

The Pastor's Notebook

It happened a number of years ago - a recovery room, strange lights and sounds, pokes and prods. Voices came in blurry waves, a gurney ride down the hall and then more strange voices.

Nothing I experienced was bad, just odd and unfamiliar. Eventually I remember arriving in a room and someone touching my hand and for the first time I opened my eyes.

Through the haze of anesthesia, I immediately recognized my wife, Linda's, face and voice.

Confusion gave way to peace. No, I still didn't know where I was but I knew who I was with, and that was enough.

Even though that surgery was 27 years ago, the memory of relief in that one moment is strong. Someone who loved me was with me. I knew I wasn't alone.

Recently we celebrated Pentecost, the sending of the Holy Spirit to the frightened, confused and disoriented disciples. It's a holiday about fire, wind, breath. But it's more than that as well – it's also about presence.

In an unsettling time, after Jesus had ascended to heaven, the Spirit came. And somehow, his disciples knew that he was with them in a different sort of way. New, yes. But also familiar.



In the wind and fire they somehow found strength and presence. They could sense the connection between themselves and God, and they could also see that the fire rested on every one of them.

So from then on, whenever they needed to hold onto the presence of God, they only had to look at one of the others and remember the tongues of fire. Because the presence of that other person brought the presence of God so near that they could hear it in a word of comfort, feel it in a handshake, see it in a kind look.

When I look at the folks who make up First Bethel Church, I think it's much the same. Because we're on the journey of faith together, I feel God so very close - in a laugh, an embrace, and an encouraging smile. I see God in a friendship mended and care extended to members and neighbors alike.

May you sense the persistent presence of God in those around you, and may you offer God's presence to those who need it, too.

- ***Pastor Tom***

Taize Prayer Service

On Tuesday June 28th at 7:30 pm we will offer our second Taize Prayer Service, which provides a serene and moving opportunity to experience the presence of God in fresh and replenishing ways.



In the softly candlelit sanctuary, those who gather will have opportunities to experience the presence of God through meditative music, Scripture readings and moments of silence and reflection. The Taizé service is a wonderful way to experience inner stillness and peace in the midst of so much outer activity. There's no sermon or offering taken – rather it seeks to create a place of peace within our hearts for God to dwell and speak. All are invited!

Food, Friends and our Father's Word

If you are interested in joining a small group, finding new friends, sharing a meal and Bible study, please consider Food and Friends. It's held at the home of Sam and LuAnn Mudrak in Mt. Lebanon. You're welcome to start at any time.



We will meet the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of every month. If you can't make one, that's okay. Our first meeting was May 10th but we have another one on May 24th. We'll meet from 7-8:30 pm. Any questions, call 412-308-6097 or e-mail LuAnn at luann.mudrak@gmail.com.

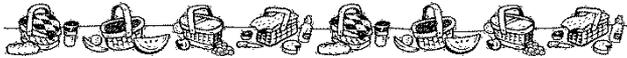


MARK YOU CALENDAR!

September 11th at
4:00 p.m.

If you would like to be part of the planning

Please contact Lynda at 412-835-6141



Meal Train Report

Thank you to all of you who participated in the meal train for Lisa Rulong and for Jaime Gray (coordinated by Charlene Pauline). It was greatly appreciated. If you didn't get to sign up but you would be interested in taking a meal to someone in need, either e-mail me at luann.mudrak@gmail.com or call me at 412-308-6097. The more the merrier.



Congratulations Mr. & Mrs. Williams!

Ken Williams would like to invite friends from the First Bethel Church Family to the 70th anniversary celebration of his parents, Murray & Laurine Williams!



It will be held on June 26th from 1:30 - 4:00 PM at First Methodist Church in Waynesburg. Anyone who would like to attend is welcome!



Summer Is Almost here

Don't forget To Get Your Tickets
to the ballgame!

Pittsburgh Pirates vs. Miami Marlins

August 21st at 1:35
\$24.00

Don't Let The Summer Fun Pass You By!

Call Lynda Pore at 412-835-6167
and Reserve Your Tickets Today!



Martha Circle News!

Our annual picnic will be held Wednesday, June 29th at the home of Dottie Bruckner at 6:30 p.m. Thanks again to our members for bringing food items for SHIM each meeting date.

Also, another "Sunshine Basket" was given to a member who had surgery recently. Thanks also for contributing items for that. We will not meet in July and August.

Thought for the day: "Little is much if God is in it."



First Bethel
Women
Care

Library News!

Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton's What Are We Fighting For? Coming Together Around What Matters Most is now in our Library. In its description of the new book, the publisher says there is much controversy about issues facing the *United Methodist Church* and that the Western Pennsylvania Bishop, in a “warm and practical” manner, “offers a way to move beyond all the discord to a hope-filled future ...” Church members are asked to work together in the midst of disagreement. The book is called “a breath of fresh air to rejuvenate our churches.”

Another book added recently is **Miracles from Heaven: A Little Girl, Her Journey to Heaven and Her Amazing Story of Healing**. A 2016 movie is based on this story, written by the girl's mother.

Among the titles in our CareNotes display is **Dealing with Financial Stress**. It offers sound advice for anyone struggling with money problems, and it recommends other sources, including four books, that may help you. Our other CareNotes include **Beating the Senior Blues, Strengthening a Struggling Marriage, Where is God in My Suffering? What to Say to Someone Who is Grieving** and **Dealing Positively with the Shock of Cancer**. Ministers, health care professionals, social workers, bereavement counselors and others use CareNotes. Our display is on a shelf on the back wall, to the left of the Library desk. The eight-page booklets are free. Take one anytime. Give one to someone who may need help.

- Your Library Staff

The gift of yourself

If you could only sense how important you are to the lives of those you meet; how important you can be to the people you may never even dream of. There is something of yourself that you leave at every meeting with another person.

- Fred Rogers

Relay for Life of South Hills – Cheryl’s Team

On behalf of Relay for Life’s Cheryl’s Team, I would like to thank those of you who participated in our bake sale, on Election Day, by donating baked goods and working the sale. We had a very successful sale, making over \$450.00, thanks to you, the volunteers. We couldn’t have done it without you!

Our next bake sale will be held on the day of the event, Saturday, June 25th from 11:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m., at the south Park Fairgrounds Oval and the Museum Building. We again need volunteers to bake and help work the booth. Suggested items that sold well at the last sale are cookies, bar cookies, brownies, pies, mini breads, (pumpkin, zucchini, banana, etc.) and muffins.

Come walk the track, play games, eat, meet with friends and have a fun day!

Please sign up on the sheet in the narthex for walking the track, donating baked goods or helping at the Cheryl’s Team booth. In appreciation,

- Denise I. Murray, Team Captain

Thanks!

At our recent Church Council meeting we recognized the hard work and deep dedication to ministry demonstrated by our Financial Administrator, Karen Betler, during the time we were without a Church Administrative Assistant. Karen went beyond the call of duty countless times to see that our work was accomplished on time and effectively. Many thanks to a valuable team member and friend!



We deeply appreciate the many volunteers that kept the office staffed throughout the months as well. Stephanie Alstadt provided excellent coordination of the office needs and the volunteer’s availability without a hitch. Many blessings to all who helped us!



Feed my sheep

By Gloria Stephan

I recently heard a sermon based on John 21:17-21 where Jesus asks Simon Peter not once, but three times “Do you love me?” Each time Peter answers “You know that I love you” and Jesus responds with “Feed my lambs”, then “Take care of my sheep” and finally “Feed my sheep”.

I wondered what exactly the point of the story was. Surely Jesus knew the answer to the question, yet he asked it three times, probably heard the answer he expected, and then followed up by giving a command in response to Peter’s affirmation.

As I thought about the scripture, it reminded me of a simple “if / then” statement that you learn about in logic or computer programming. If you love me then then feed my lambs, take care of my sheep, feed my sheep. If something is logically true, then you can make other assumptions based on that truth. It’s a simple progression of cause and effect, premise and outcome.

It also occurred to me that there is a distinction between simply giving an answer to a question and actually responding. An answer can be a simple “yes” or “no”, or “5 more minutes”, or “go ask your mother”. But a response can be so much more. A response can be a simple verbal answer, as in Peter’s repeated assurance to Jesus. A response can also be a look, a shrug, or many other non-verbal expressions. But in some cases that’s not enough.

Aha, that’s it! Perhaps Jesus was trying to get across the idea that if you really love, then don’t just say it. Respond and show it. Do something about it. Was Jesus saying for Peter to follow him, obey his commandments, and to take care of others? I think so.

And that’s how it is on ASP. Volunteers and ASP staff put their faith in action by planning and spending a week away in Appalachia as a response of love. They are feeding lambs, taking care of sheep and responding with their dedication of time and talents. Everyone that supports the trip also responds to the call with financial donations, supplies, prayers and words of encouragement.

How simple, and yet how profound to not just answer the question about love, but to respond by following the commandments of love.

The ASP volunteers will be serving in Bland County Virginia the week of June 19. Please keep the volunteers, the ASP staff and the families that will be served in your prayers. Thank you for giving First Bethel an opportunity to respond.

Welcome Joan!

The Staff-Parish Relations Committee is happy to introduce our new Church Administrative Assistant, Joan Straitiff, who has begun her work in the church office! Joan was formerly employed by the City of Alexandria, VA for 25 years in a variety of positions including, Coordinator/Community Services Program, Human Resources/Senior Analyst, and Humans Resources Manager. She now resides in Castle Shannon to be closer to her mother. WELCOME to First Bethel!

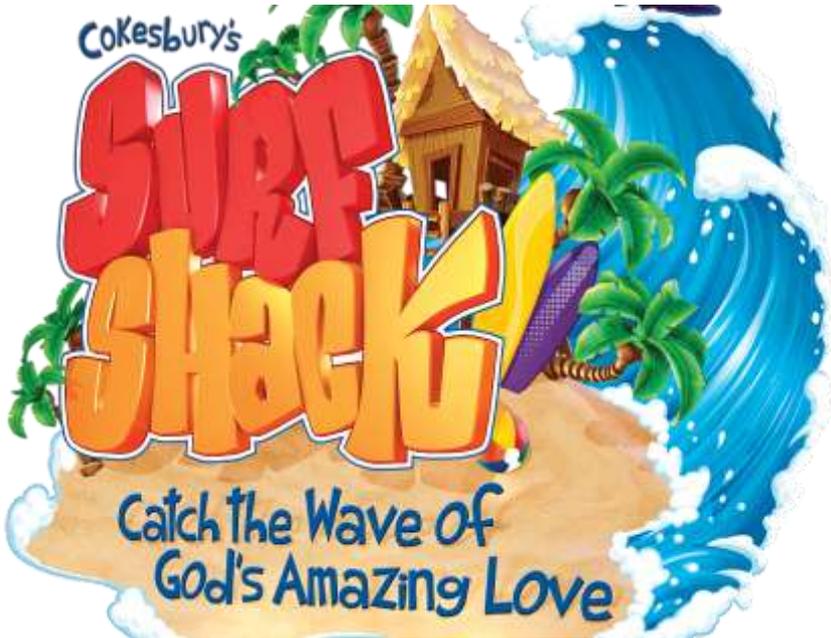


**Meet our new
Administrative
Assistant!**

Summer Worship at First Bethel!

Once again we will gather together as one church and one family this summer at one worship service! From July 3 thru September 4 our Sunday worship service will be at 10:00 a.m. This year we are thrilled to announce that we will offer Sunday School for all children in the play area near the office (weather permitting.) Kids will meet with Janice and Shawn Evans at 9:15 a.m. and their parents and any other interested adults will gather in our new worship space on the hillside below the cross for devotions and singing. Hope to see you this summer!





June 13-17

Age 3 thru Grade 4

First Bethel United Methodist Church

6:15-8:30 p.m.

It's time to head to the "**Surf Shack**" for VBS! All kids age 3 to grade 4 are invited to discover some cool fun with Jesus! We'll gather from 6:15 – 8:30 pm for music, crafts, stories, games, science and more!! Use the registration form on the back or call the church office at 412-835-0700!

Want to lend a hand as a guide, teacher or helper? Contact Alyssa Stadelman at 612-652-8256. Thanks!

Vacation Bible School
Surf Shack
Registration Form
June 13 – 17, 2016
6:15 – 8:30 pm

Child's Name _____

Parent/Guardian Name _____

Address _____

E-mail Address _____

Phone numbers: Home _____

Cell: _____ Other: _____

Date of Birth _____ Age: _____

Last grade of school completed: _____

Home church: _____

Allergies/ Medical Information: _____

Emergency Contacts: _____

Dismissal Information: (who can pick up this child) _____
