.org).



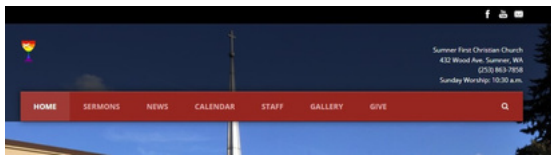
Join us for our next *Year of Biblical Womanhood* gathering **Wednesday, December 18th @ 6:00 p.m. on Zoom.** We will be reading the chapter for October: Gentleness. Message Pastor Rochelle for a zoom invite: Pastor@summerfcc.org





We now have an online calendar on the church website!

At the top of the page, click on Calendar and choose either Summer FCC Events or Non-FCC Events. Once you open the calendar, you can easily change by week or month view, change months and you can also download it to your calendar by clicking "Add to Google Calendar" on the bottom left. If you have any questions, please contact Bev in the office on Tues, Wed or Thurs 9 am-1 pm. 253-863-7858 or office@sumnerfcc.org. Special thanks to Robin C. with helping set this up!



NEWS | EVENTS | CALENDAR | NON-SFCC GROUPS



One of our teachers, Haley I., works with 5th graders at a local elementary school. Many of the children are in need of basic clothing items and we will be collecting these through the holiday season: these would include everyday clothing items as well as warmer winter items. Children this age are typically a M-L size (10-12 for girls), but remember there will be children at either end of that average as well. Holiday sales will be coming soon and it might be a great opportunity to pick up a few items. We will be collecting these through Sunday, December 15th. Thank you in advance for your help!

Thank you to everyone who brought your loose change--we raised **\$133.23** for our Camp, Gwinwood. The jar is out and we'll be collecting for the Sumner Food Bank.



The Thanksgiving Offering benefits the Colleges, Universities, Seminaries, and Divinity Houses affiliated with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Higher education has been an important focus for Disciples since the very beginning of the movement. Throughout our history, Disciples have founded institutions of higher learning to educate students and form leaders to make a difference in the world. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is still committed to higher education. Your gift to the Thanksgiving Offering helps support the education of thousands of students at our **fifteen colleges and universities** as well as our **seven seminaries and divinity houses**.