

First Bethel Church
King's Light Newsletter



2026

From the Heart

Monthly Newsletter
thoughts from Pastor David



Oh, what a glorious day when it arrived in the mail, typically in early Fall! All of it was eagerly anticipated: all three pounds of colorful pages - approximately six hundred of them.

Approximately two hundred of the pages were devoted to picturing children's toys (the first half of the catalog was boring - displaying clothes!). Those that lived in the late 1960's on through the 1990's know what this item was: The JCPenney Christmas Catalog or the Sears Wishbook (Note: I have used this illustration in another written piece or in a sermon - but needed to use it again!)

My brother and I would spend hours with the catalog upon its arrival - circling items with a pen or folding down the corner of the page. Upon finishing and reviewing all the toy pages again, we would conclude hoping that every item would appear Christmas morning. I cannot remember what finagling explanation was given by our parents regarding how Santa became aware of our Catalog/Wishbook selections, but we must have believed it!

I use this illustration to paint the picture of children at Christmastime. The receiving of tangible gifts is the "main thing" of Christmas until they begin to mature. This bubble gets popped when parents drop the truth-bomb of Santa being a make-believe person and all the gifts are actually purchased by mom & dad and loved ones. (Who then ate the cookies and drank the milk???). That excitement continues to wane throughout one's twenties and into full adulthood.

Now, at age fifty-seven, I can attest personally, that giddy excitement is mostly gone and has transformed into something different. In a general sense, I think adults get excited about the intangibles that come with Christmas: seeing the appreciation of gifts given to others, the spirit of love and fellowship with family and friends, some extra time off of work, and celebrating Jesus' advent at church. The joy from First Bethel's musical Christmas Eve service is one of my favorite gifts to receive each year!

It all flows from the gift of God's grace shown in the giving of Jesus who would come to defeat death and offer life! From the toys unwrapped with fervor to the intangible gift of joy that is offered to all - may it usher in appreciation for our Eternal Gift-Giving God!

From the Heart,

Pastor David

P.S. Christina and I do get excited about First Bethel's wonderful generosity to us at Christmastime. The generous monetary gift makes it possible for us to get away for a mid-January holiday to celebrate our anniversary! Thank you all!



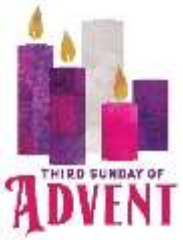
Worship Schedule FOR CHRISTMAS



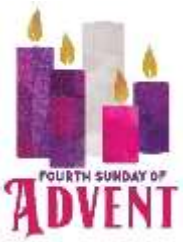
First Sunday of Advent
November 29
9:30AM Worship
10:30AM Sunday Classes
10:30AM Coffee & Fellowship



Second Sunday of Advent
December 6
9:30AM Worship and Communion
10:30AM Sunday Classes
10:30AM Coffee & Fellowship
5:30PM Advent Festival



Third Sunday of Advent
December 13
9:30AM Worship
10:30AM Coffee & Fellowship
11:00AM Christmas Pageant



Fourth Sunday of Advent
December 20
9:30AM Worship and ***Choir Cantata***
10:30AM Sunday Classes
10:30AM Coffee & Fellowship

CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICES

Thursday, December 24th

4PM and 7PM



4:00PM Family Service



Join us for a 45-minute candlelight service designed for families, with a special focus on children. A staffed nursery is available, and younger children will receive flameless candles.

7:00PM A Celebration in Song and Scripture



This service is a fresh take on a traditional Christmas Eve candlelight service, blending special music with the timeless Christmas story.

Through Song and Scripture, we celebrate this silent and holy night by receiving the light and going forth in joy.



Sunday, December 27

Bell Sunday (a First Bethel tradition)

9:30AM Worship

Bring a bell to ring in the New Year!

CHRISTMAS SEASON EVENTS



Advent Festival
Sunday, December 6th at 5:30PM

Enjoy snacks, Christmas carols, and seasonal crafts, including everything you need to build a gingerbread house.
Fun for the young and the young at heart!



Christmas Pageant
Sunday, December 13th at 11AM

Calling all Children and Youth!
Please contact Meredith Steinhagen if you're interested in participating in the Christmas Pageant. Practice will be held on Saturday, December 12th at 9AM.

Keystone Chorus

Keystone Chorus Christmas Concert
Saturday, December 19th 1:30PM

A delightful mix of traditional and popular music in the Barbershop style.
Admission is free; donations are welcome.



Choir Cantata
Sunday, December 20th
during 9:30AM Worship Service

A choral experience for Christmas.
Music composed by John F. Wilson, presented by our Chancel Choir and directed by Phil Himmler.



DECEMBER Birthdays

Dec 2 Alexandra Cecala
Dec 3 Cheryl Passios
Dec 7 Jane Black
Dec 9 Adam Carney
Dec 11 Joseph Martin
Dec 13 Corey Pauline
Dec 15 Darryl DiGorio
Dec 16 Shane Danahey
Dec 17 Bill Black
Dec 19 Donna Dunbar
Dec 20 Corey Criss
Dec 21 Hazel Mattheus-Scabilloni
Dec 27 Alex Lauver
Dec 28 Mark McDermot
Dec 30 Lem Irick
Dec 31 Carole Cuddy
Dec 31 Robin Gray

Have we missed your birthday? Please share your birth date with the church office so we can include you on our monthly list.

A birthday greeting or card from someone in your church family can brighten the day—consider sending one to help celebrate!

Sarris CANDIES

You can still order Sarris Candies online until December 14. Access the Sarris website at:

https://shopfundraising.sarriscandies.com

Click "*Shop Holiday"* then enter our **Group ID # 10-1027** under "*Supporting an Online Fundraiser?*" then Order Now.

This sale supports projects, improvements and ministries here at First Bethel. Contact Charlene Phillips with any questions.

OUTREACH

ANGEL TREE

The Christmas Angel Tree is up and has only a few angels left. There may be up to three requests for each angel.

Choose one, two, or all three wishes to fulfill, then return the angel tag with the unwrapped gift by Sunday, December 13.



This year the requests came from Family Links, Kings School Kids, and Daily Bread. Thank you so much for your generosity.

DAILY BREAD

Daily Bread is our meal ministry on Pittsburgh's North Side. At our last visit on November 1st, we served 165 meals. Our next meal will be served on **Sunday, December 13th**.

Cookie Donations Needed for Daily Bread

We are asking for donations of homemade or bakery-quality cookies so we can put the $60 we usually spend on cookies towards an additional ham. Please see the signup sheet in the Narthex if you want to donate cookies, and bring them to the church by 9:30AM on December 13th.

We would like to thank the congregation for their loyal support of this Outreach mission.

Our Daily Bread dates for 2027 are: February 28, May 2, June 13, August 8, October 10, and December 12. Contact Sally Irick if you can help with any of these meals.

Help us to collect non-perishable food and personal care items to be given to our neighbors through **SHIM** (**South Hills Interfaith Movement**) in Bethel Park. Place your donations in the bins in the Narthex, and we'll get them to SHIM

If you have prescription glasses that you no longer need, drop them in the box in the Narthex. We will pass them along to Christ United Methodist Church who will re-distribute them to people that can use them.

FISH TALES

With the start of the 2026/2027 school year, FISH entered its second year of outreach ministry to the residents of Parkford Apartments in South Park Township. A lot has happened in the past 15 months! We held nine months of weekly after school programs; applied for and received a Ministry Multiplier Grant from the United Methodist Conference; served over 900 meals through our summer **SWIM** lunch program; supplied 129 (and counting) kids with backpacks and back to school supplies; began a bi-weekly **Sunday brunch and service**; held our first distribution of clothing through our **Kind Closet**; provided scholarships for six children for Melting Pot's after school program during the spring of 2026 as well as **scholarships** for their summer camp program; strengthened and grew our relationships with ministry partners Melting Pot and St. Vincent De Paul; and perhaps most importantly, have begun to gain the trust of many members of the Parkford community.

Moving forward into 2027 we will be resuming our weekly after-school program (now dubbed **"Wonderful Wednesdays"**), and plan to begin a bi-weekly **"Drop-A-Tot"** program where we offer childcare for pre-school children while at the same time providing transportation for their caregivers/guardians to shop and run errands. One of the biggest challenges many of our Parkford

friends face is lack of transportation, which makes seemingly simple tasks such as grocery shopping overwhelming.

We are also developing a **"Loads of Love"** program to help residents with the costs associated with doing laundry. The laundry room at the community offers washing machines and dryers at a cost of $2.50 a load to wash and $2.50 to dry. Couple that with the costs of detergent and fabric sheets, and the weekly cost for a family of four quickly rises to a figure very few can afford. We plan to offer bi-weekly opportunities where we will provide childcare and the monies and supplies necessary for residents to complete this basic housekeeping task.

This may seem like an overly ambitious slate of programs, but our faith remains strong and we are dedicated to supporting our friends at Parkford in any way possible.

Please continue to pray for us as we continue our outreach, and should you feel moved to volunteer to assist in any of our programs (no matter the amount of time you can share, we will find a spot for you!) please contact me.

Lisa Rulong



FELLOWSHIP BRUNCH AT PARKFORD

Devotional services are held on the first and third Sundays of the month at Parkford Apartments at 12:30PM, led by retired Pastor Glen Irvin from First Bethel, followed by a brunch at 1PM.

If you are interested in attending, offering a dish or treat to share, or would like to help, please contact Mary Courtney.

KIND CLOSET

Generous First Bethel friends,

Your donations of clothing and linens have been great! Several items have already been distributed, and we're out of room to store the rest!

Please hold your donations until further notice.

AUDIOFETCH HEARING ASSISTANCE FOR THE SANCTUARY

AudioFetch connects Bluetooth-enabled hearing aids and other smart devices to provide hearing assistance in the church sanctuary and narthex areas.

And it's easy to use! Download the free **AudioFetch** app from the Apple App Store or Google Play. Connect to the **AudioFetchExpress** WiFi network with your smart device. Open the AudioFetch app and select Channel 1.

Contact Jeff Leonhardt or Mike Stephan if you have questions or need help getting set up.



OUR ELECTRONIC SIGN

The electronic sign has malfunctioned and we're waiting for parts that are on backorder. We're super disappointed that we can't publicize all the great events that are happening, but we're working extra hard to keep our congregation and neighbors updated through our website and Facebook in the meantime. Please call the Church Office or Pastor David if you need more information. Thanks for your patience!

HERE AM I, SEND ME!

by Gloria Stephan

Our 2027 ASP summer youth mission trip is scheduled for June 20–26. The trip is open to high school students and adults. To register, go to the Participant Center and use Group #17815.

https://apps.skycog.com/reg/APPSERV/Join.asp

Submit your $50/youth or $100/adult registration fee to First Bethel via check or online marked "ASP Registration". Our next planning meeting is scheduled for Sunday, January 10th at noon.

For more information, contact Gloria Stephan.

Learn more at https://asphome.org/summer/.



TRIVIA NIGHT

ASP FUNDRAISER

Saturday January 30th 2027
5PM - 7:30PM

Join a team to compete for fun prizes.
Your $15 Admission includes snacks and drinks.
Our professional host will be Don from TotalQuiz.com.

There will be 20 different categories of trivia,
plus Radio Bingo at halftime and a Silent Auction too!

All proceeds benefit our Appalachia Service Project mission trip fund

CHURCH LIBRARY NEWS

'TIS THE SEASON!

It's Christmas at the Library! There are elves on the shelves, a miniature manger scene, a tree of jingle bells on the desk, sprinkles of holly and glitter throughout and, best of all, soooo many Christmas books!
Check out these favorites on the shelves and look for more on the cart next to our desk.

A TREASURE OF CHRISTMAS MIRACLES - True stories of God's presence.

A CUP OF CHRISTMAS TEA - Heartwarming poetry.

THE POLAR EXPRESS - A magical journey.

CHRISTMAS DAY IN THE MORNING - A classic enjoyed for generations.

THE CHRISTMAS CANDLE - Touched by a mysterious angel.

THE LAST CHRISTMAS RIDE - A sister's love.

THE LITTLEST REINDEER

HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS

A CHRISTMAS SNOW - Trapped in a blizzard.

HOME BY ANOTHER WAY - To Bethlehem.

SNOWMEN AT CHRISTMAS - Hidden pictures.

HOW TO CATCH SANTA - Don't forget cookies.

Merry Christmas !!
Your Library Staff

BOOK CLUB



Our Book Club reads a wide variety of genres to expand our perspectives—and sometimes simply to enjoy a good story. We meet monthly on a Friday evening, and everyone is welcome! Here's what we're reading:

Friday, December 18th (7PM at the home of Mike & Gloria)
Comfort & Joy: A Fable, by Kristen Hanna



Joy Candellaro once loved Christmas more than any other time of the year. Now, as the holiday approaches, she is at a crossroads in her life; recently divorced and alone, she can't summon the old enthusiasm for celebrating. So without telling anyone, she buys a ticket and boards a plane bound for the beautiful Pacific Northwest. When an unexpected detour takes her deep into the woods of the Olympic rainforest, Joy makes a bold decision to leave her ordinary life behind—to just walk away—and thus begins an adventure unlike any she could have imagined.

In the small town of Rain Valley, six-year-old Bobby O'Shea is facing his first Christmas without a mother. Unable to handle the loss, Bobby has closed himself off from the world, talking only to his invisible best friend. His father Daniel is beside himself, desperate to help his son cope. Yet when the little boy meets Joy, these two unlikely souls form a deep and powerful bond. In helping Bobby and Daniel heal, Joy finds herself again.

But not everything is as it seems in quiet Rain Valley, and in an instant, Joy's world is ripped apart, and her heart is broken. On a magical Christmas Eve, a night of impossible dreams and unexpected chances, Joy must find the courage to believe in a love—and a family—that can't possibly exist, and go in search of what she wants . . . and the new life only she can find.

MARTHA CIRCLE

Martha Circle is our Women's Group that gathers regularly for fellowship, service and connecting with others of our faith community. In November, the ladies toured the new Sarris Candies Factory in Canonsburg – how sweet!



The next meeting is Wednesday, December 9th at 1PM at the church. Contact Donna Hennen for more information.

FBUMC MEN'S GROUP

The Men's Group meets at 8:30AM on the first Saturday of each month for fellowship and community activities. They also meet informally for breakfast on Wednesdays around 9AM at the Eat 'N Park in South Park Shops.

The next Men's Group meeting is Saturday, December 5th at 8:30AM

THANKSGIVING DINNER KITS

On November 22nd, the Men's Group joyfully assembled and delivered 28 Thanksgiving dinner kits to our neighbors.

The kits were filled with items generously donated by our congregation, including potatoes, gravy, stuffing mix, sweet potatoes, vegetables, cranberry sauce, pumpkin pie mix, dinner rolls and butter. The men added turkeys and perishable items like milk that were purchased with proceeds from their annual Garage Sale and other fundraisers. Thanks to everyone that donated items or helped with organizing, assembly or delivery!











YOUTH MINISTRY





- The Youth Progressive Dinner is set for Saturday, December 19th at the homes of Jim & Dorrie Walter, Dick & Mary Ann Davis, and Mark & Lisa McDermot. Thank you to our hosts for opening their homes to our youth and chaperones for an evening of food, fellowship and fun!
- The Youth are planning to participate in the Western Pennsylvania Annual Conference "Current" youth event led by our own Conference Superintendent Rev. Ross Pryor. The event will be at Laurelville Retreat Center February 19th-21st. Contact Meredith Steinhagen or Melissa Smith for more information.

PASTOR'S CHRISTMAS GIFT



As we approach the blessed Christmas season, our hearts are filled with gratitude for the many blessings God has bestowed upon our church family this past year.

We invite you to contribute to a monetary love gift in appreciation of Pastor David's incredible amount of heart, prayer and dedication poured into our church and community.

Contribute by adding "Pastor's Christmas Gift" to your offering envelope, or contribute online at www.firstbethelumc.org/give by the end of the year. All contributions will be processed by our counters and a check will be mailed to Pastor David in January.

Thank you!

WOMEN'S RETREAT 2026



Pastor Kathy Clark led 26 women in this year's theme, "Roots and Wings," at the annual Women's Retreat at Olmsted Manor Retreat Center in Ludlow, PA, November 13th–15th. Special thanks to Catherine Taylor and Amy Scott for organizing and bringing us all together.

The theme was inspired by an anonymous saying: "We give our children two things. One is roots and the other is wings." Our focus, however, was not on what we have given, but on what we have received—and from whom.

Together, we reflected on two questions:

- Who helped us grow roots—lasting and firm—that define significant parts of who we are?
- Who gave us wings, and where have they taken us?





I am a beloved child of God.

I pray that my life will reflect the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.

The 2027 retreat dates are set for November 5th – 7th.

WEIGHT WATCHERS

WeightWatchers holds workshops several times a week right here at First Bethel—how convenient!

- Wednesdays at 6PM
- Thursdays at 10:30AM
- Fridays at 9:30AM
- Saturdays at 7:30AM, 9AM, and 10:30AM

For more information, see www.weightwatchers.com



A COMMUNITY BOOK STUDY

How do we respond when concern for the future of our planet becomes difficult to carry alone? First Bethel invites you to join a discussion group led by Todd Slater exploring ***Life After Doom: Wisdom and Courage for a World Falling Apart*, by Brian D. McLaren**. The book offers a compassionate, practical guide for moving through climate anxiety, grief, and uncertainty without giving in to either denial or despair.

There will be six 90-minute sessions held on Tuesday evenings where we'll create space for honest conversation, thoughtful reflection, and supportive community.

Signup in the Narthex if you're interested, or call the Church Office so we know how many books to order. Starting date and time will be announced soon!

ALL AT YOUR FINGERTIPS!

The **myUCD** (My Universal Church Directory) app provides:



- ★ Contact information for church folks
- ★ **Sunday weekly announcements**
- ★ **List of upcoming events**
- ★ **The full church calendar**
- ★ Link to Vanco online giving
- ★ Church staff information
- ★ Church phone, email and web links

The app is available for iOS or Android phones. You'll need your unique Household Code to complete the installation, then you're good to go!

To obtain your unique Household Code, call the church office, see the list in the Narthex near the church portrait directories, or contact Gloria Stephan.

FIRST BETHEL MISSION STATEMENT

"Nourish Every Body,
Stimulate Every Spirit,
Satisfy Every Soul,
for the Glory of God"

First Bethel Merchandise

Shop First Bethel branded merchandise today!
Explore 21 items, including t-shirts, polos, hoodies, aprons, totes, hats, and more.
Choose your colors and logo.
Sizes available for men, women, and youth.





LOGO #1 PRINTED



LOGO #2 PRINTED



LOGO #3 EMBROIDERED



LOGO #4 EMBROIDERED

https://shieldsembroidery.tuosystems.com/stores/firstbethel2026

Order by November 30th - Pickup at the church by December 17th
Or choose to have items shipped directly at an additional cost.

Any proceeds will benefit our Building the Faith building maintenance fund.

Provided by Shields Embroidery 4156 Library Rd 15234



ORDER POINSETTIAS

Poinsettias will be displayed in the church sanctuary on Christmas Eve, and you may take yours home any time after the 7PM Christmas Eve Service. To order, please return this form, order online using the link or QR code, or call us at 412-835-0700. Pay by adding "poinsettias" to your offering envelope, mail a check, or pay online by selecting the Flowers tile.

The last day to order is Sunday, December 6th 2026.

Your Name: _____

Phone Number: _____ *Envelope. #:* _____

Number of 6.5" Red Poinsettias at $11 _____

Number of 10" White Poinsettias at $35 _____

In Memory of: _____

_____

In Honor of: _____

_____

Order online:

https://forms.gle/fjD3KjFPJVmWVdq87

Total Amount Paid:

_____ ☐ *Check here if paying online*

First Bethel United Methodist Church

Bethel Park, Pennsylvania

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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Bethel Park, PA 15102

http://www.firstbethelumc.org

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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

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

KINGS LIGHT DEADLINE: The **20th** 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

First Bethel United Methodist Church
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