



First Bethel Church  
King's Light Newsletter



2026

2026



MONTHLY NEWSLETTER  
THOUGHTS FROM  
PASTOR DAVID

I am in the middle of this series of King's Light articles called "Healthy Church." This month's topic explores the balance of laity-clergy leadership in the local church. One sign of a healthy church is when the church is not what I call "Pastor-centric" and has a healthy balance of lay leadership and clergy leadership...along with having a proper alignment of leadership tasks. First Bethel is a healthy church in these regards!

In our United Methodist tradition, the pastor is to be the leader that equips the congregation for ministry with empowerment, mobilization, training, and planning/evaluating. The congregation takes that equipping into the world to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

For example, our local outreach efforts are led very effectively by laity with Sally Irick and Lisa Rulong, and others in the lead. Our regional outreach is led effectively by Gloria Stephan. And our global/connectional ministry is led effectively by Stephanie Alstadt and Phil Himmler. The carrying out of these ministries is not dependent upon the pastor being in the middle of the work "on the ground". We have others that carry out our nurturing and witness ministries – too many to name them all here. I am thankful for all!

In Methodism's early days (late 1700's – late 1800's) pastors were not present in the day-to-day operation of the local church. Pastors were "circuit riders," traveling church to church on horseback to provide the local church with training, order/administration, oversight, and sacrament (baptism and communion). Local churches were visited by their pastor every five to six weeks.

Clearly things have changed significantly since that time. But if we think of that circuit riding system imposed on churches today, some would be ready for it (healthy churches) and other churches would find great difficulty (unhealthy churches). I am thankful that First Bethel would be a church that could operate effectively in that paradigm. This level of health becomes a dynamic of health begetting health, as if frees the pastor for discernment, vision casting, ministry planning/evaluation, gospel proclamation, and sacrament.

One recent example of First Bethel not being “Pastor-centric” occurred the week I was with the Youth at Jumonville on their annual retreat. I was not at the church to lead Sunday worship. Four lay persons led worship that day: Catherine Taylor, Claire McDermot, Lisa Rulong, and Amy Scott. Following the worship service, Sunday Classes took place, led by laity. In between, a time of fellowship took place, coordinated and prepared by other church lay persons. This is all evidence of a healthy church!

I thank God regularly for the blessing of First Bethel and all of its people!

Journeying together,

***Pastor David Ewing***





Mar 3 John Brevard

Mar 9 John Dunbar

Mar 11 Beth Mellott

Mar 11 Lisa Newman

Mar 11 Mike Stephan

Mar 11 Terry Taylor

Mar 12 Conrad Dutcher

Mar 15 Michael Taylor

Mar 16 Diana Reed

Mar 19 David Ewing

Mar 24 Nathan Armstrong

Mar 24 John Harmon

Mar 27 Todd Rinehart

Mar 27 Terry Snead

## RED LETTER LIVING BIBLE STUDY



The Red Letter Living Bible Study, led by Rev. Joel Garrett, meets on Tuesdays at 6:30PM in the Oxford Room, through March 31<sup>st</sup>.

# WORSHIP SCHEDULE



## SUNDAYS

**9:30AM WORSHIP**

*WITH CHILDREN'S MESSAGE &  
WORSHIP ENRICHMENT*

*COMMUNION IS HELD THE FIRST SUNDAY OF EACH MONTH*

**10:45AM SUNDAY SCHOOL**

**10:45AM WIRED WORD ADULT DISCUSSION**

*Children are welcome to stay in the sanctuary with their families. We have "Busy Bags" filled with engaging items available at the back of the church. Additionally, children ages three through third grade can join Charlene Phillips for Worship Enrichment after the Children's Message. For those who prefer, there is a furnished Nursery area upstairs.*

*If you need more information, feel free to ask an Usher or a Greeter or anyone with an "Ask Me" nametag.*



## **FISH TALES**

### **FISH is Fun In the South Hills at Parkford Community**

First Bethel's after school enrichment program at Parkford Community (FISH) is going strong and continuing to grow. Since late September, we have been gathering every Wednesday afternoon from 3:00PM to 5:30PM to share games, crafts, cooking lessons, food, devotions, fellowship and help with homework. We have a steady core group of 14 children attending, with numbers sometimes as high as 21!

A small group of dedicated FBUMC volunteers have joined with several folks outside of our congregation, including the leadership of Melting Pot Ministries, and have focused our attention on engaging with the kids and their caregivers, building trust, and promoting self-esteem. The kids are with us because they want to be – and seeing their smiles and hearing their laughter as we grow together as a community of faith is truly a blessing! Our consistent engagement has enabled us to identify those children and caregivers most vulnerable and at risk. We have been able to assist with clothing needs, food insecurity, school supplies, emotional support, referrals for and assistance in obtaining mental health care, and referrals for obtaining legal representation.

In addition to our weekly Wednesday gatherings, we are working on funding scholarships for our kids who need academic support to attend Melting Pot's after school program. Melting Pot has an agreement with South Park School District wherein the District transports enrolled children directly to Melting Pot (on Brownsville Road) after school. The children enjoy a healthy snack and then receive structured tutoring and assistance with their homework and preparation for tests. Once they have completed their homework assignments; they can play in the gymnasium and participate in crafts. At 6:00PM they have a nutritious dinner, after which Melting Pot takes them home in their 18-passenger van.



We have already enrolled two of our FISH kids (they attend Melting Pot on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, and are with us on Wednesdays) and hope to provide financial support for more. The cost per child is \$25/month. We also hope to provide scholarships for our FISH kids to attend Melting Pot's six-week summer day camp, which is held at their facility. The camp provides transportation to and from camp, meals, snacks, structured play groups and continued academic support. They also take the kids to the wave pool one day per week, and host other field trips. The 6-week session is \$350 per child, with family discounts for multiple children.

These enrichment opportunities and academic and emotional support systems can be truly life-altering and transforming for our FISH children. The majority have and continue to experience trauma and chaos in their daily lives which many of us may have difficulty understanding. Breaking the cycle of generational poverty takes long-term, consistent commitment to engaging with those we are trying to serve. Please pray for us as we continue our efforts to share God's love with our precious children of Parkford.

If you'd like to support us with your presence or your gifts, please contact Lisa Rulong or Mary Courtney, or sign up in Ministry Scheduler Pro to volunteer on Wednesday afternoons.

We would love to share the opportunities for local service in this expanding ministry with you!

Lisa Rulong

**FISH is Fun In the South Hills at Parkford Community  
on Wednesdays 3:30 PM – 5:30 PM**

*Snacks, Games, Crafts & Homework Help*

*Come Join Us!!!*



# FIRST BETHEL HAS A CHILD

Hear this with a compassionate heart!

We, First Bethel UMC have “adopted” a child! Kundai, a 9 year old boy who lives at the Home of Hope Orphanage in Nydire, Zimbabwe who is now our child. What does this mean?



It means that for 2026 (and hopefully year after year as he grows), “four” from our generous, caring FB have stepped up to sponsor Kundai. Each sponsor made a commitment of \$480 to take care of Kundai’s total needs: food, clothing, schooling, medical, and housing for 2026. For your information, the sponsors are 2 individuals, the Men’s Group, and our First Bethel Choir.

As someone who spent two weeks with Kundai during August of 2025, my heart is truly dancing with joy. Thank you, dear Sponsors of Kundai.

Let me take this opportunity to encourage those interested in helping a child in Nyadire, Zimbabwe to talk with me or Stephanie Aldstadt regarding the Home of Hope. The sponsorship fee is only \$125 a year. (What a deal to cover a year’s schooling!) The Home of Hope Orphanage Program is \$480 a year (\$40 a month).



**TATENDA** (which means thank you) again, sponsors of First Bethel’s child, Kundai.

Shalom to you - - down deep,

Phil Himmler

# ASP SUMMER TRIP



Plans are underway for our Appalachia Service Project summer trip from June 14<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup>. There are 14 volunteers registered (including three first timers) and we're busy planning fundraisers, checking our lists (at least twice) and waiting to hear where we'll be heading for our week of service.

Thanks in advance for your support of this ministry. It is only with your many donations of time, talents, gifts, service and witness that it happens!

See ASP's website. <https://asphome.org/summer/#learn-more> or contact Gloria Stephan for more information..

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## IT'S ASP BISTRO TIME!



Bistros are fundraiser dinners held during Lent to support our **Appalachia Service Project** mission trips. Bistros will be held on four Sundays, March 1, 8, 15 and 22 from 4:30PM-6PM. First Bethel has been having Bistros for approximately 20 years, and here's how it works.

ASP volunteers and members of our church community come together to plan, cook, and serve delicious homemade meals—including desserts. The cost of each meal is covered by voluntary free will donations. This effort relies on generous donations of time, talents, and food, as well as financial contributions, with all proceeds supporting our ASP mission trip fund. Take-out and gluten-free options are available.

Won't you join us for this time of fellowship and breaking bread together to support our primary regional Outreach efforts?

# JOIN US FOR AN ASP BISTRO

DINNER SERVED 4:30-6:00PM

TAKE-OUT AND GLUTEN-FREE OPTIONS AVAILABLE

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## SUNDAY, MARCH 1, 2026



### YOU HAD ME AT PASTA!

SPONSORED BY ASP VOLUNTEERS

FEATURING CHEFS MARK & LISA McDERMOT

Penne Pasta with choice of Marinara, Meat,  
or Alfredo Sauce ♦ Tossed Salad ♦ Bread ♦ Variety of  
Desserts

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## SUNDAY, MARCH 8, 2026

### YES, CHEF!

Ham ♦ Baked Potatoes ♦ Broccoli  
Salad ♦ Rolls & Butter ♦ Variety of Desserts

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## SUNDAY, MARCH 15, 2026

### DO – RE – MI – FA – SOL – LA....SAGNA!

SPONSORED BY THE PARENTS' DINNER GROUP

Variety of Lasagnas ♦ Tossed Salad ♦ Bread ♦  
Variety of Desserts

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## SUNDAY, MARCH 22, 2026

### GOT BEEF?

SPONSORED BY THE MEN'S GROUP

Roast Beef (you know it!) ♦ Potatoes ♦ Vegetable  
Tossed salad ♦ Bread ♦ Variety of Desserts

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Your generous donation  
will benefit our ASP mission  
trip fund.  
Thank You!





# ASP YOUTH LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

by Gloria Stephan



Thank you to Church Council for supporting Alexandra Cecala's participation in the Appalachia Service Project Leadership Summit in Jonesville, VA on February 13-15.

The event brought together a community of like-minded leaders who have said yes to exploring leadership skills and practices of discipleship. Youth attendees and chaperones were challenged to get out of their comfort zone to learn more about ASP's

mission. ASP is a Christian ministry, open to all people, that inspires hope and service through volunteer home repair and replacement in Central Appalachia.



We explored ASP's 2026 theme **"Love Your Neighbor"** by having conversations to learn from each other how we get to know neighbors and share God's love with them. We engaged in leadership lessons,

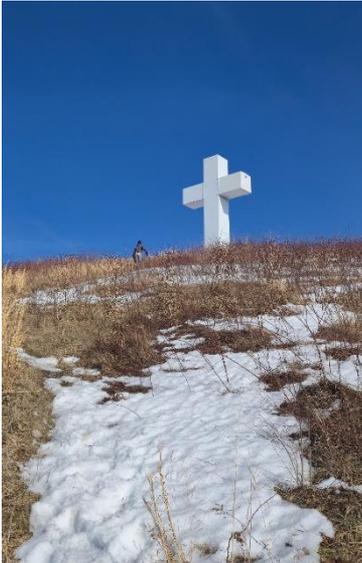
worshiped and prayed together, completed service projects, and heard inspiring messages from guest speakers, ASP staff and each other. The team-building activities and the mixing of small groups helped turn strangers into friends within a weekend.

We are grateful for the opportunity to express our commitment to serving God and our neighbors with love and a spirit of service.

# YOUTH GROUP



The annual Youth Retreat to Jumontville was held on **February 13-15, 2026**, with seven youth in attendance, and four chaperones. Everyone reported that it was a great time of faith, fun and Christian fellowship on and off the mountain, including a snowball sabotage of Pastor David. All in good fun, right? Thanks to our chaperones and leaders, Pastor David Ewing, Mike Bowser, Phil Himmler and Melissa Smith.



# CHURCH LIBRARY NEWS

## A Nobel Laureate



The First Bethel Library got off to a good start this year. Many books were added. Among them:

**DEAR LIFE** There are 14 short stories in this book by Nobel laureate Alice Munro, who explores “life-altering moments, chance encounters, and the complexities of ordinary lives.” Her stories are mostly set in the Lake Huron region of Canada, offering a rare, personal glimpse into her own childhood and family life, blurring the line between fiction and reality. Alice won the 2013 Nobel Prize for Literature and was declared a “master of the contemporary short story.” “Dear Life” was her last collection of short stories. She died in 2024 at the age of 92.

These two were donated:

**THE PIECES WE KEEP** Historical fiction that will “touch any reader who has experienced love, loss, tragedy, or the impact of family secrets.” That description of this work by Kristina McMorris is in a Boston Globe review. This is a decades-long story of personal histories coming together to help a woman who lost her husband in World War II and struggles to understand and form a bond with her son, who is tortured by nightmares.

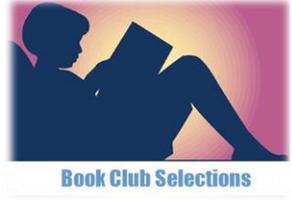
**BOSSYPANTS** by Tina Fey. This is a paperback memoir by the comedian/actress, widely known for her years on *Saturday Night Live*, *30 Rock* and *Mean Girls*. Fey writes about the joys and setbacks in family life from childhood to her years of fame. The New York Times says Fey portrays herself as a “smart, unyielding woman who has forced her way to the top of what is usually a man’s profession.” The Guardian had this observation: “There are some hugely funny bits, and some inspiring bits, and some nerdishly interesting bits.”

As always, we are very thankful for books donated to our Library.

**Your Library Staff**

# BOOK CLUB

Our Book Club delves into a wide range of books to broaden our insights and viewpoints.

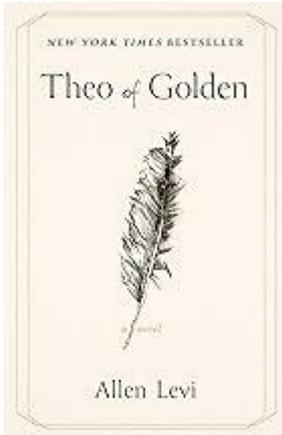


The group gathers for discussions at Panera Bread in South Park Shops the third Friday of every month at 7PM.

We welcome you to join us!

## March 20<sup>th</sup> Discussion

### Theo of Golden by Allen Levi (400 pages)



One spring morning, a stranger arrives in the small southern city of Golden. No one knows where he has come from...or why...His name is Theo. And he asks a lot more questions than he answers. Theo visits the local coffeehouse, where ninety-two pencil portraits hang on the walls, portraits of the people of Golden done by a local artist. He begins purchasing them, one at a time, and putting them back in the hands of their “rightful owners.”

With each exchange, a story is told, a friendship is born, and a life altered. A story of giving and receiving, of seeing and being seen, *Theo of Golden* is a beautifully crafted novel about the power of creative generosity, the importance of wonder to a purposeful life, and the invisible threads of kindness that bind us to one another.

# FIRST BETHEL MEN'S GROUP



**MEN'S  
GROUP**

The next Men's Group meeting is Saturday, March 7<sup>th</sup> at 8:30AM. The men also gather informally for breakfast on Wednesdays around 9AM at the Eat 'N Park in South Park Shops.

The men coordinate local service projects and assist with various Nurture, Outreach and Witness ministries within and beyond our walls.

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## MARTHA CIRCLE



Martha Circle is a time for the ladies to be together for fellowship, service and connecting with other women of our faith community. The next Martha Circle meeting is scheduled for March 11<sup>th</sup> at 1PM.

Contact Donna Hennen or Lea Cook for more information.

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## SOUTH PARK DRAMA CLUB PRESENTS SHREK THE MUSICAL

South Park Drama Club  
presents

**SHREK**  
The Musical

April 9 - 12

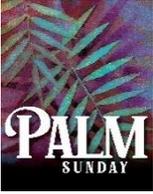
South Park High School  
Drama Club Presents  
Shrek the Musical

South Park High School Drama Club presents "Shrek The Musical" featuring First Bethel's own **Ayden Bowser** in the lead role as Shrek.

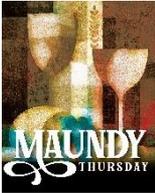
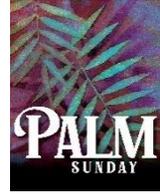
Show dates are April 9 – 12, 2026 and tickets will be available soon.

Follow @southparkdramaclub on Facebook or Instagram or contact Shauna Bowser for ticket information. Break a leg Ayden!

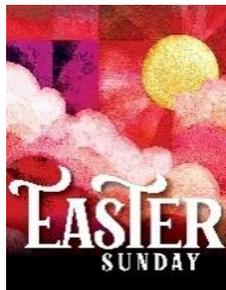
## SPECIAL SERVICES



**PALM SUNDAY WORSHIP**  
**SUNDAY, MARCH 29<sup>TH</sup>**  
**9:30AM**



**MAUNDY THURSDAY**  
**AND**  
**GOOD FRIDAY**  
**COMBINED SERVICE**  
**THURSDAY, APRIL 2<sup>ND</sup>**  
**7:00PM**



**EASTER**  
**SUNDAY, APRIL 5<sup>TH</sup>**  
**7:00AM SUNRISE SERVICE**  
**9:30AM WORSHIP SERVICE**

## STAY CONNECTED !



The **MyUCD** app not only contains contact information and family photos for our congregation, but it also has contact information for our church and staff, **AND links to access weekly announcements, online giving, and the church calendar.**

There are two easy steps to install the app. Download the **myUCD** app to your smart phone and enter your family's personal household access code. From there, it's easy peasy!

If you missed the email with your code, contact the Church Office at 412-835-0700 or via email [FBUMC@Verizon.net](mailto:FBUMC@Verizon.net). There is also a list of the access codes in the Narthex.

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## First Bethel's Mission Statement

*“Nourish Every Body,  
Stimulate Every Spirit,  
Satisfy Every Soul,  
for the Glory of God”*



# First Bethel United Methodist Church

Bethel Park, Pennsylvania

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

5901 Library Road

Bethel Park, PA 15102

<http://www.firstbethelumc.org>

**Church Office**

**412-835-0700**

[FBUMC@Verizon.net](mailto:FBUMC@Verizon.net)



**Kings School Kids**

**412-835-6141**

[KSK10@Verizon.net](mailto:KSK10@Verizon.net)

**Pastor:** Rev. David Ewing

Mobile: 412-818-0889

[PastorDavid@FirstBethelumc.org](mailto:PastorDavid@FirstBethelumc.org)

**Office Manager:** Lisa Stefanowicz

[OfficeManager@FirstBethelumc.org](mailto:OfficeManager@FirstBethelumc.org)

**Choir Director and Organist:** Phil Himmler

**Director of Maintenance:** Jim Howells

## KINGS SCHOOL KIDS

**Director of KSK:** Mary Beth Deckard

**Assistant Director of KSK:** Nicole Crisson

**KSK Office Administrator:** Charlene Phillips



<https://www.facebook.com/FirstBethelUMC/>

**KINGS LIGHT DEADLINE:** The 20<sup>th</sup> of each month is the deadline for submissions for the next issue of the King's Light. Please have your information submitted on time to avoid the disappointment of not having it appear in the next edition. Send via email to Gloria Stephan, editor or send to [FBUMC@Verizon.net](mailto:FBUMC@Verizon.net)

FIRST BETHEL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

5901 LIBRARY ROAD

BETHEL PARK, PA 15102-3398

[www.firstbethelumc.org](http://www.firstbethelumc.org)

**March 2026**

***King's Light Newsletter***

