

the. Clarion

Truth matters — bethelclarion.com

Looking back, *stepping forward*

Finding comfort and success playing Bethel football and starting a shoe-selling business, Bronson Pe'a dreams of living a life far from the tragedy, violence and homelessness that marked his childhood.

Page 13

A painful and important journey: Efforts toward racial reconciliation

As BIPOC students experience the daily effects of systemic racism and injustice, Bethel University works toward a more diverse, equitable and inclusive environment.

Page 23



Contents



Photo submitted by Sandi Holmgren

05

A whole lot of sparkle

BUILD program alumna Mikayla Holmgren makes history as the first woman with Down syndrome to compete in a Miss USA state pageant.

09

Bethel prepares a safe return to spring sports

Bethel spring sports are back in action with intense COVID-19-related protocols after a disappointing cancellation in 2020.

11

'Heaven is other people'

Bethel launched a nationwide search March 1 to find a replacement for the Vice President of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion position formerly held by Ruben Rivera.

17

Afriad of needles

Bethel community members demonstrate the ideological divide surrounding the COVID-19 vaccine and share their decisions and reasoning regarding the shot.

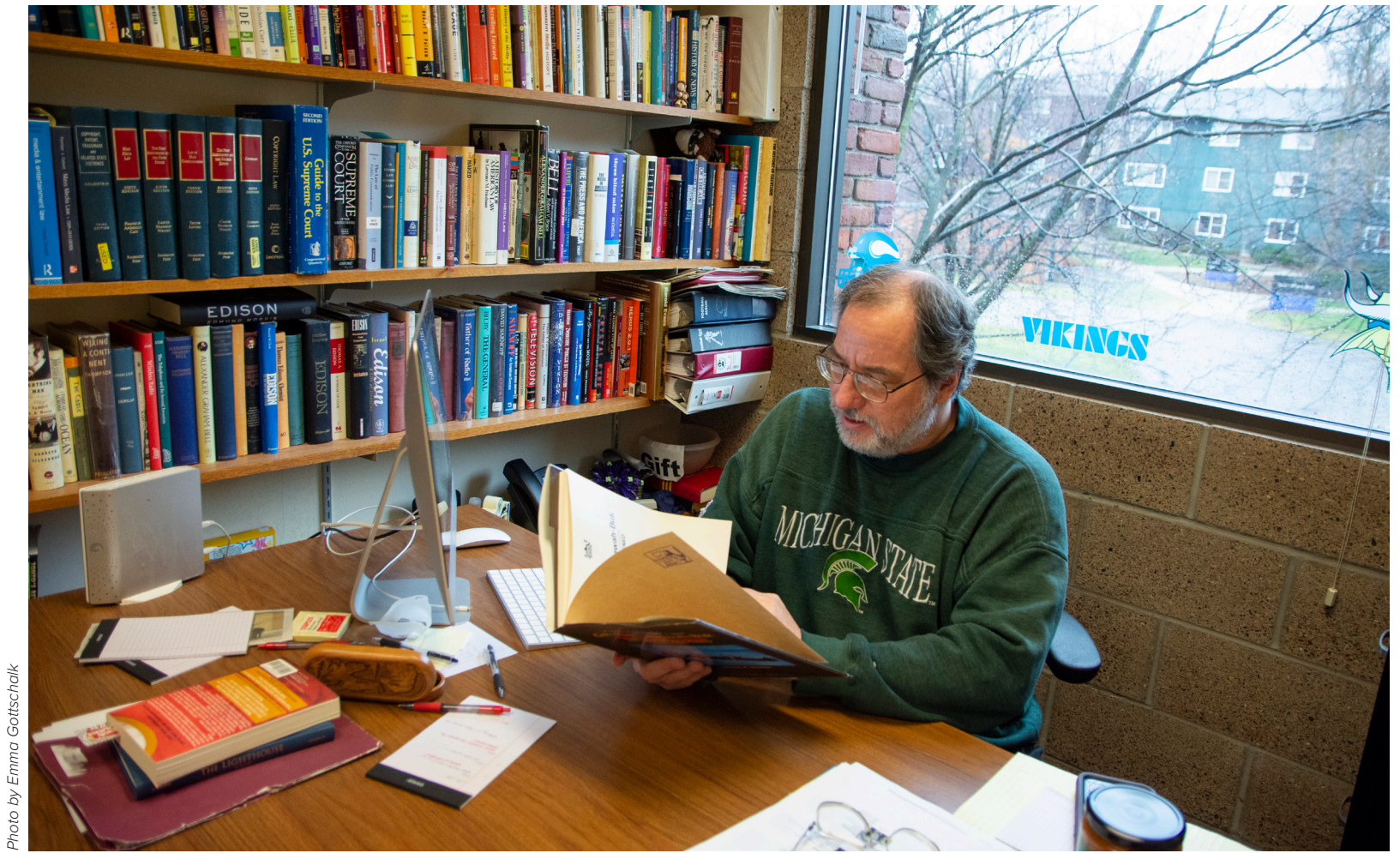


Photo by Emma Gottschalk

13

On the cover: Looking back, stepping forward

Finding comfort and success playing Bethel football and starting a shoe-selling business, Bronson Pe'a dreams of living a life far from the tragedy, violence and homelessness that marked his childhood.



Photo by Emma Gottschalk

19

Often forgotten, yet still fighting

Although often emphasized as a part of America's past, Indigenous Americans at Bethel are working towards increasing awareness and representation of their cultures.

27

Thank you, Oregon, for killing me

How four months living in the woods broke me, created me and changed my life for real.

Opinion by Zachariah Walker

From the editor

Finding the little pockets of hope

During lockdown last spring, I drove the same route every night, two miles north from my house along Sunset Avenue to St. Joseph's, the brown brick chapel on Elm Street. It's near the gravel path I used to jog with my middle school track team, and it's where my driver's ed instructor taught me how to parallel park six years ago.

In an attempt to escape the four walls of my childhood bedroom, I'd somewhat suspiciously park under the willow tree and watch the church's priest walk slow loops around the building under a swollen orange sun. While I watched the world deteriorate from my driver's seat, I made guesses at which of the million problems he could be praying about that night.

As the hotter months followed, a fiery carousel of catastrophic news headlines spun so ferociously I began to wake up and wonder what super-sized serving of violence or hatred my tiny screen would shove down my throat that day.

Now, 10 months after George Floyd's death, the spinning hasn't stopped – on March 16, eight people, the majority of them women of Asian descent, were fatally shot in the Atlanta area amid a spike in hate, discrimination and violence against Asian Americans during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Like many, I've been anxious to hear what tangible steps Bethel is taking to address its own issues of racial injustice within the community. In this issue, you'll hear about some of those plans as well as meet people in the Bethel community who, despite all odds, have voyaged through catastrophe.

You'll learn about two new racial reconciliation-focused initiatives at Bethel: Take Action, a faculty-led group focused on anti-racism efforts, and Micah 6:8, a university-wide cultural inclusivity training initiative for staff, graduate students and seminary students.

You'll hear from Dr. Ruben Rivera, former Vice President of Diversity, Equity and

“As the hotter months followed, a fiery carousel of catastrophic news headlines spun so ferociously I began to wake up and wonder what super-sized serving of violence or hatred my tiny screen would shove down my throat that day.”

Inclusion, about how his upbringing as a Latino person of color in Los Angeles led him to become the mentor he never had for Bethel students with similar struggles.

You'll meet Bronson Pe'a, a sophomore whose childhood in San Diego was scarred by homelessness and gun violence but who forged a life for himself through starting his



Emma Harville

Managing Editor

emma-harville@bethel.edu

own shoe business and being recruited to play football at Bethel.

And, in addition to others, you'll meet BUILD alumna Mikayla Holmgren, the first person with Down syndrome to compete in the Miss Minnesota USA pageant and who is also working toward becoming the first to be featured in the Sports Illustrated swimsuit issue.

Each story in this month's issue strikes me with the resilience and grit of those in our community. Amid isolation and doomsday

headlines, these individuals were able to shrug off the labels slapped on them, stitch their open wounds and find little pockets of hope that transformed their lives.

Although I haven't been back to St. Joseph's in several months, I still treasure those raw, rare moments of stillness its parking lot gave me when the world's snark and cynicism threatened to choke me like a vine. I can now be certain there is still good because I've seen it – and in reading these stories, I hope you get to see it too. **C**

Contributors

Zachariah Walker - Editor in Chief
Emma Harville - Managing Editor
Jhenna Becker - Copy Editor
Emma Gottschalk - Visuals Editor
Thanh Nguyen - Assistant Visuals Editor
Rachel Blood - News Editor
Soraya Keiser - News Reporter
Emma Eidsvoog - Lifestyle Editor
Makenzi Johnson - Lifestyle Reporter
Emily Rossing - Sports Editor
Nate Eisenmann - Sports Reporter
Alexa Vos - Section Designer
Bryson Rosell - Section Designer
Vanna Contreras - Staff Photographer
C.J. Washington - Staff Photographer
Joe Werdan - Columnist
Caden Christiansen - Contributing Writer
Molly Wilson - Contributing Reporter
Davis McElmurry - Contributing Designer
Aimee Kuiper - Contributing Illustrator
Alice Hong - Contributing Reporter

Have a response to a story in this issue?

Email Editor in Chief Zachariah Walker at zach-walker@bethel.edu with questions, thoughts or concerns or drop by The Clarion Newsroom during community time Tuesdays and Thursdays to speak with a Clarion staff member.

Want to write for The Clarion?

Email our Managing Editor Emma Harville at emma-harville@bethel.edu and she'll get you connected.

See all stories online at bethelclarion.com, or follow us on social media:



A woman with long blonde hair, wearing a blue lace gown with a long train, stands on a stage. She is waving her right hand. The background is a blue, shimmering curtain.

A whole lot of sparkle

BUILD program alumna Mikayla Holmgren makes history as the first woman with Down syndrome to compete in a Miss USA state pageant.

Mikayla Holmgren competes in a royal blue gown on the stage of the 2017 Miss Minnesota pageant where she received "The Spirit of Miss USA" award. | Photo submitted by Sandi Holmgren

Mikayla Holmgren, 2018 Bethel BUILD Program alumna, has her hands full with modeling, dancing, competing in pageants and most recently, competing for the Sports Illustrated swimsuit edition cover. Holmgren says she does not put limits on herself and says she is a strong woman with 'a little Down syndrome on the side.' | Photo by Vanna Contreras



By Makenzi Johnson

Mikayla Holmgren, Bethel alumna, springs up from her chair with a gleeful laugh to grab two cases from her closet that hold her pageant crowns. As she pulls the many tiaras from the boxes, light filters through the diamonds, creating patterns all across her bedroom walls. Still, Holmgren's face shines brighter than these diamonds. The chance to show her crowns is a chance to showcase just how hard she's worked over the past few years.

As a 26-year-old woman with Down syndrome, Holmgren has not let anything hold her back from the things she loves.

"I have Down syndrome, but I'm a dancer, I'm a public speaker [and] I'm a college graduate," Holmgren said.

Holmgren graduated from Bethel's BUILD program in 2018, and is one of the many members of her family to attend Bethel. At Bethel, she mentored other students, attended Chapel, was a part of the Pray First team and loved to attend late nights in the DC with her friends. The two years spent at Bethel helped to give her the push she needed to get involved in the world of pageants after a friend from school brought up the idea of pageants to her.

In 2015, Holmgren received a packet in the mail about a pageant for women with special needs, the Minnesota Junior Miss Amazing pageant. She entered the pageant looking forward to learning something

new and left with a newfound passion for the world of pageants. In 2017, Holmgren became the first woman with Down syndrome to compete at Miss Minnesota USA. She later won two awards for being the first woman in this pageant, the Miss Minnesota USA Spirit Award and the Director's Award. Holmgren is planning on running again in this summer's Miss Minnesota USA Pageant. She already has her gown chosen and hung on her clothing rack, a long white and nude gown with sequins and sparkles decorating it - the more sparkles the better.

"It fit me like a glove," Holmgren said about her pageant gown, "I put it on and was like, 'oh yeah, that's the one.'"

Participating in pageants is more than just walking across a stage with a smile, it's spending months preparing - interviews, picking out a gown, finding the right hair and makeup, and practicing walking in high heels. Her reason for doing it all is simple, she gets to make a difference by doing something she is passionate about.

"It's something fun that I really love," Holmgren said.

Being able to participate in the various pageants is a joy to Holmgren, she gets to compete in them with her friends and gain experience to even further propel her into her career.

"All my friends have special needs and that brings the awareness and it inspires others. It makes people feel happy and feel more joy," Holmgren said.

Bringing awareness for special needs, especially in women, is a big focus for Holmgren. Her theme for her platform and campaign being, "dreaming big without limits." The phrase started with just "dreaming big," but she added on the latter half because she feels it is important for people to realize that having a disability should not put limitations on what she does.

"A lot of times those with special needs have limits and they're not allowed to go and get their dreams ... so that's kind of how it came up," Sandi Holmgren, Mikayla's mom, said.

Her parents, Sandi and Craig Holmgren, knew from the moment Mikayla was born that they weren't going to let Down syndrome force them to shelter or protect her from exploring or finding new opportunities.

"We don't want to label her, I look past her disability. If she was a typical 22, 23, 24, whatever year old, would we put limits on what she would do? Because she's an adult and she'd make her own decisions... we want her to be looked at as Mikayla and not somebody with Down syndrome," Sandi said.

Her campaign has led her to even more opportunities than pageant competitions. Along with pageantry, Holmgren was asked by some big name companies, Sephora Beauty, Sigma Beauty and the local Rosedale Center shopping mall, to do modeling campaigns for their brands.

"I mean, I just love to model," Holmgren said.

She was able to take her love for both pageants and modeling to the next level by hosting fashion shows in order to raise money for her campaign and Best Buddies, an organization that Holmgren has been a

part of for several years now that focuses on creating opportunities for people with disabilities. The fashion shows, occurring over the past two years, have been made possible through the help of local business.

Stillwater, where the event takes place, boutiques lend clothing to the models, give participants goody bags and special VIP treats at the event. Holmgren was also able to incorporate her love of dancing - which she has been doing since she was six years old - by ending the event with a solo number. This year, the fashion show was held virtually due to COVID-19.

Holmgren's love of pageantry and fashion has propelled her into her latest endeavor, which involves a much bigger stage than she's used to. Holmgren is currently competing to be the first woman with Down Syndrome to appear in the Sports Illustrated Swimsuit edition.

Deciding to submit her casting tape for the SI Swim Search was something completely different and new for Holmgren and her family to be a part of. It was an opportunity that she just couldn't pass up.

"It's there, it's right in front of me and I just want to do it... I wanna try something new," Holmgren said.

Instead of choosing a sparkly, royal blue gown, Holmgren chose a white and navy striped bikini. The process was different than preparing for a pageant, the preparation for this was practicing a script she read off for her audition tape sent to the Sports Illustrated team, working out, choosing the swimsuit and finding a hair and makeup team. It was a challenge, but one Holmgren was excited to learn about.

This experience is especially important for Holmgren because it gives her an even larger platform to spread her message of inclusivity and diversity for people with disabilities.

"It gives a good message... it makes a difference," Holmgren said. **C**

Mikayla Holmgren's pageant career

2015: Minnesota Miss Amazing - won Junior Miss Division

2015: Minnesota Miss Amazing - Nationals

2017: Miss Minnesota USA - won Director's Award and Spirit of Miss USA award

2018: Miss Minnesota USA - won Miss Congeniality award

2019: Minnesota Miss Amazing - won Miss Division

2019: Minnesota Miss Amazing - Nationals



One of Holmgren's many tiaras from various pageants she has competed in, the Miss Minnesota USA, Miss Amazing, etc. sits on a dresser in her room. Other memorabilia such as pictures of friends and family or Bethel nametags and merch lie atop the wood along with the pageant awards. | Photo by Vanna Contreras

Bethel prepares a safe return to spring sports

Bethel spring sports are back in action with intense COVID-19-related protocols after a disappointing cancellation in 2020.

By Caden Christiansen

As snow begins to clear off of Hargis Park and the Ona Orth Athletic Complex, Bethel University spring sports are back after a calendar year filled with frustration and disappointment for many athletes. The COVID-19 pandemic wiped out the 2020 season for spring sports athletes, but the familiar ping of metal bats, shoes digging into the track, and swish of tennis rackets brings excitement to campus.

Still, everything is not exactly the same as it was before last March. Bethel athletes will have to deal with several new protocols amidst the ongoing pandemic, not to mention only having some, if any, fans during competition. The Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIAC) has provided extensive guidelines for teams to follow and ensure the health and safety of players and coaches during the season. Because outdoor spring sports have a lower risk of COVID-19 spread, the MIAC has decided to follow the NCAA testing and masking guidelines, but has left the specificity of protocols and fan attendance up to the discretion of each individual university.

Bethel has announced they will welcome spectators to outdoor, on campus sporting events for baseball and softball games along with tennis matches. Each student athlete and coach will be allotted three tickets for fans, and softball and baseball will welcome 30 visiting spectators while tennis will welcome 20 visiting spectators.

“Each campus is a little different based on how they are handling COVID-19 from a campus wide standpoint,” said Bethel professor and director of athletic training services Justin Byers. “We have chosen to follow, as close as we possibly can, the NCAA recommendations and requirements and the CDC and Minnesota Department of Health guidelines.”

All MIAC schools are abiding by conference-wide guidelines that require masks to be worn during both practices and competition, along with team testing guidelines that require athletes to PCR test for COVID-19 every week.

How other MIAC schools supply these tests to athletes and whether they meet the testing guidelines or exceed them is up to the discretion of each university. Bethel has been fortunate to work with Hyvee Food Stores, which provides the university with free testing kits for all of its student athletes.

“We were really lucky to find out that relationship with Hyvee,” Byers said.

The relationship with the company began through a former Bethel student who works as an athletic trainer at another Twin Cities school and was able to give insight into the testing program Hyvee provides.

“We reached out to Hyvee to see if it was possible to have that testing with us, and we were lucky enough to be one of the last few schools to get into the free testing that Hyvee was doing,” Byers said.

The Hyvee testing program is run through federal grants on a monthly basis, and as long as they are receiving federal funding, Bethel athletes will be able to get tested throughout the spring sports season. Testing is conducted from 7:30 a.m. to 8:10 a.m. and is communicated to athletes on a weekly basis. The free testing has allowed Bethel athletes to test at least once a week, but how often each team must test is based on NCAA recommendations.

“None of the spring sports are listed as high risk due to the nature of competition,” Byers said.

In terms of physical distance during competition, spring sports do not pose as high of a risk for COVID-19 exposure because of the lack of direct contact between athletes. Tennis and golf are played in a naturally distanced manner while sports such as baseball, softball, and track have the ability to take preventative measures like physical distancing in dugouts or on the racetrack that slow the spread of COVID-19.

Spring sports also have the luxury of being outside, which mitigates the spread of the virus better than indoor sports can. With less athlete-to-athlete contact, Bethel spring sports are not required to test as extensively or often as winter sports were, but still are

testing for preventative and cautionary purposes.

“Basically 25 to 50 percent of the teams have to test every week as surveillance testing because the risk of them are so low,” Byers said.

Bethel baseball, softball and track teams have occupied the majority of the testing as they are listed as intermediate risk sports, requiring them to test at least once a week throughout the entirety of the season. And with a large number of athletes on each team, players and coaches are required to go through even more protocols when traveling to away games.

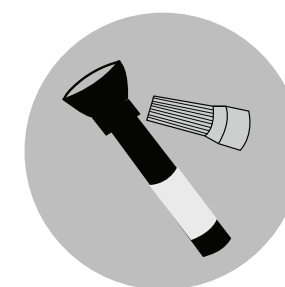
“For all of our traveling teams, we have to do symptom checks before they get on the bus to go,” Byers said. “We are doing temperature checks; we are doing pulse ox checks to make sure we are not missing any symptoms or the potential for positive tests.”

Trying to stay on top of the spread of COVID-19 is no easy task for the training staff when only testing athletes once or twice a week, but utilizing other measures such as checking body temperatures and blood oxygen levels via the “pulse ox” checks have proven effective in detecting COVID-19 when symptoms are not present.

“In this age bracket of 18-22 year olds, so few of them are going to exhibit symptoms even if they are positive for COVID-19, so things like temperature checks and pulse ox readings compared to their baseline readings can tell us whether or not they may be positive, even if they don't have symptoms,” Byers said.

These protocols, along with weekly testing, have allowed the Bethel training staff to closely monitor all the spring sport athletes and the spread of COVID-19. Extensive protocols during travel, such as consistent bus seating charts and smaller traveling rosters than years past, has allowed for more efficient contact tracing and helped minimize the risk of transmission. **C**

Bethel Athletics COVID Protocols



Covid testing twice a week



Using pulse oximeters to check for symptoms



Consistent bus seating chart for ease of contact tracing



Regular temperature checks



Smaller traveling rosters than years past



‘Heaven is other people’

Bethel launched a nationwide search March 1 to find a replacement for the Vice President of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion position formerly held by Ruben Rivera.

By Rachel Blood

Ruben Rivera grew up feeling invisible. As a Latino person of color in Los Angeles, he never saw anyone who looked like him represented in the most prominent circles of society. He didn't see himself in the public school curriculum, television, politics or even church. The only person in the media bearing his resemblance was a sidekick named Tonto on *The Lone Ranger*, whose Spanish name translated to “dummy.”

Later, as Vice President of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DE&I) at Bethel from 2014 to 2020, Rivera's goals were to increase diversity to honor the global reach of God's redemption, reflect the demographic complexity of the world and to make Bethel live up to its namesake as the “House of God.”

Rivera aimed to create an environment in which people of color are surrounded by people who look like them, a university culture reflected in the curriculum, social life and spiritual life of the school. While Rivera said that simply having diversity does not solve problems, creating the capacity for it to thrive makes all the difference.

Following high school, one of Rivera's friends, David, invited him to attend *La Casa de Mi Amigo*, a church in Whittier, California founded by Latino former gang members. The church had grown rapidly and done ministerial work with local youth, and there, Rivera was finally introduced to the idea that God loved him. For the first time, he felt that the Bible was talking to people like him, too.

Rivera aimed to be a peacemaker as a result of the violence and misunderstanding around which he grew up.

“I just wanted to be a mentor, because I never had one,” Rivera said. “I wanted to get an education that was biblically grounded.”

Rivera attended Vanguard University in Costa Mesa, California, a Christian liberal arts school where Rivera could count the students of color on one hand. Two or three of them were from his own church, and they would drive to class together.

“How come we're the only people of color around?” his friend Pete would ask. “Why are we always by ourselves?”

Rivera recalls that not a single academic mentor looked like him. Not in kindergarten, not in grade school, not as an undergraduate or even a PhD student.

“When I was in college I was told regularly that I was a rare bird: a Latinx person of color, among the top students in the school graduating *summa cum laude* with a degree in biblical studies,” Rivera said. “I was sure to be recruited by many churches who admitted that when it came to their diverse reach they were still in the ‘White Ages,’ to say nothing of many graduate schools. I noticed, however, a large gap between the ideals that many Christians preached and their understanding of the realities of the historically devalued.”

Today, Vanguard is made up of 50 to 60 percent students of color.

All around him, Rivera saw people defined by their political affiliations, gangs and races rather than religion. It was the leadership at his church and professors at his university who led him to understand Christianity.

“They loved the Lord and they really cared about me, and that kind of

woke me up,” Rivera said. “I realized, ‘Oh, being a Christian really can change your heart.’”

After graduating Vanguard with a bachelor's degree, Rivera attended Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary for his master's and Boston University for his doctorate before teaching at Bethel; coast to coast with various churches in between.

“The journey helped me to see how ingroup and culturally captive Christians and churches can be,” said Rivera.

Six years ago, former Bethel President Jay Barnes asked Rivera to move from his role as a history professor to the Vice President of DE&I. Initially, Rivera didn't want it. Two teaching assistants begged him not to take the position, saying that his work in the classroom was more impactful than anything administration could accomplish.

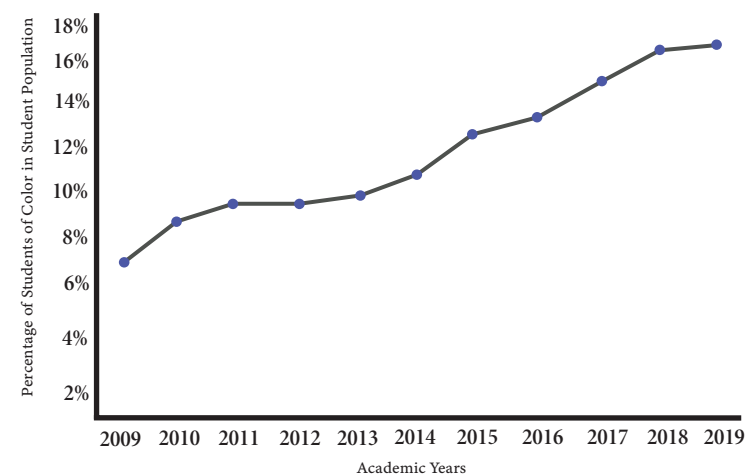
He ultimately decided to take the job – but only for a year while still teaching classes, allowing the administration to search for a permanent hire. But after eight months, Rivera realized God was calling him to the position.

Health issues forced Rivera into what he called an early retirement December 31, and Bethel Campus Pastor Laurel Bunker took over his role in addition to serving as Vice President of Christian Formation and Church Relations.

Rivera said a necessary operation and leave of absence, as well as a strong retirement package offered to his wife, Anita, contributed largely to this decision.

“Perhaps the biggest reason is that I have wanted to slow down and focus on my writing and spend more time with my family,” Rivera said.

Bunker now works with faculty and staff to address cultural responsiveness in the classroom, curriculum instruction and groups designed to facilitate conversations on anti-racism and peace-making. Bunker is also working on the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan that Rivera started prior to his retirement.



Graphic by Davis McElmurry



Rivera speaks with colleague Amy Poppinga before the 2018 commencement ceremony. Submitted by Ruben Rivera

“Caring well for our students is of primary concern to me,” said Bunker, who now spends additional time working with students of color and on issues that impact them.

While Bunker serves as Interim VP of DE&I, President Ross Allen and his Cabinet are engaged in a national search for a new employee to fill the position.

In an email announcing the launch of the search, Allen addressed Bethel's commitment to striving toward a future that is equitable, just and hopeful. He has been encouraged to see the university engaging in efforts like the Take Action group and Micah 6:8 training, two faculty and staff initiatives to seek racial reconciliation through dialogue.

According to Bunker, the national search for the next person to fill the position has only just begun. She hopes whoever fills the position is not only a strong academic, but is also personable and works well with students and staff alike. The position should be filled by a visionary, Bunker said, who can spur Bethel's growth forward in its ability to live out justice in a biblical sense and improve retention of staff, faculty and students of color.

“I recognize that I stand on the shoulders of people who have broken barriers and battled issues long before I have,” Bunker said. “Those people have mentored me and taught me to love others while not compromising my spiritual or cultural values. It has not always been easy; in fact, it has been painful and isolating at times.”

Part of Rivera's most lasting legacy is a poem titled “Heaven is Other People” on display in Bethel's Cultural Connection Center, a space for engaging in dialogue about diversity and providing education opportunities to strengthen multicultural relationships across campus.

“I was a young man who grew up inside his own head,” Rivera said. “I try to use poetry as a way of engaging in some of these really challenging issues that our society faces.”

Rivera read “Heaven is Other People” at one of the faculty meetings following George Floyd's death. Many people reached out to him asking for a copy after the meeting, saying that for the first time, they were recognizing that their Christianity was an in-group concept.

Rivera drew inspiration from a theatre line that read, “hell is other people.” Aside from its meaning in the context of the play, Rivera took it to mean that the worst thing that could happen in Hell is being stuck with people he didn't like. He took that concept and turned it on its head, claiming, “Heaven is other people, and you need to get ready for it.”

Rivera aims to get people to recognize that their own in-group Christianity and view of heaven is unremarkable. Heaven will not consist entirely of English-speakers, one culture or one color, he says.

“I just wanted to get people to start thinking a little bit differently about the values they claim that they hold,” Rivera said. “American Christianity is incredibly materialistic and sometimes unwilling to change.”

Over and over, Rivera has witnessed Christians withholding love, patience and understanding from those who are different from themselves.

“One significant problem is that sincere White Christian leaders in churches and schools assumed they would always be the gatekeepers,” he said. “They might open doors to diversity, but resistance arose when ‘diversity’ did not follow what they thought things should look like.”

Rivera acknowledges that people of color have suffered at Bethel. Unintended or not, he said, there has been prejudice at Bethel. Many people of color have come to Rivera saying, “I can't wait to get out of here.”

While Rivera knows some great Christians, he also knows some who haven't grown. He knows people who claim to be Christian but still hate people. He is baffled by the reality that a person who walks with Jesus for 50 years can turn around and engage in racial discrimination against Asians because of the “kung flu.”

“Christians are sometimes the hardest people to reach, because they've already found the truth, the way and the light,” Rivera said. “What they don't know is that they can still be very prejudiced. This isn't a White or a Black thing. This is a human thing.”

Nowadays, Rivera writes poetry in his Twin Cities home, meeting in a poetry group via Zoom with his wife regularly. He hopes to publish his work in the future. He also continues work on “Remarkable Christianity,” a work expanding on the Shalom Seminar he created for Bethel employees.

Rivera hopes to see Bethel continue its growth in terms of demographic diversity, not only in students but in faculty and leadership. While he credits a number of White employees who work hard to make Bethel a welcoming environment, he acknowledges that many students of color turn away from Bethel because it notably lacks diversity.

“Let's just say that history is not through with Bethel, any more than the country as a whole.” Rivera said. **C**

Additional Reporting by Alice Hong

Bronson Pe'a shows off his favorite pair of sneakers in his dorm room. Behind him is the shelving unit used to house the rest of his valuable shoe collection.

| Photo by Emma Gottschalk



Looking back, stepping forward

Finding comfort and success playing Bethel football and starting a shoe-selling business, Bronson Pe'a dreams of living a life far from the tragedy, violence and homelessness that marked his childhood.

By [Emma Eidsvoog](#)

Sophomore Bronson Pe'a holds a pair of red, black and white Air Jordans in his hands, what he hopes is a ticket out of the life he grew up with.

Pe'a grew up in the Logan Heights neighborhood in San Diego, Calif. where his mother struggled to keep up with house payments. Pe'a, his mother and three siblings grew up moving from home to home, sometimes using a car for shelter. Pe'a never knew his dad.

He remembers receiving an Xbox for his 14th birthday, but otherwise didn't expect much with so little money to be spent.

"[San Diego] is pretty amazing, aside from the struggles. It's always sunny," Pe'a said.

After living in a grey Volvo for six months, his mother, Lehua, decided to stay at a homeless shelter for a night where they'd be given a cot to sleep on and a hot meal. During this stay, Pe'a remembers eating half a bag of Cheez-Its and laying down on a bed for the first time in months. When he awoke, a man near his cot was holding the bag of crackers. Pe'a decided then that he would never be in a position in life to be that desperate. He would work for a financially stable life.

"From that point on, I knew I couldn't be homeless," Pe'a said. "I knew I had to get out of there; to figure out a way to make my family's life better."

For him, that meant focusing on school, starting football and working at fast-food restaurants while growing up. These things would lead him away from the neighborhood where he witnessed the death of his friend.

At 7 years old, Pe'a walked to school with his friend, the same route he took every day. On a cloudy Tuesday in Logan Heights, a black car, the kind that makes you tense up as it drives by, pulled up to the curb. A man got out of the car, pulled out a gun and shot Pe'a's friend.

As quickly as he came, the man hopped back in the car and drove away, never to be found. He left Pe'a be.

"I was kinda stuck," Pe'a said. "I didn't know what to

do initially. I just ran."

He ran home to tell someone, then went to school and on with his day. Looking back, he doesn't know how he did that.

"My friend and I grew up in the same area but he partook in some of the things I didn't partake in, so that was the difference," Pe'a said.

Such violence wasn't a rare occurrence where he grew up. Even today, Pe'a has four friends with 20-plus year prison sentences and another friend who was shot a few weeks ago in the neighborhood he grew up in. Pe'a's loss has followed him to Bethel, but he knows college is where he needs to be to have the stability he dreams of.

Family found far from home

At 16, Pe'a made a big move. After finding out his mother had missed four months of house payments, he moved to Washington state to live with his sister and brother-in-law, who were financially stable.

That's when he played football for Lakes High School in Lakewood, Wash. The coaches threw him in, realizing he played for a highly-ranked team in California. But Pe'a had barely played back home. His coaches weren't easy on him, but he stuck with it.

Pe'a met Jaydon McMillon, now a freshman business major at Bethel, in the weight room at Lakes High School. They were both on the football team and instantly got along. The two spent everyday together between class, football and playing Madden at each other's houses. In November of his senior year, Pe'a moved into the two-bedroom apartment McMillon's family lived in.

"They accepted me as their own and I never had that before," Pe'a said. "When [home life] was more stable, school went a lot better and there was a lot of weight lifted off my shoulders."

McMillon heard Pe'a's story and could somewhat empathize with having an absent father – his father is in the military and was stationed during much of his

high school career.

"We were able to talk through it and use it as momentum," McMillon said. "We want to be able to do better for ourselves so we're able to support our families. We want to make sure we're an influence in our children's lives. We want the things we didn't, in a sense, have growing up."

“From that point on, I knew I couldn't be homeless, I knew I had to get out of there; to figure out a way to make my family's life better.”

Bronson Pe'a

A future he can rely on

As a sophomore marketing and human resources major, Pe'a isn't sure what he wants to do after graduating. All he knows is school and perhaps a shoe business will lead him to the life he wants.

"Until I was 12 and really understood what jobs were like, I wanted school to take me to be a trash truck driver," Pe'a said.

He started making money in seventh grade when his mother bought him Jordan Retro Maroon 6's that he resold to people who were willing to spend \$1000 on a pair of shoes. Once he started working at KFC, he bought more and more shoes and has now sold about 350 pairs. He uses his Instagram page, Schoolboy Kickz, to market his shoe finds.

Between business classes, Pe'a keeps busy with shoe selling, 6 a.m. football practices, trips to thrift stores and three other jobs. He still makes time for Xbox with McMillon after finishing statistics homework.

When McMillon started looking at colleges, Pe'a told him to consider Bethel. After he stayed with Pe'a during a visit, McMillon knew that Bethel was for him. The Lakes High graduate started Bethel this fall and said Pe'a makes being far from home easier.

Now they're on the same team again. This fall, the football team scrimmaged. Pe'a wore a white jersey; McMillon wore Navy.

"We always talk, 'We can't go back to that.' Whenever we touch the field, we're like, 'Hey, remember why we do what we do,'" McMillon said.

Football has made it easier for Pe'a to be far from familiarity. The defensive line and special teams coach A.J. Parnell became a father figure to Pe'a, bringing him home to see what a healthy home life could look like. He also shows Pe'a support by going with him to doctor's appointments.

"He wanted me to experience life raising a solid family in a nice neighborhood," Pe'a said.

For now, Pe'a is okay with being 1,990 miles away – but he thinks about moving back to San Diego where the temperature doesn't dip below zero. Although his relationship with his mother is distant, he's hopeful it will get better. He calls once a month to update her on how school is going. She also tells him about school, as she attends a community college to work in business administration.

"Communication is getting better and I can understand things as I get older," he said.

As an older brother, Pe'a's motivation partly stems from the desire to be a positive example for his siblings.

"Now that I see them following in my footsteps, there's pressure to keep going because they only have me as an example. I'm kinda leading the way now, figuring it out for myself while they're watching and seeing what I'm doing."

Pe'a holds his future in his hands. The sneakers are just a symbol of the life he wants, a life where he doesn't need to worry about where he's going to lay his head at night. **C**

2001
Pe'a was born at UCSD Hospital in San Diego, Calif on July 17, 2001. His mother, Lehua, holds him.



2019
From left to right, Jamal (family friend), Charlie (youngest brother), Pe'a, Keoni (middle brother) and Lehua (mother) pose at Pe'a's graduation from Lakes High School on June 5, 2019. Pe'a's family and friend drove 18



2020
Pe'a stands with Jaydon McMillon and Rafi Mbuja, who also attended Lakes High School in Washington, after a 2020 Bethel football game.



2015
Moved to Washington to live with his sister.

Fall 2019
Started at Bethel University

Pe'a carries a football at Bethel's outdoor stadium. He excitedly anticipates playing on this field during the spring football season, COVID permitting. | Photo by Emma Gottschalk



SIMPLIFY YOUR LIFE



FIRE UP YOUR MIND

Live in cabins,
study one course at a time,
read a mountain of books,
adventure in the Pacific Northwest



Bethel-approved 17-credit
off-campus fall semester program

oregonextension.org

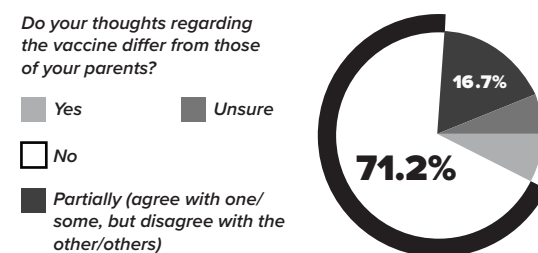
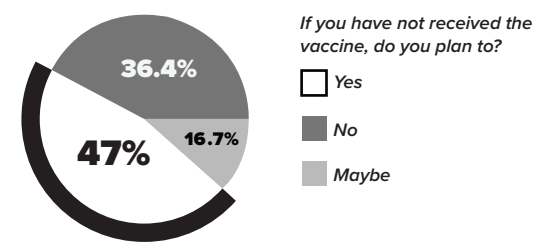
Call 541-842-0860 for more information

Afraid of needles

Bethel community members demonstrate the ideological divide surrounding the COVID-19 vaccine and share their decisions and reasoning regarding the shot.

By Nate Eisenmann

Bethel Student Vaccine Survey



With the recent rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine in the United States, the debate has been fiery. As vaccines become available, increasing numbers of people are choosing to get vaccinated, while some are choosing not to. This debate is demonstrated at Bethel through students with opposing views. Currently there are three different vaccines approved for emergency use by the United States Food and Drug Administration. Each of these vaccines underwent rigorous testing prior to approval. However, due to the fact that the pandemic began just over a year ago, long-term side effects have not been determined.

Dr. Joy Doan, a professor of biological sciences at Bethel, explains just how remarkable the vaccine timeline has been.

“The fact that there were multiple vaccines available for use around the world a mere 10 months after the [World Health Organization] declared SARS-CoV-2 a pandemic is absolutely remarkable,” Doan said.

She noted that, prior to COVID, the fastest vaccine to be developed was that for mumps, which took four years.

Doan, who holds a doctorate in medical microbiology and immunology, mentioned that even though the process occurred so quickly, standard procedures were still followed. She said that many factors played into the fast-paced testing and approval process, such as the financial support and large sample sizes used.

Although the standards vaccines are required to meet for FDA approval are high, some people still don't trust the vaccine.

A recent study conducted by the Pew Research Center in February found that 30 percent of the American public did not plan on getting vaccinated while 69 percent plan on receiving or have already received the vaccine.

In a recent Clarion survey of 132 Bethel undergraduate students, 77 percent said that they had not yet been

vaccinated while 23 percent said they had. Of those who had not yet been vaccinated, 23 percent said they do not plan on receiving the vaccine.

Bethel senior Ellie Hoyt is skeptical of the vaccine and does not plan on receiving it when it becomes available to her.

“[The vaccine] came out really, really fast,” Hoyt said. “Most vaccines go through years of clinical research. Do we know all of the side effects?”

Hoyt mentioned the role her religious convictions have played in her approach to the vaccine, saying “God created our bodies to heal themselves.”

“We can inform, explain and educate.”

Dr. Diane Dahl

Hoyt also shared her belief in the importance of not listening to only one source for information regarding the vaccine. She talked about reading different articles, not just those from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or the World Health Organization, but finding other sources of information.

“[I read] articles that are by doctors that have been silenced,” Hoyt said, but she could not cite any specific articles or doctors. “I hope [people] right now will do

the research for themselves, challenge the narrative for themselves and [not] believe everything they're told.”

One of the main reasons cited by participants of The Clarion's survey who did not plan on receiving the vaccine was that it had not been studied long enough to test for long-term side effects. Another reason was due to fears of infertility.

Doan acknowledges that there is misinformation regarding the vaccine, especially on the internet, but says that the COVID-19 vaccine is safe according to reliable sources such as the CDC, WHO and National Institute for Health.

“The broad consensus of the scientific community is that vaccines are safe and effective,” Doan said. “Yes, there are people who should not get certain vaccines, and every health care provider and scientist will acknowledge this fact, but there is very little serious risk to vaccination for an otherwise healthy individual.”

Hoyt notices that her beliefs and outspokenness against the COVID-19 vaccine have resulted in higher tensions in relationships, but this hasn't swayed her point of view.

“We can all have our own opinion,” Hoyt said. “At the end of the day we should all respect each other. Without conversation and dialogue, you can't actually know more about others' opinions.”

While there are groups of people at Bethel choosing to forego the COVID-19 vaccine, many students plan to get vaccinated or have already done so.

Senior social work major Kenzie Hanenburg interns at the Glenwood Residence of Catholic Charities in St. Paul and received a vaccination for COVID-19 due to the nature of her internship. Hanenburg's job entails working in close contact with older adults who have



Senior Kenzie Hanenburg stands outside Catholic Charities Glenwood residence where she works as an intern helping people who have experienced homelessness. | Photo by Emma Gottschalk

experienced homelessness and now live full time in the residence shelter. Many of these residents are men who are chronic alcoholics and therefore are at high risk for having severe complications if they were to contract the virus that causes COVID-19.

Although she had already contracted the virus in August 2020, Hanenburg said that she still wanted to get vaccinated to avoid future infection and to protect the health of those around her.

“I know there's more research to be done,” Hanenburg said. “But [I trust] the research that has been done.”

Even though she doesn't face much backlash for her choice to get vaccinated and follow the CDC guidelines, Hanenburg says that there are friends and family members who don't have the same opinions about the vaccine, so she emphasizes the importance of talking about each other's perspectives.

“We're all human, we're all entitled to our beliefs,” Hanenburg said. “Conversations around it are really important.”

One specific group at Bethel that has early access to the COVID-19 vaccine is the nursing program. Dr. Diane Dahl, nursing department chair, explains that there are actually five separate nursing programs at Bethel and three of the five require clinical work, which involves practicing direct care to patients in hospitals in the Twin Cities. Through these clinicals, nursing students had the option to get the vaccine during the past few months.

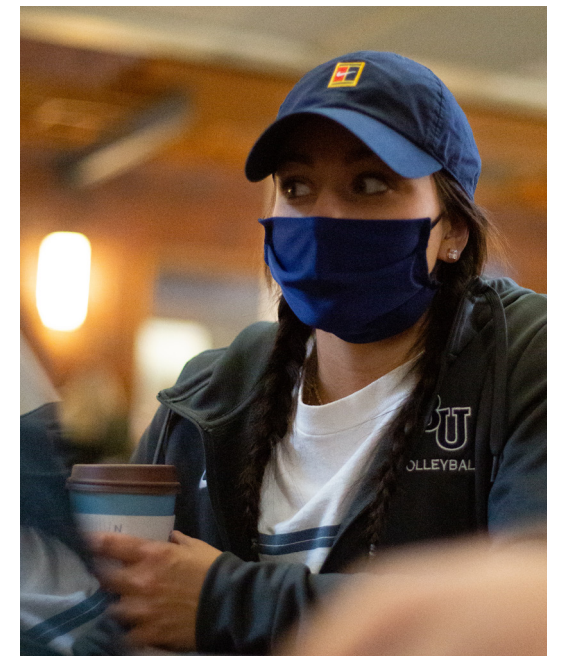
None of the clinical locations that Bethel works with require the COVID-19 vaccine at this point, but it is highly encouraged by both the hospitals and Bethel nursing department. Dahl said that she believes that in a year or two, the vaccine will be a requirement for nursing clinicals.

Although she didn't have exact numbers of nursing students who had or had not been vaccinated, Dahl estimated that about 30 percent had chosen not to get vaccinated and noted that this is the trend among nursing programs of nearby colleges and universities.

Because the current vaccines are only available under emergency use authorization, Bethel cannot require that community members vaccinate. The director of COVID-19 operations, Kristi Moline, said that Bethel applied to host vaccination clinics on campus for the general public but was denied. However, Bethel continues to work with both the Minnesota Department of Health and the Ramsey County Public Health Center to find vaccination options for community members when they become available.

With the mistrust and conflicting opinions around the vaccine, Dahl said that the goal of the nursing department, like many health organizations focused on the vaccine, is to educate.

“We can inform, explain and educate. We want to make sure that [students] have the most current information about the vaccination. We have to respect people's opinions,” Dahl said. “I know it's hard. How you come at it and your frame of COVID is so different from mine. It makes sense that we view it so differently. We all come from different life circumstances. I think that's important for all of us to remember.”



Senior Ellie Hoyt does not plan on receiving the COVID-19 vaccine. “We can all have our own opinion,” said Hoyt. | Photo by C.J. Washington

“I know there's more research to be done, but [I trust] the research that has been done.”

Kenzie Hanenburg



Bridger Foster wears the regalia of a classically trained dancer. | Photo by Bryson Rosell

Often forgotten, yet still *fighting*

Although often emphasized as a part of America's past, Native Americans at Bethel are still working towards increasing awareness and representation of their cultures on campus and in the wider community.

By Soraya Keiser

Bridger Foster feels free when he dances in the annual powwow on the Red Cliff Reservation in Bayfield, WI. Eagle feathers in his hand, red paint on his face, bells on his legs and dressed in the regalia of a classically trained dancer, Foster follows the crowd clockwise around the gazebo as drummers beat out the rhythm. The beat of which represents the Anishinaabe people's connection to the earth. Although hundreds of people come to watch and participate, Foster barely notices that.

"It's very euphoric and very just in the moment," Foster said. "Like nothing else matters. I feel very connected to my ancestors and I feel very at home."

Foster, a junior nursing student at Bethel, is a card-carrying member of the Métis tribal nation in Ontario. This means that he holds official tribal membership with the Métis. He also has Huron and Wyandotte heritage and grew up surrounded by the culture of the Anishinaabe Ojibwe people in Northern Wisconsin. Foster is the director of the First Nations subgroup of United Cultures of Bethel and helps plan events throughout the year highlighting Indigenous American culture.

The de facto advisor for the First Nations subgroup of United Cultures of Bethel is Associate Professor of Communication Studies Dr. Scott Sochay. Originally from Northern Michigan, Sochay is a card-carrying member of the Little Traverse Bay Band of Odawa Indians. Unlike Foster, Sochay did not grow up surrounded by his native culture. Sochay's father wanted to distance himself from the tribe after witnessing and experiencing discrimination because his mother, Sochay's grandmother who was an Indigenous tribal member, married a white man.

"I grew up knowing I was Indian but not really knowing a whole lot about what that meant," Sochay said.

It wasn't until college when Sochay was really able to explore his heritage. Sochay received a scholarship to Michigan State University through the 1971 Native American Tuition Act because his grandmother was listed in the 1908 Michigan tribal census.

"Knowing that my native heritage was going to pay for my college education, I said, even though my dad really wasn't all that interested in passing on his heritage, I want to learn what it means to be native now that it's paying for my schooling," Sochay said. "That really in a sense was the catalyst for me really starting to ask that question: What does it mean to be native?"

From this point on, Sochay dove into the culture and history of his ancestors when he got involved with the North American Indian Student Organization at Michigan State. By listening to speakers, participating in campus powwows and reading up on his specific tribal history, Sochay soon realized that the way he saw the world was "more native than that of mainstream Western culture."

For Sochay's tribe, everything living is intertwined. Humans, animals, plants, spirits and natural resources.

"In Western culture we tend to separate faith from reason, religion from science, the natural from the supernatural," Sochay said. "In native cultures there are no walls of separation or distinctions. Spiritually, Native Americans see the world as far more alive."

Because of this, he sees all aspects of the natural world as sacred.

Growing up in Northern Wisconsin, Foster and his tribal community hunted, fished and gathered only what was necessary for food and natural herbal remedies. With these practices he gained a deep respect for nature.

One way that Foster tries to emulate this respect is by living with zero waste. Back home, the Anishinaabe are very conscious of the resources they use. For example, if an animal is hunted and killed for food, the community uses every part of the animal, not just the parts they want to eat.

Foster crochets old t-shirts and plastic bags into blankets and sleeping mats for the homeless. He is also working with Bethel grounds crew to set up a compost pile on campus.

"I believe very much that God created everything we see and loves everything that he created," Foster said. "So, for us to go around destroying what he created is disrespectful to Him."

Protesting the pipeline

Respect for the earth has also led both Foster and Sochay to resist the replacement of the Line 3 Pipeline in Northern Minnesota.

Line 3 is a pipeline created by Enbridge, a multinational energy transportation company, to transport tar sands crude oil from Alberta, Canada to Superior, Wisconsin. Enbridge has plans to replace the pipeline with a new route. Both the current and future pipelines run through tribal lands, which are sovereign nations and protected under treaties with the U.S. government.

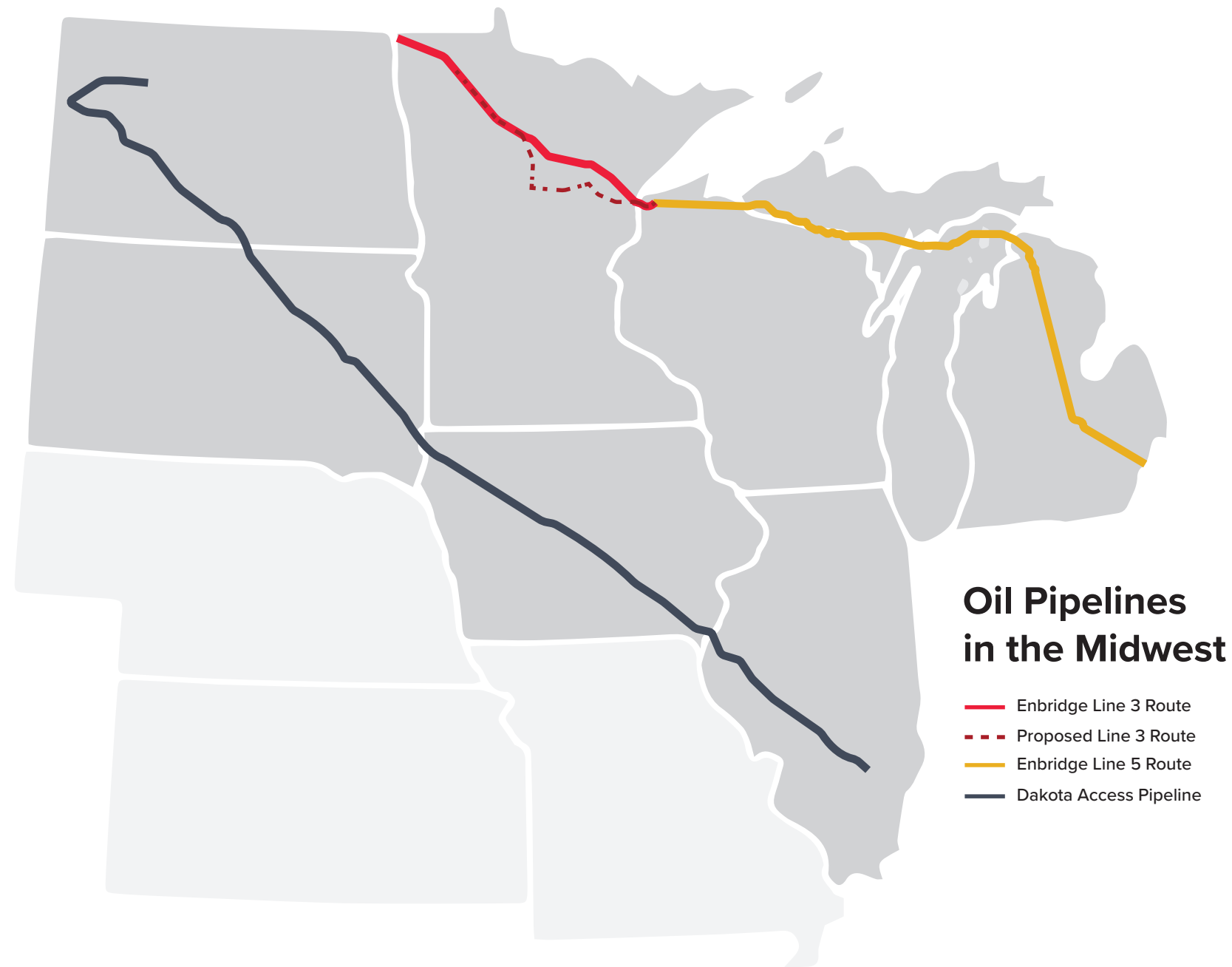
Environmental groups, tribal nations and their allies have staged regular protests for six years in order to prevent Enbridge from building a new pipeline.

"The Native American perspective is we are trying to protect our water because we consider it sacred," Sochay said.

Activists also resist the pipeline because if a spill occurs, it would negatively affect the ecosystems of Northern Minnesota. Polluted water would hurt

“I believe very much that God created everything we see and loves everything that he created, so for us to go around destroying what he created is disrespectful to Him.”

Bridger Foster



Above: A hair piece handmade by Bridger Foster. He explains the importance of beading in his culture, stating that each bead is like a prayer.

Right: Dr. Scott Sochay flips through a book he keeps in his office created by his tribe as a means of proving their history and sovereignty to the federal government | Photos by Emma Gottschalk.



the fishing and wild rice harvesting that is essential to the culture of Indigenous tribes across Minnesota. However, this pollution would affect more than just Minnesota as spills would flow into the Mississippi River headwaters and the Lake Superior watershed, depositing tar sands into the Mississippi River and Gulf of Mexico.

This is a nightmare for many Native Americans that has already started to play out. 30 years ago, Line 3 ruptured, spilling 1.7 million gallons of tar sands and oil into the water system.

“So, it’s happened before. It’s not like the oil companies can say, ‘Oh this’ll never happen,’” Sochay said. “It has. And it’s happened in a big way.”

Line 3 is not unique in its controversy. Sochay’s tribe is dealing with a lawsuit of its own against the Line 5 pipeline in Michigan, and Foster’s family has been involved in the Dakota Access Pipeline protests throughout the past few years.

Sochay hopes that the treaties created years ago with many tribes across the United States will be upheld and that pipeline construction will stop.

“Native tribes that are recognized by the federal government are considered sovereign nations. You don’t enter into a treaty with anyone other than a sovereign nation,” Sochay said. “And so, when we don’t

want pipelines through our tribal lands or potentially impacting the waters that we use to fish and grow wild rice, we are asserting our sovereignty.”

Joining the discussion

Foster hopes to better educate the Bethel community not only on the effects of a new pipeline, but about Indigenous cultures as a whole. He is talking with Bethel professors about how to accurately represent Indigenous Americans as not just a thing of the past. Not just as people only mentioned in chapters on colonialism in American history textbooks. According to the United States Census Bureau there are more than 2.9 million Indigenous people living in America to this day. Foster is also working on restructuring the Bethel Covenant for Life Together so that it is more culturally inclusive.

These efforts are to create a closer Indigenous American community on campus prove difficult because of the lack of students who identify as coming from an Indigenous background. Foster is one of four students he knows of that are Indigenous American, and Sochay is the only Indigenous American faculty member that Bethel has ever employed.

“Because there has never been in a sense what you would call a critical mass of native students here on campus, it’s very difficult to help develop a native community,” Sochay said. “As a Bethel faculty member, I often feel isolated at times because whenever anything here on campus happens that involves Native American culture in some way, shape or form, I know I am going to be called on whether I want to be or not. And sometimes that can be a little bit tiring or weary.”

Although both Foster and Sochay wish that Bethel would do more regarding Indigenous American representation, they realize that Bethel isn’t always the one to blame.

“It’s not a Bethel issue,” Sochay said. “It’s a larger cultural issue.”

He wishes that Indigenous American culture and rights were less overlooked and forgotten.

“As Native Americans we tend to get tired of issues related to diversity and civil rights [being] almost always framed exclusively in a Black-White context,” Sochay said. “We often feel like we are just left out of the discussion.” **C**

A painful and important journey: *Efforts toward racial reconciliation*

As BIPOC students experience the daily effects of systemic racism and injustice, Bethel University works toward a more diverse, equitable and inclusive environment.

By Rachel Blood and Ariel Dunleavy

Nancy Alquicira grew up celebrating both Mexican and American holidays, reflecting both ethnic backgrounds in her food and family values. She knew Bethel would be different, but she came in with an optimistic attitude.

“Unfortunately, many of my concerns about coming here were [confirmed], and in more ways than one,” sophomore English and psychology double major Alquicira said. “It was hard to find [non-BIPOC] friends or students that I could trust and comfortably be myself with or even relate with about things like family and music or social views. But, there are constantly occasions where people surprise me, and those experiences are something that I look forward to all the time.”

Freshman music performance major Rayven Davis feels the same way. Being one of a small number of Black students at Bethel has not been easy for her.

“Sometimes I feel like the ugly duckling,” Davis said. “I definitely feel isolated all the time. Most days I’m alone. They say that Bethel is a home away from home, even instantly for some, but when you’re literally the black swan surrounded by white swans, it’s hard to feel like family.”

A necessary conversation: Take Action

In a rural Louisiana town 40 miles north of Baton Rouge, Bethel Assistant Professor of Education Elisabeth Lefebvre taught at an elementary school serving a 95% Black community. Across the chain-link fence was an academy that had only accepted its first Black student in 1994. And it announced its first non-discriminatory admissions policy less than a decade before Lefebvre began teaching in the area.

“That, to me, was a very visible manifestation [of systemic racism],” Lefebvre said. “Those teaching experiences underscored for me how blinded [White people] can be to our place within a deeply racialized history that has exploited communities of color for hundreds of years.”

While her Louisiana experiences increased Lefebvre’s awareness of racism, she knows that her work cannot stop there. According to Lefebvre, people are often quick to dismiss racist tendencies in places like Minnesota because other cities have larger, more visible problems. However, as Lefebvre points out, the same issues are just as prevalent in Minnesota, perhaps in a less visible way.

When Lefebvre lived in North Minneapolis, she saw a group of students of color chatting on a street corner after a day of high school. A police car turned on its lights and swerved around, interrupting the students’ conversation to check for trouble that, from Lefebvre’s perspective, didn’t exist.

Also in Minneapolis, Lefebvre once forgot to pay a library fine and was still allowed to check out books. Later, she witnessed a library employee refuse the same service to a Black student due to the same outstanding fee.

When George Floyd was killed May 25, 2020, calls for change were focused on police brutality and systemic racism, conversations Lefebvre

and other Bethel faculty felt drawn to join.

As a response to Floyd’s death and the need for community processing, Bethel psychology professors Sherryse Corrow and Rachel Anderson coordinated a book club this past summer. Lefebvre was one of the first to join.

The group discussed “How to Be an Antiracist,” the New York Times bestselling book by Ibram X. Kendi that explores the concept of racism as structural and systemic, deciding at the end of the summer to elevate the book club into something more.

“We were very aware of the criticism that, when racial injustice moments erupt in the news, many White people decide to read a book together, and that is it,” Bethel Digital Library Manager Kent Gerber said. “We wanted to be sure to be much more than that.”

From that mindset, the Take Action group was born.

Lefebvre, Anderson, Geber and Corrow polled members of the book club and found an interest in deeper discussion on antiracism and implementing antiracist methods on campus. The four faculty members began a biweekly discussion group and a biweekly book club that reads books written by BIPOC authors and purchased from a Black-owned bookstore. The book club recently read Latasha Morrison’s “Be the Bridge,” coincidentally lining up with Morrison’s visit to Bethel Feb. 16.

“The hope is that the group will create a venue for folks to connect across



Sophomore Nancy Alquicira serves as Director of UCB subgroup Voz Latinx. Submitted by Nancy Alquicira

the university,” Lefebvre said. “To share concerns.”

One meeting of the Take Action group enlisted United Cultures of Bethel leadership to join and share ways for faculty and staff to be more supportive of BIPOC students. UCB subgroup directors, including Alquicira, Director of Voz Latinx, provided faculty members with tangible steps toward creating a supportive environment for BIPOC students, including inclusion training for Resident Assistants, promoting UCB and being careful to not expect an individual student of color to speak for her entire ethnicity. Faculty and staff were encouraged to teach topics like racism as a present concern rather than a past problem and be actively antiracist rather than simply “not racist.”

UCB has been Alquicira’s primary way of connecting with other BIPOC students at Bethel in addition to White students who are part of European Americans in Solidarity, a UCB subdivision.

Davis joined the Black Student Union, another UCB subdivision, this year to find peers with a shared background. Despite being hesitant to come to Bethel due to its lack of diversity, she has found comfort in being a part of the BSU community.

“I honestly don’t regret it,” Davis said. “I honestly hope to gain a sense of community and home within BSU, and I think I’ve accomplished that.” Alquicira says her time as director of Voz Latinx has been one of the most enriching and impactful experiences she’s had at Bethel.

“All that we do in UCB is about growing who we are as a people and celebrating our experiences and identities,” Alquicira said. “In a school where those identities and cultures are so few in numbers and representation, bringing them to the spotlight with UCB is so important and vital.”

Lefebvre, who teaches a course on educational equity, has seen repeatedly the patience of the BIPOC community in educating their White peers. She praises the students of color in her classes who show up to have vulnerable and enlightening conversations about their experiences. But some students, like Davis, feel exhausted by the expectation to educate.

Davis said she feels as though students around her simply don’t care enough to make a conscious effort to understand or acknowledge racism, but she often feels she has to be the educator and serve as the voice for the “Black perspective.”

“I think ignorance comes from the lack of knowledge, especially when it comes to society’s racial issues,” Davis said. “I feel like I have to be the voice for George Floyd or the voice for Breonna Taylor. It’s hard for [White people] to understand that quite frankly. I’m not MLK or Malcolm X, and my goal was to come to Bethel for education, not to be a civil rights activist.”

Lefebvre promotes the idea of approaching reconciliation from a place of humility and with a willingness to be wrong. She says Christ-followers are called to hold themselves accountable.

“As Christians, we can recognize that God delights in the diversity of his creation. That God delights in the different cultures and people groups that exist, and that He laments racism,” Lefebvre said. “Just as God laments racism, we can also see that race as a social construct can become a manifestation of sin.”

She acknowledges students come to Bethel in many different headspaces and levels of awareness in relation to racism. Some have never discussed it. Lefebvre’s advice to those students is to seek to learn with a sense of humility.

“It’s a long journey,” Lefebvre said. “But it’s an important one.”

She believes if people approach racial reconciliation in their own ways but with a shared desire to learn, good work can be done. But she knows it will not be easy.

“I think it’s important to acknowledge that we’re



Freshman music performance major Rayven Davis is a member of UCB’s Black Student Union subdivision, which she joined to find a sense of community and peers who shared a similar background. Submitted by Rayven Davis

not going to dismantle over 400 years of racialized history by being nice people,” Lefebvre said. “It’s going to be hard, long, sometimes painful work, but it’s good and God-honoring work.”

Showing up and doing the work: Micah 6:8

Inspired by nationwide attempts at racial reconciliation and the accomplishments of the Take Action group, Dean of Education, Christian Ministries and Associate Programs Judith Landrum brought the concept of a university-wide cultural inclusivity training to Rivera. Workshops were designed and scheduled, and the Micah 6:8 group launched with the goal of increasing cultural humility and decreasing unintentional racial biases at Bethel.

Micah 6:8 consists of three lecture-style workshops held on Zoom that are used to help educate staff, seminary students and graduate students at Bethel. Each of the three workshops is offered at three different times to allow for flexible attendance.

Each of the three sessions is based on a portion of Micah 6:8, which reads, “He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”

“I think this was from the Holy Spirit,” Landrum said. “Because I had no intention of doing any of this.”

Initially, Landrum worried about getting people interested.

“Everybody’s exhausted,” she said. “It’s not that people don’t care about it, but bandwidth is tight, and everyone is just ... finding minutes out of their regularly full and busy days.”

Landrum’s goal was to recruit 30 participants for the first workshop. One-hundred-forty showed up, and even more asked for a recording of the Zoom session. The second session yielded similar numbers, and the third will be led by Kara Wicklund and Jodi Wolkerstorfer of the Academic Development and Operations Office and Dr. Jeff Sanders from Bethel Seminary in early April. Each workshop is being offered three times.

At the beginning of each workshop, participants receive immense amounts of information from one or two faculty leaders speaking on various topics related to racism. Following the informative portion of the workshop, the participants are split into debriefing sessions of 10-15 people to discuss the concepts in a transparent and intimate setting for an hour or more. The goal of the discussion-based debriefings is what Landrum calls a “heart change.”

Before each session, Landrum and her colleagues pray for open hearts

willing to receive the information presented to them. While Landrum finds her colleagues' teachings informative, she knows they won't be effective if the hearts of listeners are closed off. However, the overwhelmingly positive feedback of the first and second workshops' survey results point to both open hearts and minds, something Landrum once again attributes to the Holy Spirit's work.

"Working toward making Bethel a place that is welcoming to all is important to me," Amy Dykstra, Professor of Biological Sciences and participant in the workshop said. "I think the thing I most appreciate about the Micah 6:8 workshops is the opportunity to hear from my colleagues who do not look like me and who have different perspectives on what it is like to be a person of color in the United States, and at Bethel University. They have shared stories that open my eyes – if only a little bit – to what they experience on a day-to-day basis."

Dr. Peg McCormick and Dr. Shawn Moore presented information in the "Walk Humbly: Exploring Cultural Bias" workshop in January, which explored how the human mind is wired in relation to racial reconciliation.

McCormick, a Bethel education professor, has spent most of her life studying educational psychology. She became particularly fascinated by the neuroscience behind implicit bias, which she says is rooted in "fear, suspicion and judgment of the out-group." McCormick believed that uncovering implicit biases would be the best starting point in the Micah 6:8 workshop because it is a universal concept for all humans.

"It kind of levels the field for us all to start in the same place and acknowledge that we all have implicit bias," McCormick said, "It helped to bring everybody's guard down. We're all in this together."

McCormick said these workshops and initiatives are important for predominantly White institutions because they don't always provide an environment where community members are honest about their tendencies to judge and prefer in-groups.

"You have to keep showing up and you have to keep making space for the conversations," McCormick said. "...If you stop watering, those dormant seeds will never wake up."

The goal for the first Micah 6:8 workshop was for participants to leave with tangible action steps, said Diversity and Inclusion Associate Pang Moua. Alongside Data Steward and Administrative Assistant Melanie Cole, Moua spoke on topics of dialogue and human interaction in February's workshop, "Love Mercy: Engaging in Authentic Conversations."

The third workshop, slated for April 1, 13 and 15, "Do Justice: Honoring Culture in Documents & Syllabus Design," will focus on creating syllabi, assignments, meetings, assessments and websites that are inclusive and reminiscent of the safe, welcoming environment Bethel is aiming to create for all students. Alquicira has a deep appreciation for the professors who have made it a point to be intentionally inclusive in their curriculum, bringing in different perspectives than that



Assistant Professor of Education Elisabeth Lefebvre, one of the founders of the Take Action group, believes that Christians are called to seek out injustice and restore right relationships. | Photo by C.J. Washington

"He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" Micah 6:8, ESV

of Bethel's prevailing white middle-class.

Moua was the only BIPOC staff member involved in the Micah 6:8 planning, which was not a new concept for her. Moua recognizes there is often pressure on BIPOC committee members to represent the entirety of a minority community and tries to set boundaries to avoid this.

"I speak for Pang Moua," she said.

Intergroup dialogue has helped Moua use "I" statements rather than "we" or "they," avoiding speaking on behalf of the entire BIPOC community solely because she is the only representative in the process.

As a follower of Christ, Moua felt that she needed to engage in the group not only as a presenter but also as a participant. The timing was something that pushed Moua towards the group, as it was conceived shortly after the murder of George Floyd. Moua sensed there was an awakening happening at Bethel. This awakening was obvious when Moua realized the initiative was spreading all across campus.

"To plan an institution-wide initiative around decreasing unintentional racial bias and increasing cultural humility..." Moua said. "That's really exciting to me."

Moua serves as a program specialist within Bethel's Cultural Connection Center, which aims to create connections within and outside of the BIPOC community in addition to educating the campus community on various cultures and traditions. Alquicira found a safe place in the CCC, a space where she found lifelong friendships and never felt misunderstood or excluded.

Both the Take Action group and the Micah 6:8 training initiative aim to inform faculty and staff on diversity, inclusion and racial reconciliation on Bethel's campus. While the Take Action group focuses on reflection through reading and engaging in hard conversations, Micah 6:8 spotlights learning and implementing inclusive policies through lecture style discussions.

The groups are separate entities, but they work together and offer support throughout Bethel's reconciliation journey. Members of each group attend the meetings of the other and act as a source of support when needed. Lefebvre is thankful for the Micah 6:8 group's work and insight.

"We're all part of the same whole," Landrum said. "We want to work on this together."

Alquicira plans to continue advocating fiercely for Christians to be on the frontlines of reconciliation efforts.

"Empathy and kindness are two of the biggest characteristics that distinguish us from those who are not Christians, yet at Bethel I have found a severe lack of both from individuals who call themselves Christians yet fail to support the marginalized communities in their own school," Alquicira said. **C**

Additional Reporting by Alice Hong and Molly Wilson



Dean of Education and Christian Ministries Judith Landrum worked with former Vice President of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Ruben Rivera to launch the Micah 6:8 initiative at Bethel. | Photo by C.J. Washington



TOP cheese.



ROSEVILLE
651-488-0968
SAVOYPIZZA.COM

PIZZA POTLUCK
LARGE 1-TOPPING PIZZA, GARLIC CHEESE BREAD, 4 PACK CHOCOLATE CHUNK COOKIES, & A 1-LITER OF POP **\$28.99**



Not valid with other offers or specials. No cash value. No Substitutions. Valid at Roseville only. Prices do not include tax. Expires 3/1/21.

\$5 OFF
ANY PURCHASE OF \$30 OR MORE



Not valid with other offers or specials. No cash value. No Substitutions. Valid at Roseville only. Prices do not include tax. Expires 3/1/21.

Thank you, Oregon, for killing me

How four months living in the woods broke me, created me and changed my life for real.

by Zachariah Walker

I think I was born again. Not in the way that would have me sobbing on the stage of Benson Great Hall, but in a real, messy way. I actually think I was conceived, developed and pushed out into the world, my eyes still shut and my body still slippery from living in the wet dark for so long.

I can't be the only person to have been birthed twice. Because every human being has an experience or two that annihilates their previous self, wraps their jelly-bean of a soul up in whatever earthly fabric is easiest to reach and pitches them like a knuckleball back to where they left off. Go ahead, laugh. But this is real. It happened to me, and I bet it's happened to a few of you, too.

Last semester, I was a student at The Oregon Extension, a study-away program nestled into the Cascade Mountains of Southern Oregon. Thirty minutes up a winding road from the nearest town and far enough into the wilderness for Verizon to drop to 1x, the OE welcomes a cohort of college students seeking a non-traditional fall semester spent reading in hammocks, backpacking through volcanic valleys and thinking hard about what it means to be human. I was one of 29 from across the United States who decided to take a break from days packed with five classes, four extracurriculars and 15 to-do list items and instead focus on one thing — reading *The Brothers Karamazov* or cooking turmeric chicken for a potluck or pondering climate change solutions over hot tea — at a time.

Those four months were not easy, breaking me in spots I didn't know I could be broken. But, like any good rebirth, my time at the OE provided me everything I needed to mend the wounds and heal into someone more aware, more awake and more confident in his ability to chop a piece of wood in one swing.

I lived fast before the OE. When I walked, I zoomed past couples holding hands and professors chatting on their way to lunch just so I could open my laptop and finish a Moodle quiz quick enough to draft an essay outline before class. I laughed hard and listened well and stopped to smell my stir fry when Wing added the extra garlic I

asked for, but every day was still defined by little black boxes waiting for check marks. College was a place to get things done for good grades so I could graduate and start getting things done for good money. After my first day at the OE, when my only assignment was to read 120 pages of a book about the Anthropocene, and I had all day to do it, I realized I was in for something different. Something slower. Something that looked like a sunset over a rocky gulch and smelled like fresh baked sourdough.

The motto of the OE, as seen on its website, water bottles and brochures is "Simplify your life. Fire up your mind." I usually think slogans are cheesy lies meant to falsely excite cogs in the consumerist system into spending \$2,000 on an indoor bicycle with a television bolted to the handlebars, but the OE slogan, like the program it represents, has never seen me as a cog.

Living in Cabin 7, a three-bedroom wooden structure built in the 1920s and outfitted with bunk beds, a woodstove and desks hand-made by the previous year's cohort, my life did simplify. I woke up at 8 a.m. to the alarm of my Casio F91W watch, ate over-medium eggs with my cabin mates, listened to a lecture on Transcendentalism or social justice movements or the Russian Orthodox church, took a walk around the organic garden and poultry yard, sat for an hour and a half in one of my professors homes and discussed big ideas from the previous night's reading and spent the rest of the day at my own pace, completing the one assignment given each day (except weekends, which are free save for impromptu hiking trips), cooking curry for my cabin or skipping rocks on the pond. And each new day was tinder for the fire that did start in my mind. I took notes when a sentence stirred my heart instead of when it answered a worksheet question, and the two eight-day independent research periods where I read close to 1,000 pages brought the most meaningful academic work I have ever done.

But the readings kept me up until 2 a.m. some nights. A few discussions shattered my worldview to the point of stress tears. And the relaxed, focused pace of each

day forced me to recognize that I have been living a life driven by the wrong motivations. Slow walks around the woodshop after lecture reminded me of just how fast I move when I'm back at Bethel. Nights spent laughing about Bigfoot sightings over tacos with fresh salsa twisted my head until I saw how I rush DC dinners with my friends so I can get back to analyzing poetry. And every time I finished a chapter without having to write a two-page response, I wondered if the past 17 years of education was a waste. Life at the OE shook me until my skin fell off and my muscles tore away and there was nothing left but a skeleton. But my bones needed to feel the wind.

Looking back, every day at the OE seems to breathe on its own, every moment existing outside as well as in the context of my four months on the mountain. It's sometimes hard to explain, the way the forest and the stars and the gently flowing creek made me feel, so I have to resort to semi-philosophical ramblings like the first sentence of this paragraph. But I can always think back to the stories that stitched together every day — those short stretches of time without distraction or outside pressure, memories made possible by the unconventional pace of the program. Like the night my cabin mates and I cooked empanadas from scratch for four hours to feed my professor and his family because we had the time. Or when I hurled a snowball at the neighboring cabin so hard it broke the window screen and nobody got mad. Or the six-hour walk after an outdoor dinner that made me fall in love with a girl from Mississippi (but I'll save that for another column). These seem like regular stories, but they hit me in the heart and didn't let up — like watching "The Shawshank Redemption" for the first time or hearing my best friend say he loves me. They are stories of a place where stories are everything. Where the world outside what is in front of you fades away and you can breathe in. And out.

What I'm trying to say with all of this is that the Oregon Extension killed me, made me new again, thrust me in front

of the universe and said, "Slow down and look for once." When I did what the forest told me, I saw and heard and felt beauty. Shooting stars with purple tails and a mountain valley so green you'd think God was Irish. Midnight jam sessions in the living room and perfect harmonies after six weeks of talent-show choir practice. Love like a first kiss between two people who have been waiting for what feels like four months plus a couple lifetimes to hold each other like that. And when I saw the stars and heard the music and felt that kind of love, I was content. Finally and for the first time, truly content. Like the roads leading down the mountain could fall away and I would breathe easy and deep knowing I would spend the rest of my life in a place that every day makes me feel OK to be exactly who I am.

That is what the Oregon Extension gave me. It is a gift without price or size or the pressure to pay back the sentiment with something equally thoughtful, because there isn't a handmade photo collage worth nearly as much as the place and the people and the new life given to me in Lincoln. My time at the OE is part of me now, twisted around my spinal cord, and I can't look at a constellation or hear a folk song or hug someone I love without thinking of what life was like among the pines.

So, thank you, Oregon. Thank you for breaking me down. Thank you for making me new. Thank you for making me whole.

Thank you. **C**

Lamenting Lent

By Joe Werdan

Lent is a season of penitence and lament. It is the road that begins at a manger and ends at the cross. As I write this, we are little over halfway through this journey. And as we inch closer to the cross, I'm beginning to wonder how faithful we as a community—myself included—have walked this road.

Before we begin this journey though, I must make a confession: I didn't attend an Ash Wednesday service. While most walked around campus with their foreheads covered with ashes, I sat with mine in a Dietrich Bonhoeffer book. For everyone around me, time had shifted—now was when the annual “taking a break from social media” posts and casual comments about giving up caffeine would begin.

Lenten time is different from ordinary time, because time itself slows down—we take time to face the things we usually neglect. But while everyone around me seemed to be making this transition, I sat, taking notes on Bonhoeffer's sociology of the church, not feeling slowed down—or penitent—at all.

A few days later, I finished the book. I won't lecture, but I will share with you his sentiment: Christ exists as community. This is Bonhoeffer's genius (and why I label myself a “Bonhoefferian” in my Instagram bio): he claims that we encounter Jesus Christ in community, in other persons.

The same day I turned the last page of “Sanctorum Communio,” I went to my favorite coffee shop in Minneapolis. With flurries of snow collecting on my windshield, I drove down I-35 and onto I-94. As I got off the interstate, I saw a man standing on the side of the road. With his hands in pockets, he was watching the cars go by. His hood was up, and his face was hidden from me. He was homeless, I assumed.

In that moment, I heard the words of the prophet Isaiah: “He was despised and abandoned by men, a man of great pain and familiar with sickness; and like one from whom people hide their faces, he was despised, and we had no regard for Him. It was our sickness that he himself bore, and our pains that he carried. We assumed he had been afflicted, but he was pierced for our offenses, he was crushed for our wrongdoings, and the price of our peace was laid upon him.”

Encountering a homeless person on the streets of Minneapolis isn't uncommon. And yet, in that moment, I felt a change. I felt time slow down. I felt its weight catch up to me. Most notably, I felt sorry.

Five minutes later, I sat down with my coffee and thought of the homeless man again. As I relived that moment, I saw something I

hadn't before. I saw his face. And I recognized him. When I looked back at the man on the street, I no longer saw a stranger; I saw Jesus Christ—and I had driven right past him. I had neglected him. I left him there, standing in the cold.

Driving down Lyndale, I hadn't just seen a homeless person. I had seen the perishing Jesus. And, as I looked at him, I saw my own sin—my participation in a society that refused to make room for or regard a man on the street—and felt the weight of its tragedy.

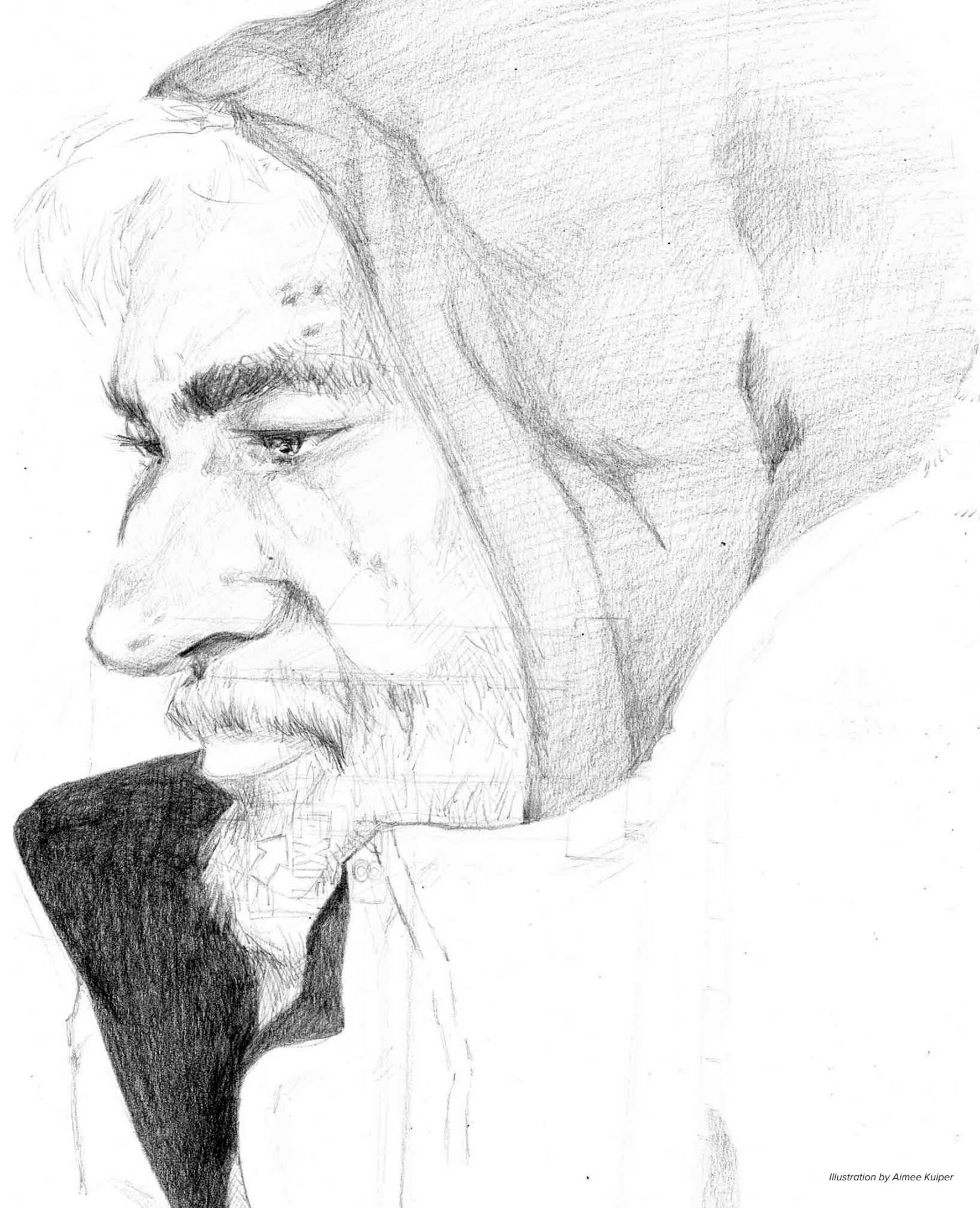
Lent, like sin, is relational. The point of reflecting on the reality of sin is that it leads us to look for hope—it points us toward the cross. But when we reflect on ourselves and walk the road of Lent with our heads bent toward the ground and our hearts turned inward, we disregard the person on its side; the one stripped and beaten, half on his way to death; the one despised and abandoned. And as we walk toward the cross, we fail to acknowledge the one for whom it waits.

This, I believe, is what Lent has become for us today—and I say this not as a faithful exemplar or self-proposed saint, but as a sinner who, on this very road, stands guilty. We no longer lament the tragedy of sin, but focus instead on our own sinfulness, believing that individual penitence is this journey's only demand. We choose cheap grace over costly grace, the grace of the cross, the grace of the other and the grace of Jesus Christ. Such grace is costly because it condemns our sin—it requires us to set aside ourselves—and it is grace because it meets us in the face of our neighbor.

Lent is not only a turn from our own sin, but a turn toward those who bear the weight of that sin and carry the pain. It is a turn toward the one on the side of the road—a turn toward Jesus Christ. The heartbeat of Lent is not penitence, but lament—and this demands we turn toward others. It demands we see not only our sins, but those who bear them.

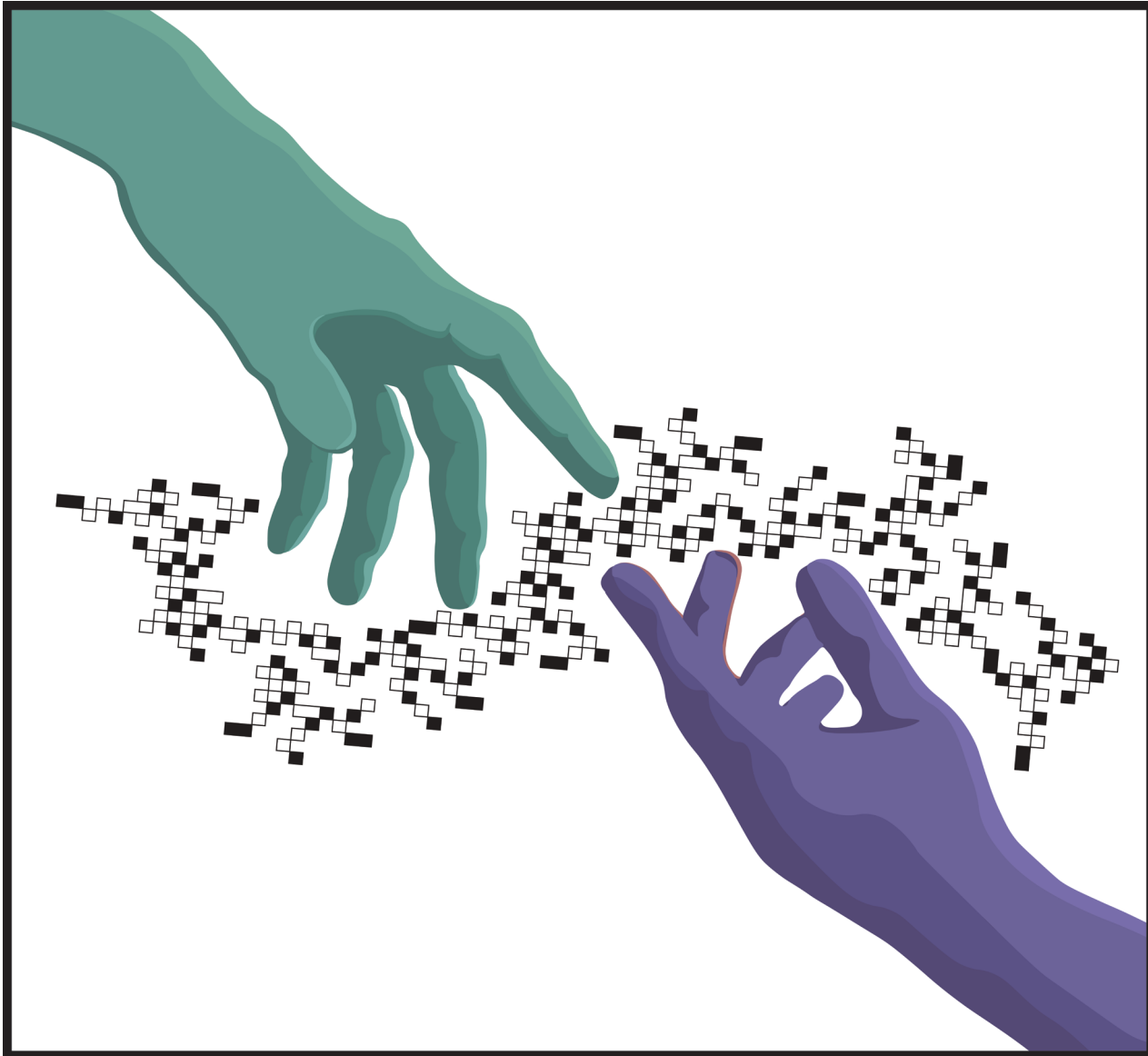
The road of Lent is costly, but it leads us toward hope. So, Bethel community, this is my hope: that we confess our inwardness and disregard for our neighbor (the vulnerable, the homeless, and those outside the bubble). That we slow down and notice those on the side of the road—and lament with them. And that we see in them the face of Christ and walk with them to the cross. **C**

“Lent is not only a turn from our own sin, but a turn toward those who bear the weight of that sin and carry the pain. It is a turn toward the one on the side of the road – a turn toward Jesus Christ”



featured artist

Brandon Barnaal



“Space Between”

Want to be a featured artist in our next issue? Email your art or design submissions and a short artist statement to emma-gottschalk@bethel.edu