

The Pastor's Notebook

Luke's Easter story tells of three women on an early morning mission of mourning, two angels in dazzling white, and the earth-shattering news, "*“Why do you look for the living among the dead? He's not here, but has risen.*”

Returning to the apostles they told them what had happened, "*but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.*”

The first Easter was treated like nonsense. I wonder if the women, deep in their hearts, thought it was nonsense too. The dead coming back to life? Unthinkable. But you know, Jesus said a lot of things that was first thought to be nonsense.

When Jesus talked about sacrifice, taking up a cross, dying and rising, people didn't



really listen to him. When Jesus pointed to the true nature of the Messiah - a downward path of service and sacrifice—the disciples responded by talking privilege, power and position. No one listened to Jesus' talk about death and sacrifice, resurrection and new life. It was just plain nonsense. And it remains so today for some people.

It's unthinkable, counter-cultural and rooted in the notion that service is the way of authentic life. In a world steeped in



selfishness, self-promotion, and a passion for power and clout, Jesus' life of sacrifice, sacrificial death and unbelievable resurrection, is considered nonsense... even by some Christians.

But, for those who dare to live boldly based on what God has done, it's the realization of being lifted by God as we struggle with the meaning of life or with an addiction that's overwhelming us.

It's the discovery that there's new life which may come suddenly or rise upon us gradually when we're agonizing over loss.

It's the experience of peace and calmness that comes over us when we're facing such horrendous things like surgery, a serious illness, or even death. I've sensed that peace with people in hospitals and on death beds.

It's learning, as one person puts it, that now "Only ONE thing is certain.....TAXES," or to put it another way, "If death isn't the end, then all the cards in the deck may be wild."

For some Easter may be nonsense, but I'll bet my life on its truth – how about you? Have a joyful, wild and unbelievable Easter, friends.

May is Mental Health Month

Jane Black would like to offer an Introduction to QPR for Suicide Prevention in honor of Mental Health Month.

QPR stands for "Question, Persuade, Refer" and is a CPR for the brain if you will. Just as people learn CPR to as a live-saving technique for someone whose heart had stopped beating or someone who has stopped breathing, QPR is designed to teach recognition of warning signs, clues and suicidal communication by people considering suicide.

QPR is not a form of counseling or treatment but it is intended to offer hope through positive action.



Please let the office know if you are interested in this and a session can be scheduled. Call 412-835-0700.

It's Not About Me

by Gloria Stephan

There is a quote by James Hudson Taylor that recently caused me to pause and see ASP in a slightly different way. Hudson Taylor was a British Protestant Christian missionary who spent 51 years in China. The quote is: "I used to ask God to help me. Then I asked if I might help Him. I ended up by asking Him to do His work through me."

If you're like me, you've probably asked God to help you through a situation or you've asked for a sign that you're making the right decision or you've asked for divine intervention to get you out of a predicament. (Not that there's anything wrong with that, right?). Similarly, you probably have thought at times that you were helping God in some way with your efforts at good works, or by spreading His love. Again, nothing wrong with that, but, perhaps the right way to think about it is by asking God to do His work through you. Using your hands and feet, and your words and actions to accomplish His will.



Putting things in that perspective means that what happens has very little to do with what I do, and everything to do with what God does. How interesting. I can think of so many times where I set the stage, take control, prepare, plan, and make lists of what I'm going to need to do to accomplish some goal and then.....something totally unexpected, and better happens if I just let it.

As one of my ASP friends often reminds me, I need to "Let go and let God".

It happens time and time again on ASP trips. The most unexpected blessings happen every day. It doesn't matter if we're riding in vans, repairing homes, sharing meals, telling



stories, doing chores, standing in line, playing games, or sitting quietly on a porch looking at the beautiful mountains. It's not about what we're doing, it's about what God is doing through everyone involved with ASP.

See me in church or send me an email at gstephan57@gmail.com if you're interested in the ASP experience. Our trip is scheduled for June 18-24 to Perry County, Kentucky and we still have room to let God do his work through YOU!

An Update from the MARTHA CIRCLE -

We are not meeting in April. Our next meeting date will be Wednesday, May 10 at 7:00 pm in the Susanna Wesley Room.

We are approaching the most holy week of the church year – a very busy week with a lot to focus on.



Luke 22:41 – He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed.

- Donna Hennen

Perspective

Copenhagen's Church of Our Lady, Denmark's national cathedral, features life-sized marble statues of Jesus and his 12 apostles, sculpted by famous Danish artist Bertel Thorvaldsen.

Although the faces of the apostles are easily visible, you can't look into the face of the statue of Jesus unless you kneel at his feet. This is uniquely appropriate, since this is where our faith grows and our hope endures - at the feet of our Savior.

Giving out of Gratitude

By Bishop Michael J. Coyner, Indiana Annual Conference

Every day, it seems, our mailbox is filled with appeals from groups and ministries and missions requesting that we give to support their good work. All of that is good and helpful, but most of their requests do not speak to the reason my wife, Marsha, and I give. So perhaps this list of “why we give” might be helpful to others who are contemplating their giving.



We give out of gratitude to God. We are not really that motivated by giving to institutions (although we do) or by giving to special needs (although we do) or by giving to missional efforts (although we do). No; our primary motivation for giving is to express our gratitude to God. We

believe that everything we have is a gift from God, so we give because we are grateful.

We tithe as a witness to our faith. We tithe to the church where Marsha has her membership (we bishops do not have membership in a local church or even in an annual conference; we are members of the Council of Bishops), and then we give additional to each church where we visit or I preach, and finally we give to support various appeals and mission efforts. Our primary giving is our tithe because we believe that tithing is obedience to God and a witness to our faith in God.

Life is meant to be lived, shared and generously multiplied. God has designed life in such a way that when we try to hold onto life, we lose it but when we give life away, we receive life in more abundance.

We give because it is fun, joyful and fulfilling. There is nothing quite like giving to someone or to some cause and seeing the joy that our gifts can create. That is most obvious when we give to our children and grandchildren, but it is true in other situations, too.

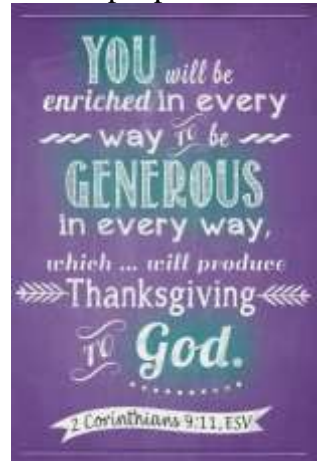
Giving is fun. I know that might sound a little selfish, but it is true. We give because we enjoy it.

We give when we see needs and want to help. This is where all of those appeals are effective – we look over the requests and appeals that we receive, and when we see a need we can help, then we give to it.

Now, I have to confess that for many years as a pastor, I worked hard to get people to give for the wrong reasons. I appealed for support of our church budget. I asked people to give to grow our ministries. I probably even used a little bit of guilt to encourage people to give, rather than allowing them to be selfish.

Most of the time that worked. I did fundraising for the churches and ministries I served, and it was effective because people saw the value in those churches and ministries.

But eventually, I began to mature in my own giving and in my understanding of stewardship. I began to ask people to give out of gratitude to God and as a witness to their faith. And that freed me from any sense of being a “salesman” for our church to being one who proclaimed the spiritual truth about stewardship. I moved from fundraising to stewardship-proclaiming. I focused less upon the need to balance our church budget, and more upon the need to balance our lifestyles. And the results were even more effective in terms of dollars but also in terms of joyful satisfaction.



You are welcome to give for almost any good reason. Whatever appeals to you is great because I believe that any person of faith must be a giver. That’s the secret to living – it is all about giving. And it is all about gratitude to God.

So, please give.

It's Not About the Easter Eggs or Bunnies.

It's the hope that this season unfolds

God's Blessings

in Everyone's Heart!



Join Us On
April 15th 11:30
to 12:30



For Our Easter Festival.

Activities, Stories, Crafts, Pizza Lunch,
Egg Hunt & So Much More!!!!

Please RSVP By April 8th
To Miss Lynda at 412-835-6141

Happy
Easter

Holy Communion Helpers Needed



Volunteers are needed for communion service set up and clean up. This very vital area of our worship experience requires a two-person team that will take responsibility for baking the communion bread (a very simple recipe), coming into the church at some point prior to Sunday services to fill the communion cups with juice, getting the bread and juice ready to be served on Sunday morning, then staying after the first service to replenish the elements where needed and, in general, straightening up for the next service.

You would need to be in charge of the communion service, which is held on the first Sunday of each month, for only two or three times a year. If you feel that this is a way you would like to contribute to our worship service, please see Lea Cook. Lea can also be reached by phone at 412-551-9266.

Is that a Tree in the Narthex?

Yep - Did you see the ASP Construction Tree yet? Here's a new way you can support our Appalachia Service Project mission trip to Perry County, Kentucky. The tags have items listed that the ASP volunteers need for their trip on June 18. Take a tag off the tree and bring the item back to the tree by the end of May and know you helped us to make homes warmer, safer and drier in Central Appalachia. That's **Love in Action!** You can also contribute gift cards, or checks written to First Bethel UMC using the envelopes provided. Every donation helps and every donation is greatly appreciated.

Kings School Kids

Preschool Registration
Is Going On
Now
For The
2017-2018
School Year



Please contact the
Kings School Kids Office at
412-835-6141
For More Information

King School Kids



Hurry!!
Classes Fill Fast

Maundy Thursday Dramatic Worship!

Join Jesus and his disciples in the Upper Room on **Thursday April 13 at 7:30 p.m.** for a dramatic portrayal of the Lord's final evening with his friends.

Our **Living Last Supper** allows you to hear the disciples' thoughts as Jesus reveals his betrayal and listen as they recall their time with him. Share in the Last Supper, let beautiful music touch your heart, and accompany Jesus as he departs for the Garden of Gathesemane.



Good Friday Tenebrae Service

One of the most powerful and poignant days of the year, Good Friday brings Jesus, and his disciples, face to face with forces of darkness in its attempt to snuff out the light of God's love. Be with us on **Friday evening, April 14 at 7:30 p.m.** for our **Tenebrae Service** as we remember Jesus' last hours and the love



which led him to the cross. Retrace his steps, remember his passion, and resolve to keep watch, for though darkness appears to have won, something big is coming!

“Jesus's resurrection is the beginning of God's new project not to snatch people away from earth to heaven but to colonize earth with the life of heaven. That, after all, is what the Lord's Prayer is about.”

- N.T. Wright

Easter Sunrise Service!



Celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ in a splendid Easter Sunrise Service on the lawn of First Bethel Church!

Gather as we did last year, on **Sunday April 16 at 6:30 a.m.** for music, fellowship and the joy of a new and glorious day! There is plenty of parking, no hills, no long walks and all of the anticipation Easter brings forth. Join us as we experience the good news, "Christ is Risen!" If it rains we will gather in the sanctuary.

Easter Sunday in the Sanctuary!

Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed! Easter Sunday worship in the sanctuary of First Bethel Church is a singularly beautiful and glorious experience!

Come and share the exciting news of Jesus' resurrection with family and friends on Sunday April 16 at 9 and 11 a.m. There will be beautiful music, stunning Easter flowers, and the age-old story of God's love that cannot be contained, even by death!



It is true that going out on to the street implies the risk of accidents happening, as they would to any ordinary man or woman. But if the church stays wrapped up in itself, it will age. And if I had to choose between a wounded church that goes out on to the streets and a sick, withdrawn church, I would definitely choose the first one.

- Pope Francis

Library News – A Milestone!

EIGHT-YEAR-OLD Carolyn Taylor checked out The Complete Tales of Beatrix Potter after the 9 a.m. service on Sunday, Feb. 19 – but this was no ordinary occasion. **Carolyn’s book was the 16,000th checked out of the First Bethel Church Library** since we started counting in the 1970s. Later, the young reader sat for a photo with her Mom, Catherine Taylor, and Donna Hennen of our Library staff. Carolyn also received a gift certificate. Sixteen-thousand is a milestone we are proud of. Our thanks to all of you who visit the Library in the Narthex.



Here are two of our latest additions:

SMALL GREAT THINGS by Jodi Picoult explores issues of race, privilege, prejudice, compassion and justice. It tells the story of Ruth Jefferson, an African-American labor/delivery nurse at a Connecticut hospital who is removed from a newborn’s care because the white supremacist parents don’t want a black woman to touch their child. A tragedy follows, and then a trial. It becomes a media sensation. The Washington Post calls this 2016 book the most important novel this high-profile author has ever written. It joins these other Picoult works in our Library: Handle With Care and Leaving Time.

RESISTING HAPPINESS, another new book, was recently donated to the Library. The Catholic author, Matthew Kelly, writes that resistance is the feeling of not wanting to do something you know is good for you, and the certainty that something you want to do is not good for you. He says it “wears a thousand masks” that interfere with happiness. Among them, he lists laziness, fear, procrastination, doubt, instant gratification, self-loathing and indecision. One of the chapters in this easy-to-read book is titled “When God looks at a resume.” Kelly recommends setting aside a few minutes each day to read and reflect on a passage from the Bible. He suggests: “Begin with Matthew, Proverbs or Psalms.”

- Your Library Staff

A Different Way of Worship

For years I have heard people speak of “**resting in the Lord.**” What does this mean? It refers to an attitude of openness and peace, a time of quiet and simply “being with God” in an unhurried and calm way. Given our busy lifestyles and the hectic pace of our activities, a time of rest and quiet might be a wise and healthy alternative to the chaos of our world.

First Bethel provides a monthly **Taize Prayer Service** in the candlelit sanctuary, allowing those who gather an opportunity to experience the presence of God through meditative music, Scripture readings and moments of silence and reflection. All are invited to our next Prayer Service, in the afterglow of Easter , on **Wednesday April 19 at 7:30 pm!**

When We Can't Find Easter

Easter is the most joyous Christian holy day ... except when it's not. What do we do when our mood isn't what we think it “should” be? The kids are sugared up, we're juggling family gatherings (and maybe conflicts), our everyday challenges remain, and festive hymns — however rousing — fail to lift our spirits. We wonder, “What's *wrong* with me, that I can't seem to find Easter?”

Been there, done that. And it's okay. *You're* okay.



Jesus' resurrection doesn't scoop us out of our troubles, but the death-defying Christ walks through them beside us, on our own Emmaus road (Luke 24). We aren't alone.

When we can't find Easter, Easter somehow finds us — if not on this designated Sunday, perhaps two days from now, or next week or mid-May. Watch for it; keep your heart open. Christ is risen indeed — and you shall be too.

- Heidi Mann

Saturday Night Worship!

Our next Coffeehouse Worship Service, will be on **Saturday April 1 at 6 pm in Founders Hall!**

Enjoy this casual gathering of talented musicians, artists and those interested in a unique worship experience. Would you like to help provide beverages and snacks? See Pastor Tom today! Bring a friend! **The Coffeehouse meets on the first Saturday of every month!**



Youth Report!

Don't expect to find the youth of the church to be sitting still for very long. They're on the move having fun and sharing the compassion of Christ! Thanks to the leadership of parents, supportive members and the pastor this is what they've done in just the past 2 months:

- **Ice Skating at South Park**
- **Laser Tag**
- **Lock-in & Black Light Bash**
- **Movie Night at the church**



The youth themselves have been our best ambassadors as they've invited numerous friends to join in the fun as well.

As a Mission Project, they supported the "**Teens for Jeans**" outreach. Over a million young people experience homelessness in the US every year. One item they often request? A pair of jeans. Through the leadership of the youth and the generosity of the church, over **100 pairs of gently-used jeans were collected** and delivered to a local shelter!

Watch for the new Spring activities schedule coming soon!