

First Bethel United Methodist Church Beyond the Plate (April through June 2016)

This is our thirtieth report on beyond-the-plate ministries, and is intended to highlight the ways First Bethel reaches out in ministry within our congregation, our community, and the world. Often, we see ourselves (or others) take charge of planning - perhaps a dinner, a Sunday lesson, an outing. Or a grieving family might be served, a shut-in touched with love, or a maintenance chore undertaken. Or perhaps, any of the numerous obligations that on the surface appear commonplace or ordinary disappear from our to-do lists because someone has already acted. Doors are opened, candles are lit, supplies are ordered, prayers are said, the sanctuary is cleaned, a small group sings, the organ sounds, tables are set up, chairs are moved, stories are told, someone is able to smile because you made your presence known, you give a hug, you greet a stranger at the door, you visit, you feed, you listen, you understand. Someone must do these things, and someone does. We look with our eyes which become accustomed, thus conceal the merits of the gifts that others (and we ourselves) give, and so we surely undervalue them. We rather should be looking with our hearts, which God has given the ability to truly see. Our hearts will put the name on these things, which may not have dollar value but will always have merit. They are pieces of our ministry. We ask God to continue to bless the little things, to help us to understand how they fit, to fill our hearts with the knowledge of them, and be grateful for the strength of the collage that is our First Bethel family.

April

Special Offerings for April - The special offering for this month \$280 went to First Bethel's Vacation Bible School. See the outstanding report on the Surf Shack under June's VBS item to see that this is money well used. Native American Awareness, our Conference Benevolence for April, received donations of \$163.

Awesome Pie Sale - This sale of wonderful pies (at \$12/each) was coordinated by our ASP volunteers to lighten mom's heart for Mother's Day. The revenue from the sale \$297 was dedicated to our June ASP ministry. There were a few pies remaining, so we are promised that some very special dessert will be served at the ASP Thank You dinner. Watch for it!

M&M Containers - Your loose change (and dollars) added up to ca. \$767.50 for our ASP trip. Not bad! Thanks to all for supporting this effort.

Concert - On April 16 the exquisite Bell'Art Ensemble presented a lovely (and we're told absolutely breathtakingly complex) concert featuring music of Central and South America. This is a premier professional group in the Pittsburgh area, and we're very proud to have hosted them. Proceeds from our concerts help our Men's Ministry in their support of needed renovations.

Deb Dennick-Ream - On April 24, we gathered for a single worship (and a brunch following) so that

all could celebrate together with thankful hearts the service, dedication, and love that Deb invested over the years as our Deacon. The service brimmed with emotion, the brunch was delicious, and the hugs were warm.

Cheryl's Team Bake Sale - This bake sale was held on April 26 to raise dollars for the American Cancer Society. We were invited to donate baked goods or to help run the sale. The event earned \$450 towards our fight against cancer.

Taize - As a bit of background, Taize is the name of a village in Burgundy, France, where the community was founded in 1949 by Brother Roger Schutz-Marsauche. The community comprises more than 100 brothers, from Catholic and Protestant traditions, who originate from approximately 30 countries across the world. The community intends for its life to be one of reconciliation. On April 27, First Bethel experienced our first Taize service with a lovely and contemplative candlelit service. We pray these services will provide for us many occasions for peaceful meditation with listening hearts.

May

Special Offerings for May - We hit the jackpot with this offering of \$1,167 in support of our Outdoor Beautification Project. Your generous donations will go far to help refresh and brighten up the gardens and grounds around our church building.

Additionally, Peace with Justice, our Conference Benevolence for May, received donations of \$118.

First Bethel Walkers - Each Friday, at 6:00 p.m. we will meet at the parking lot across from the Community House on Maple Springs Road in South Park to walk together. We intend to get healthy (and perhaps enhance camaraderie along the way). Wear reasonable walking shoes (duh) - and maybe take along one of those fantastic First Bethel ASP water bottles (available in the Narthex following worship). All ages are welcome!

Celebration of God's Creation of Animals - We experienced our very own St. Francis moments as we joined on the afternoon of May 22 to celebrate God's wisdom in providing for us small or large furry, feathery, finny, or scaly beings to love us unconditionally and encouraging us to do the same in return. Treats were provided to soothe the savage beasts, and donations of pet food, supplies, and treats were accepted for donation to SHIM.

Youth Group Movie and Pizza Night - An evening of pizza and the movie "Heaven is for Real" was hosted by Jaime and Robin Gray at their home. There was a good turnout, and the kids seemed to enjoy the movie, and the pizza, and the 4 POUNDS of popcorn! We had a good mix of boys and girls (and were very happy to include one non-First Bethel participant), with the youngest going into 6th grade this fall, and the oldest in 9th grade. Since the summer is already action packed with FB youth activities, we're thinking this will be something we will want to continue later this year.

Bible Study - This five week study began on May 4, and was envisioned to give us some insight into the incredible courage required of first century Christians to face truly daunting daily challenges. Imagine if they had not. Imagine...

June

Special Offerings for June - Facility improvements, (including a fairly expensive but necessary replacement of the deteriorated classroom floors in the Education Building) are the target for this month's special offering. \$215 was garnered for this effort. Flood relief for West Virginia, our Conference Benevolence for June, received donations of \$107.

Grads - June 5 was the date set aside to celebrate the graduation of a number of our incredible young people. Lance Irick graduated from PSU with a BS in Hospitality Management; Nicole Irick graduated from Thomas Jefferson University with a Master's in Nursing Anesthesia, Sarah Kobylinski graduated from Pitt with a Master's in Education, Jimmie Yetiskul graduated from Pitt with a BA in Business Management, and Shelby Zakrzewski graduated from Slippery Rock with a Bachelor of Science. Wesley and Thomas Black graduated from Bethel Park H.S., and Morgan Wade graduated from South Fayette H.S. Congratulations to these young people whose efforts have provided them with a solid base and a path to a bright future. They truly are blessings to all of us.

Movie Night - June 5 also was the date we got together to watch and discuss "War Room". Eight people attended. Discussion centered on communication about opportunities for spiritual development and the possibility for dedicated, intimate space for prayer. One question raised for our consideration was "how can we make prayer a more intentional part of our lives".

Nar-Anon - This family support group began meeting at First Bethel on June 7 and will continue to meet each Tuesday. The focus of the Nar-Anon organization is particularly on those who are struggling to cope with the situation of loved ones suffering addiction.

Reusable Water Bottles - Where else could you buy a 36 oz sturdy, BPA-free, eco-friendly water bottle for \$8.00 AND support ASP at the same time. This effort continues to be a factor in raising dollars for ASP, so you will be able to find water bottles in the Narthex throughout the summer. They work super well to keep us hydrated on those South Park walks.

Vacation Bible School - This year, our VBS was held June 13-17 in the evenings. Our fearless VBS director says "It was AMAZING!" and adds: The kids had a fabulous time and unanimously favored "snack" over anything else- who wouldn't? Snack was paired with science, so they had a chance to eat yummy beach-themed treats while watching things explode, bubble over, and participating in the action! They loved each "center". Bible was enhanced with a game that tied in with the story of the night, and everyone

shared their excitement by shaking their "shakas" (palm closed, pinky and thumb out (:o). We averaged 21 kids, ~10 adult leaders, and 5-6 teen volunteers each night. The kids learned about the creation story (God creates), Moses being taken care of by Miriam (God helps), Jesus' baptism (God loves), Jesus calming the storm (God calms), and Jesus sending his disciples to spread the word (God sends). Our theme verse was, "Remember that the Lord is great and awesome!" (Nehemiah 4:14b) Thanks to all who participated in the organization and administration of this action-packed five days!

Church World Service Blankets - The CWS blankets (a humanitarian effort we combined with a commemoration of Father's Day), will be distributed to people in need all over the world. Circumstances that impoverish people include wars, natural disasters, genocide, famine, drought. These blankets provide warmth, comfort, and protection. We provided \$445 toward this effort.

Appalachia Service Project (ASP) - This was our 17th consecutive year of involvement in ASP, and new participants joined seasoned volunteers for an experience of learning, working, and living for others. On June 19, thirteen volunteers were assigned to two homes (neighboring each other in Princeton, WV) owned by a mother and a daughter. Another daughter lived close by, so the volunteers were often joined by children and other family members, especially at lunchtime! Two of the grandchildren suffer from mitochondrial myopathy and another is autistic. We built a 42' handicap ramp, installed laminate flooring, and replaced damaged insulation. The ASP teams originally had been assigned to Kentucky, were sent to Virginia, but worked in West Virginia. By the end of the week, the connections and God moments that occurred were well beyond coincidence and became multiplied blessings for many.

Relay for Life - Cheryl's Team - This event took place on June 25 at the South Park Fairgrounds Oval and the Museum Building. Cheryl's Team worked to enlist volunteers to bake goods and help work the booth, and First Bethel participated with walkers. The weather cooperated beautifully.

SHIM - Our food donations to SHIM over this quarter were 293 lb. Keep that good work flowing!

Our Website - Don't forget to check out our new website at www.firstbethelumc.org (and return often because new information will frequently be added). The website is more inviting, more user friendly, more informative, and more reflective of the church, its many ministries, and opportunities for discipleship. You'll find ways to become involved, an interactive calendar of events, recent sermons, the Kings Light newsletter, Beyond the Plate, and Pastor Tom's blog! Let the church office know if you have ideas or items to share.

KSK Website - Watch for details soon on a revamp of the Kings School Kids website. We'll give you a heads up when we go "live".

Financial Snapshot:

Church Income YTD: \$124,759

Church Expenses YTD: \$153,291

KSK Income YTD: \$210,958

KSK Expenses YTD: \$162,992

Fulfilling the Faith:

June: Income: \$2,581

Shortfall: \$1,453

YTD: Income: \$18,393

Shortfall: \$5,813

Around the Corner!

Summer Worship - Beginning July 3, our Sunday services will return to a single 10:00 a.m. worship. With an eye to "One Church, One Family", we really do relish this opportunity to reunite in worship. First Bethel also will provide Sunday School this summer (at 9:15 a.m.) for all children (in the outdoor play area near the office, weather permitting). Janice and Shawn Evans will lead this children's Sunday School opportunity. Parents and other interested adults are invited to gather in our new worship space on the hillside below the cross for devotions and singing.

Kings School Kids - For those of us with children or grandchildren in the 3 1/2 years old or older age group, KSK is offering a new 3-days per week afternoon preschool class, which apparently is filling up fast. Call 412-835-6141 for information.

Talent Show - Watch your bulletin for information on an upcoming Talent Show, tentatively scheduled for August. We are truly blessed to be so rich in God-given abilities. You're going to want to be a part of this - on stage or in the audience!

Pirate Fun Run/Walk - Terry Taylor is spearheading First Bethel's participation in this event on

Saturday, July 30, with a walk around the stadiums. He has a team set up (he's made this effort an event for the Indian Guides and Princesses). You can join his team, "South Hills Y Walkers" (or become a sponsor). Anyone raising or donating \$30 will receive an event T-shirt, entry to a tailgate gathering after the walk, and a general admission ticket to a Pirates Game. Terry's email is (josephtjt@yahoo.com) ...or, talk with him following church service for particulars.

Annual Outing - Don't forget to reserve your tickets to attend the Pirate game on August 21 at 1:30 p.m. Tickets are \$24.00/person and space is limited (we had only 38 tickets available, and they're going quickly). Kids 14 and under will receive a W. B. Mason collectible truck and will be able to "run the bases". Call Lynda soon at 412-835-6141 to reserve your tickets or for additional information.

Church Picnic - Our annual church picnic will take place on September 11 at Peterswood Park (4:00-8:00 p.m.) Mark your calendar! ...and watch for details.

Don't Forget

Meal Train - The Meal Train is intended as a way for us to provide meals for those in the church who may have suffered an illness, welcomed a baby, or perhaps experienced a death in the family. It has been activated twice since its inception with good results. If you wish to volunteer for this ministry, please contact LuAnn Mudrak. Her info for the Meal Train (and for the Bible study group mentioned below) is: luann.mudrak@gmail.com or call 412-308-6097. The process is relatively easy. As circumstances dictate, a schedule is developed based on a family's input. That information is shared by e-mail or phone, as you prefer. A simple meal is delivered to the home. No visit is required, but the family may enjoy chatting with you briefly. Our hope is to continue this ministry as needed.

Food, Friends, and Our Father's Word - This study group meeting will take place on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of each month at the home of Sam and LuAnn Mudrak. Light snacks will be served. The group is currently studying the book of James. The plan is to do Bible study and/or studies on topics as the group decides.

Just A Thought - The April edition of the King's Light included a succinct description of the enormous building/remodeling step we took in 2001 to the financial tune of \$875,000. We called our commitment "Find Us Faithful". Among the many changes: we remodeled to bring our First Bethel home into handicap compliance; to provide a safe, dry and well-lit Founders Hall; we added ramps to Founders Hall and to the Education Building, added bathrooms, a beautiful parlor, a kitchenette in the foyer area; and (certainly not in our sights at the outset, but environmentally required by our municipality), installed an expensive water catchment area to prevent flooding at the jointure of the base of Kings School Road, Route 88, and our parking lot. Over the years, we've morphed the name of our Stewardship campaign segments, but not our commitment, which now we unwaveringly call "Fulfilling the Faith". With God's blessings and your generosity, we see a light at the end of the tunnel and it's not a train. By the end of March, we had reduced the balance on our loan to \$66,083. This will require a little over \$4,000 a month to pay our loan. We, as a congregation, prove over and over again our commitment to whatever we set our sights on. If we keep our noses to the grindstone, our pockets to the ready, our prayers and dedication to this beautiful building that we both reap benefit and spread ministry from, we will pay off this commitment before Fall of next year. Please keep your prayers and gifts flowing to "Fulfilling the Faith".

p.s. - If you find yourself at Shrubs & Stuff to pick up annuals, perennials, mulch, etc., please let them know you're a member of First Bethel, and how much we appreciate their generosity. They very kindly donated an extra yard of mulch for our Beautification Project.

p.p.s. - A warm welcome to our Administrative Assistant, Joan Straitiff.