

From the Pastor

We are drawing close to the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, a revolution of the spirit begun by the monk, Martin Luther, who challenged the Roman Catholic with his “95 Theses,” or complaints. He was a brilliant thinker, courageous and determined, whose dedication to the God revealed in scripture motivated him and his efforts to renew the church.

That said, he didn’t always appreciate the biblical book of James, calling it an “Epistle of Straw.” With apologies to ol’ Martin, I find it to be a rather pointed, personal letter that speaks to my life and the world around us.

What do I mean? Simply this - I am so like the people James talks about – someone who claims to be in a relationship with God, yet who indulges in pleasures from other sources. Sure, I know that my relationship with God is the center, the core of my life. But that doesn’t keep me from getting all tangled up in other passions, intrigues and terrors. It doesn’t take away my petty worries or my insecurities. And if I add my subterranean racism, my unconsciousness concerning privilege, my cowardice in the face of conflict and a few other shadowy things that for some reason just seem to have slipped my mind at the moment, this is a pretty good portrait of me. I am almost always double-minded, very rarely pure of heart...and I am not alone.



You know, God is seldom dramatic. God doesn’t surge with the strong emotion that less important desires carry. God is like a healthy, wholesome meal, lacking the pizzazz of the empty carbs of fear or anger yet providing all that’s needed for a rich, meaningful life. And so it’s hard to stay grounded in God and true to my deepest commitment.

Realizing that and acknowledging it is difficult. But admitting our double-mindedness, is necessary, vital, for only then can we find our way home again. And, fortunately for me the way back to God is simple and immediate. It is something that can happen at each and every moment, and should. It occurs when, acknowledging where I am, I then turn

around, turn back. Opening my heart to receive my relationship with God in this moment and then again in the next moment, I am saved.

We get all caught up in behaviors: behaving well, behaving dreadfully, behaving in ways that bring glory, or in ways that make us want to crawl beneath the carpet in shame. But all this does is keep the focus on us, on our actions. The bottom line is that, no matter how hard we try, we are always going to fall short – always – unless we turn around, grounding ourselves in God.

God is an artist, using the palette of our particular personalities and skills to paint an incredible work that is multidimensional and completely beyond our understanding. And so the question for us in each of our moments is simply this - where is our attention? Is it on God or is it on some petty intrigue?

Are we, for instance, the instrument God can use right here and now to make another person feel less isolated, less violated? Are we willing to be used by God to bring peace to our families, workplaces, schools and neighborhoods? Are we willing to be counted among the courageous like Martin Luther as we strive to reform our church and world, or are we too caught up in fear to act? Where are we? Where is our focus?

In the words of the Book of James, God yearns for the spirit that God has made to dwell in us. Draw near to God, and God will draw near to you.

- Pastor Tom

Meadowcrest Nursing Center Ministry

Bring the good news of Jesus to our neighbors at Meadowcrest on Braun Road in Bethel Park!

Our next visit for worship and singing will be October 20 at 3:00 pm. Join us for a meaningful time with our neighbors. No experience necessary, just a caring heart and a willing spirit! See Pastor Tom today!

70TH Anniversary Celebration!



Come celebrate the 70th Anniversary of First Bethel Church! There will be interesting activities beginning Sunday October 15 and culminating in a church-wide luncheon after worship on November 5!

- Oct 15th Honoring Charter Members
- Oct 22th Remembering with Pictures in the Narthex
- Oct 29th Video Interviews running before the service
- Nov 5th The Big Finale!
Pot luck lunch after the 10:00 service
(don't forget to sign up!)



Balloons!

Commemorative Pens!

Silent Auction!

Win a two-layer cake!

Hope to see you there!

Phone Tree News!

Would you like to be notified by phone of important church announcements? Would you like to receive reminders of church events? Would you like to be called if there is an urgent prayer request? The **Phone Tree** system is a way that Pastor Tom can send out an automated voice message to your phone. Calls will not go out after 8PM and if you don't answer, you'll get a voicemail. You can choose to receive calls on your landline or cellphone, you can receive one call per family, or separate calls by person. See the list in the Narthex to verify your phone number(s) if you want to receive these calls, or let us know that you don't – it's up to you!



Taize Prayer Services

Want a deeper experience with God? For the last several decades thousands of Christians and seekers from all parts of the world have discovered the presence of God in fresh and replenishing ways through the contemplative worship services that have grown out of the Protestant monastic community in Taize, France.

I encourage everyone to attend and experience this most unique expression of worship. You 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 discover inner stillness and peace in the midst of our busy and raucous lives. There's no sermon or offering taken (let the cheering begin!) – rather it seeks to create a place of peace within our hearts for God to dwell and speak. Our next Taize Prayer service is Wednesday October 18 at 7:30 p.m.



Giving TO... or Giving THRU?

I recently read an article on Stewardship* about how we shouldn't think of giving TO the Church, rather, we should think of giving THRU the Church. So whatever we choose to give—our time, our prayers and/or our financial gifts doesn't "dead end" "somewhere in the church's "accounts." Rather, our gifts flow thru the Church to meet the needs of the world. Paying the utilities and the custodian are not mundane expenses, if they provide a place for Sunday School, Girls Scout Meetings, Bible Study and such. Just something to think about before the next Stewardship Campaign.



(* It was an email from The United Methodist Church—funded THRU our gifts!)

- *Stephanie Alstadt*

Music Notes!

We have begun rehearsals, but would welcome new people in any of our groups - Chancel Choir, Wesley Ringers, and Angels of God (Kids' Choir). We will be working to put together the Youth Bell Choir, too!



If you need information or have questions, contact Ruth Finlay. We would love to have you!

Martha Circle

You've heard of the Martha Circle, but who are they and what do they do? This is a gathering of women of all ages who have a passion for building a better church community and caring for others outside our church. They support and encourage one another, laugh together, share difficulties with one another, and embody the best qualities of what a church should be.



If you're looking for a place to belong, look into the Martha Circle and discover an expanded circle of friends in your life!

The next meeting is Wednesday, October 11 at 7:00 PM in the Susanna Wesley Room.

Disciple Bible Study Returns!

The New Testament, with its amazing stories of Jesus and his life, teachings, passion and resurrection, as well as its powerful guidance from the Apostles Paul, Peter, James, and of course, the strange and compelling book of Revelation, will be explored in this 12-week survey beginning Wed. Oct. 11 at 6:30 pm.

Even if you didn't participate in the Old Testament last Spring please feel free to be part of the New Testament study. See Pastor Tom for your workbook and join us!



It has happened again.

Add Las Vegas to the long line of cities, towns, workplaces and schools which have seen horrific violence in recent years – Orlando, Virginia Tech, San Bernardino, Sandy Hook, the Washington Navy Yard, Ft. Hood, Aurora, Columbine and more. How sad. How utterly and tragically wasteful. Last night I began reading some of the biographies of the 59 victims of the gunman who, from a perch on the 32nd floor of the Mandalay Bay Casino, fired upon the crowd below. Among the dead are nurses, teachers, commercial fishermen, students, secretaries, lawyers, mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, and friends.

How sad. How wasteful. How routine.

I truly wonder how the police and first responders find the courage to run TOWARD the carnage when every instinct screams to run away. I wonder how so many concert-goers found it possible to put themselves in harm's way in order to care for the injured near them. I wonder how the loved ones of the dead and injured will go on from here. I wonder what pain or illness would drive a man to kill and injure as he did. And I wonder how long it will take for our nation to become more peaceful and concerned for the welfare of all.



Today I need to spend some hours in prayer for our nation, and certainly for the victims of this unspeakable crime. And will you join me as we seek God's guidance towards a solution to our nation's soul-shattering and sorrowful addiction to violence?

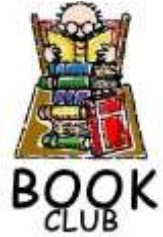
- Pastor Tom

“When every hope is gone, 'when helpers fail and comforts flee,' I find that help arrives somehow, from I know not where. Supplication, worship, prayer are no superstition; they are acts more real than the acts of eating, drinking, sitting or walking. It is no exaggeration to say that they alone are real, all else is unreal.”

- Mahatma Gandhi

Book 'Em!

Remember we're back to our regular Book Club schedule - We meet on the third Friday of the month at 7:30PM at Panera in South Park shops. In December, we'll meet at the home of one of our members, more later! Here are the upcoming book selections:



- **Friday, October 20** “The Day the World Came to Town” (9/11 in Gander Newfoundland)
- **Friday, November 17** “10% Happier; How I Tamed the Voice in My Head, Reduced Stress Without Losing My Edge, and Found Self-Help That Actually Works--A True Story” by Dan Harris
- **Friday, December 15** “Wait, What? And Life’s Other Essential Questions” by James E. Ryan

Blessing Of The Animals

Our annual Blessing of the Animals will be held in First Bethel Church’s Hillside Worship Center on Sunday afternoon, October 21 at 4:30 p.m. We will join together in appreciation and gratitude for the animals in our lives and give thanks for their love.

Bring your well-socialized pets (dogs on leash, cats, birds, and other small critters in crates) **to be blessed, or bring photos or stuffed animals** as representation of home -loving animals.



Pet treats and human treats will be provided! Donations of pet supplies and treats will be accepted for SHIM. Sign up in the Narthex.



Join in on all the fun
Sunday October 29th from 6:00 to 7:00
*Costume Contests * Trunk Decorating Contests *
Crafts* Games *

Please bring a non-perishable food item to donate to
SHIM and Treats to distribute to all our friends

Please RSVP to Kings School Kids Office
by
October 23rd 412-835-6141
If you are interested in being a helper
please see Miss. Lynda



A Thought from Thomas Merton

“One of the effects of original sin is an instinctive prejudice in favor of our own selfish desires. We see things as they are not, because we see them centered on ourselves. Fear, anxiety, greed, ambition and our hopeless need for pleasure all distort the image of reality that is reflected in our minds. Grace does not completely correct this distortion all at once: but it gives us a means of recognizing and allowing for it. And it tells us what we must do to correct it. Sincerity must be bought at a price: the humility to recognize our innumerable errors, and fidelity in tirelessly setting them right.”

Women of the Reformation

Although the names most often associated with the Reformation are male, women also played key roles in maintaining the integrity of the church. “Most were wives and mothers,” professor Justin Holcomb writes. “Some were also authors, apologists, ex-nuns and queens. All were faithful servants of Jesus.”

Women who made notable contributions include:

- Katherine von Bora, the former nun who married former-priest Martin Luther
- Argula von Grumbach, a Bavarian noblewoman who published letters and debated with university faculty
- Olympia Fulvia Morata, an Italian scholar who lectured on the teachings of Luther and Calvin — and was persecuted and imprisoned
- Jeanne d’Albret, queen of Navarre and a leader in France’s Huguenot movement, who tried to peacefully resolve tensions between Catholics and Protestants
- Marie Dentièrre, an aristocrat who left an Augustinian monastery to speak in public — even on street corners! — about church reform

A Pray for Neighborliness

O God, we pray for a broader vision of the needs of humanity, and a deeper compassion to fill those needs; for a planting of the seeds of concern for all humanity in our hearts; for a tapping of the wells of generosity. May we live together as people who have been forgiven a great debt. May we be gentle, walking softly with one another. May we be understanding, lest we shall add to the world’s sorrow or cause to flow needless tears. May we be as anxious for the rights of others as we are for our own. May we be as eager to forgive as we are to seek forgiveness. May we know no barriers of creed or race or sex, that our love may be like Yours — a love that sees all people as Your children and our kin. May we be ministers of humanity.

- Peter Marshall, Chaplain, United States Senate

Joy! by Gloria Stephan

“The Dead Sea in the Middle East receives fresh water, but it has no outlet, so it doesn’t pass the water out. It receives beautiful water from the rivers, and the water goes dank. I mean, it just goes bad. And that’s why it is the Dead Sea. It receives and does not give. In the end generosity is the best way of becoming more, more, and more joyful.”
Desmond Tutu

ASP just completed its 49th summer of home repair in Central Appalachia and the numbers are astonishing. 410,000 volunteers helped more than 18,000 families because of the partnerships with compassionate people like the 20 volunteers that were sent from First Bethel.



It’s obvious how home repair can improve the lives of a family that now has a safe, warm, dry place to call home. What may not be so obvious is why those that serve with ASP find joy in spending a week away with strangers that become friends selflessly giving of their time and talents to help others that they will likely never see again.

As Desmond Tutu explains, generosity leads to joy. Holding on to what we receive does not bring us joy. Only by using our resources for good can we grow.

Now, that’s a win/win if I ever saw one!

Next summer will be First Bethel’s 19th year in a row participating in the ASP ministry and this life-changing work. If you’ve been around our volunteers when they return from an ASP trip, you probably realized that everyone touched by this ministry is blessed, and filled with joy. Our week of service will likely be June 17 – 23, 2018. There’s a place for YOU to help if you’re seeking a way to give and experience true joy. Registration forms will be available soon, and you can get more information by contacting me at gstephan57@gmail.com or by checking out the ASP website at www.ASPHome.org.

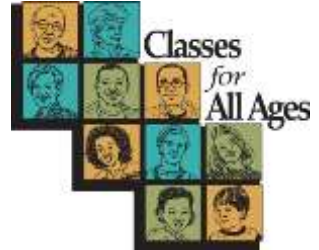
“Don’t ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.”

- Howard Thurman

Sunday School at First Bethel!

Want to help change the world? No seriously – if you want to change the world begin with the hearts and lives of your children, grandchildren, and even yourself! We're excited to offer the following classes during the fall at 10:00 a.m.

- Pre-K with Amy Zeminski
- Grades 1 & 2 with Breann Thompson
- Grades 3 & 4 with Brittany Barnicott
- Grades 5 to 8 with Brenda Sullivan
- Grades 9 to 12 – Shauna Bowser
- Adults – FaithLink with Mike Stephan



A Meal Train - What's that?!

You might be wondering what is a Meal Train and how is this important ministry woven into the fabric that makes up First Bethel? Just like a freight or passenger train, food links us together. Everyone must eat to sustain life. From Psalm 107:9 "For He satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things." A home-cooked meal delivered to a Church Member can satisfy and sustain them during both a challenging time or a celebratory time in life. No train is too small or too big. What makes a train strong is its links together. "A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed." (Proverbs 11:25).



Meal Train

How it works:

Provide Catherine Taylor your email. No email - no problem please pass along your phone number. When the need arises a Meal Train will be created and an email will be sent. You sign up for a day and time that is

convenient, prepare the meal and deliver to your Church Family member. Not available this time around - don't worry! There will be plenty of opportunities. Remember, "Here I am! I stand at [your] door

and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me." (Revelation 3:20)

Who is it for:

EVERYONE! Have a new baby? Meal Train. Loved one in the hospital? Meal Train. Recovering from surgery, illness, a bad fall? Meal Train. Kitchen being gutted and you have no stove or microwave? Why not! Meal Train. Please help me connect to those in our Church Family by reaching out to me to schedule a meal train. It takes me 5 minutes to set up the desired dates, times, likes, dislikes and send it out. If I don't know you need help - WE cannot lend a helping hand and be the strongly linked train.

Together we can nourish the mind, body, and soul.

Catherine Taylor - catherineweiltaylor@gmail.com

412-591-3035

The Reformation: Celebration & Repentance

October 31, 2017, marks the 500th anniversary of the start of the Protestant Reformation, when Martin Luther posted his “95 Theses” on a church door in Germany. This wasn’t an unusual act at the time; Luther was simply welcoming scholarly debate. But his ideas opposing certain teachings and practices of the Roman Catholic Church led to a monumental shift in Christianity.

Along with other reformers, Luther taught that Scripture is the supreme authority for the believer; that salvation comes by grace alone, through faith alone; and that baptism gives all full access to God in Christ (“the priesthood of all believers”), so there’s no need for an intermediary such as a pope, priest or saint.

Initially, the reformers intended not to leave the Catholic Church but to reform it. But those who protested church practices became known as Protestants, and eventually, multiple denominations arose — Lutheranism, Presbyterianism, Anglicanism and others — and did, in fact, separate from the Roman tradition.

Sadly, woven amid the good intentions to rightly teach and live the faith were sins on all sides: Luther hurled insults “with the best of them”; the pope excommunicated him and had other reformers executed; the beliefs and faith of theological opponents were regularly disparaged. As Heinz Josef Algermissen, a present-day Roman Catholic bishop in Germany, states: “In commemorating the Reformation, we cannot just see it as a jubilee, but should also admit our guilt for past errors and repent on both sides for the past 500 years.

A Place for YOUTH! -



More than just a place to have fun, The Youth Ministry of First Bethel Church gives teens a chance to develop their faith, offering a place where young people can discuss important issues, while providing an opportunity for interaction with Christian adults.

DON'T FORGET - October 15th is the **Simmons Farm/Gray's House** activity. We will meet at the church at 3:00 and should return at 8:00. The hayride and other fall activities at Simmons has a cost of \$13.25 (includes a pumpkin). See Charlene or Tom if cost is a deterrent for you. **All youth in grades 6-12 are invited to join the fun!**

Light their Fire...for Jesus!

Did you hear? The Youth Group is going on a winter retreat this year! In order to make it affordable for everyone, we are holding a **CHESTNUT HILL CANDLE SALE**. These are amazing soy based candles. All candles are \$10 and \$4 of each candle goes directly to the Youth Group! See our youth in the narthex between services until Oct 21. Free "sniffs" are available to help you decide on your favorite scents. These are perfect gifts for teachers and co-workers! Delivered around Thanksgiving.



Library News!

ZOFIA'S MAGICAL IDEA

One of our youngest readers, *Zofia*, inspired the newest additions to our church library. Thanks to *Zofia's* Mom, we now have three new books in a series titled *Upside-Down Magic*. The stories feature eight kids in their elementary school's magic class who can't get their magic to work properly (magic gone "wonky"). Our thanks to *Zofia* for her suggestion and her Mom who purchased these delightful new books for our library. These books are rated for ages 8 through 12, and may be appealing to older readers as well.



We've added another page-turning book to check out: *The Mountain Between Us* (now a major motion picture) by *Charles Martin*, New York Times bestselling Christian author of ten previous novels. The story finds two strangers sharing a single-engine prop plane that, on a stormy winter night, crashes into Utah's High Uintas Wilderness -- one of the largest stretches of harsh and remote land in the United States.

You will also want to read the two other *Charles Martin* novels on our shelves: *When Crickets Cry* and *Chasing Fireflies*.

A book is a gift you can open again and again. -- Garrison Keillor

- Your Library Staff

When Jesus Christ utters a word, he opens his mouth so wide that it embraces all heaven and earth, even though that word be but in a whisper. The word of the emperor is powerful, but that of Jesus Christ governs the whole universe.

- Martin Luther