

The Pastor's Notebook

The Hebrew prophet Isaiah wrote a beloved passage that has become closely associated with Christmas:

*“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them has light shined.
6For unto us a child is born, unto us a son given to us; all authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:2, 6-7)*

One of my favorite writers is Howard Thurman, the great African-American author, philosopher, theologian, educator, and civil rights leader. He was the Dean of the Chapel at both Howard University in Washington DC and Boston University. His theology of nonviolence helped Thurman become a legendary mentor to the likes of Martin Luther King, and every Advent my mind goes back to his words about candlelight and Christmas which seem so very precious and timely right now.

**“I will light candles this Christmas,
Candles of joy despite all the sadness,
Candles of hope where despair keeps watch,
Candles of courage for fears ever present,
Candles of peace for tempest-tossed days,
Candles of grace to ease heavy burdens,
Candles of love to inspire all my living,
Candles that will burn all year long.”**

**“When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,**



**To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among others,
To make music in the heart.”**

May you share the light of Christ and the song of the angels throughout Advent and Christmas this year. Pierce the darkness with acts of love and kindness, as did the Child of Bethlehem long ago and the Living Christ does today.

God bless you always!

- Pastor Tom

Christmas Eve Worship

The church will be filled with the sounds of Christmas carols, joy, friendship and love as we gather together on Christmas Eve. Plan to be a part of the wonder on this sacred, candlelit night as we celebrate the wonder of Christ’s birth.



4:00 pm - A family worship service for children of all ages!

7:00 pm - Casual, acoustic worship with Jeff Leonhart and a wonderful gathering of instrumentalists and singers.

10:00 pm – A beautiful service of carols, candlelight, and the miracle of Christmas in a traditional style sure to touch your heart.

Christmas Eve MORNING – One Service!

There will be ONE SERVICE on Christmas Eve Morning, 10:00 a.m. We invite everyone to wear their brightest, boldest, most “Christmasy” sweaters, shirts, and ties to church for a joyful Advent morning of anticipation





Evening

Sunday December 3rd at 4:30

We will start the evening with a covered-dish dinner.
The wonderful Martha Circle ladies will prepare a ham!

Please bring a dish to share.

We will continue the evening with Crafts,

**Yes! Mr. and Mrs. D Will be doing
Ginger Bread Houses!**

We will end with a carol sing in the sanctuary!!!

Please sign up in the Narthex.

Isaiah used the image of a new tree growing from what appears dead to foretell God's redemption of Israel: "A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit" (Isaiah 11:1, NIV). During Advent, this prophecy assures us of the coming of the Messiah, descended from King David, and thus his father, Jesse.

The Nyadire Connection Won Again!

(This is about the Rotary Chicken Bar B Q held on Oct. 7th.)

Dear FBUMC-ites – my church family,

“We give Thee but thine own whate‘re the gift may be. All that we have is Thine alone – a trust, oh Lord, from Thee.”

These are words to a song sung prior to the collection of dollars during many, many worship services from my past. You might not have placed a ten or twenty dollar bill or more into a golden offering plate at First Bethel United Methodist Church prior to October 7th this year, but you truly gave back to God – BELIEVE IT OR NOT! – from what has been entrusted to you via a pink Bar B Q ticket. Altogether, TNC sold 770 tickets this year.

YES! TNC (The Nyadire Connection) won the additional \$500.00 bonus award for having sold the most tickets to the annual Bethel Park/Upper St. Clair Rotary Chicken Bar B Q. In addition to whatever the grant of money to TNC for O-level Exams will be, five additional students will be funded to take those exams because of this \$500.00 bonus. (These exams are required in order to remain in highschool at a cost of \$100.00) And so, my friends, I need to thank you **AGAIN** from the bottom of my Nyadire-heart



for your unquestionable support. I am remembering the feeling in September when some approached me for tickets *even before an announcement about it was placed in the bulletin*. My heart danced. And now, I am remembering how some purchased additional tickets to donate to SHIM when I

announced that our sales were down (perhaps because of hurricanes and earthquakes) as compared to last year at that point in time.

Four churches participate in this each year, but, **BUT** it is truly First Bethel that puts TNC “over the top” in winning the \$500.00

bonus. So, so many of you donate your ticket(s). You will be pleased to know that you contributed greatly to the total 250 tickets given to SHIM. In addition, I was able to give individual families a “dinner or lunch out” who otherwise do not want to part with \$40.00 or \$50.00 because of their financial circumstances. And that sentence reminds me of a sentence said during a “Mission Minute” years ago: “If you want to know what is really important to someone, follow that path of their money .” Apparently, helping others, giving when maybe you really shouldn’t part with the dollars either shouts to me that First Bethel United Methodist Church knows what is really important!

Tatenda, Tatenda ZVAKANAKA! (Thank you very, very much!)

Shalom – down deep,
Phil Himmler

Serve the Lord with Gladness

We’re always in need of a variety of volunteer helpers around the church. If you’re interested in serving as a **Liturgist, Greeter, Coffee Host, Counter, Nursery, Acolyte, Altar Guild or Prayer List Partner**, contact Melissa Zelinsky or Gloria Stephan.



Just call the office and we will help you sign up! We always need substitutes, too, so even if you don’t want to be on the “regular schedule,” we could use your help. Call 412-722-8316 for more information!

“The only blind person at Christmastime is he who has not Christmas in his heart.”

- Helen Keller

Save the dates for ASP Bistros!

What: Delicious dinners held during **SUNDAYS** in Lent as fundraisers for our Appalachia Service Project summer mission trip. *(Please note the change of day and times for the Bistros)*



How: All the food and preparation time is donated by many of our church's ASP supporters; otherwise it doesn't work. Our diners receive a homemade meal lovingly prepared and served during this time of fellowship. We encourage our patrons to give generously as they are able, keeping in mind what a similar meal might cost at a restaurant - but there's no comparison.

Who: All are welcome to enjoy delicious meals. The menu changes weekly, and kid-friendly and gluten free options are available.

When: **4:30PM-6:30PM** on the following **SUNDAY** evenings:
February 18, 25, March 4, 11 and 18

Where: Suzanna Wesley Room of First Bethel United Methodist Church

All proceeds benefit our **ASP** mission trip on June 17-23, 2018

Youth Group News!

- DEC. 16 from 5:30-10 pm - Reverse Progressive Dinner - \$10 gift for those who want to participate in the exchange
- JAN. 12-14 - Youth Winter Retreat at Jumonville - \$25 deposit due ASAP to secure your spot. \$117 per youth max (cost will be adjusted after fundraiser is submitted)



Call the church office at 412-835-0700 or talk to Charlene Pauline on Sunday !

Advent Evening is Coming!

Our annual gathering of church family and friends, Advent evening, will be Sunday December 3 at 4:30!



We will start the evening with a covered-dish dinner, move on to crafts and end the evening with carol sing!

Please sign up in the Narthex!

Christmas Caroling!

Friends young and old will be sharing a measure of Christmas cheer this year as we go caroling in the community. Scheduled for **Friday December 22 at 5:30 p.m.**, we'll take our Christmas music to shut-ins.




Caroling

If you'd like to brighten another's holiday by sharing the Christmas story in song, call Pastor Tom Barnicott at 412-722-8316 or the office at 412-835-0700 to sign up. **Drivers are always needed** for this evening so we offer a heartfelt invitation to you especially.

How Quietly, How Quietly...

This Advent season First Bethel Church will offer a reflective worship service called, "**A Quiet Christmas**" to pause amidst the busyness, to remember our loved ones who are no longer with us and honor their memories, and to thank God for the birth of Jesus Christ who gives us great hope. Join us on December 20 at 7:30 p.m.





Come and Celebrate



The Real Meaning of Christmas...

December 9th from 11:30 to 12:30

Join us for all the Fun

Games, Crafts, Treats, and a Pizza Lunch

In Honor of Jesus' Birthday



Please Bring a baby gift to give to SHIM.



RSVP to Miss Lynda by

December 4th 412-835-6141

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Unique Link: <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/25-1102686> and
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Library News -- Will you hear the bell?

We have a treasure of Christmas books. One of the most beautiful – and magical – is **The Polar Express**. It's about a young boy's journey to the North Pole and a sleigh bell that only children hear. Youngsters everywhere love this story. Adults, too! The pictures are magnificent. The book, published more than 30 years ago, is one of many Christmas favorites in the Library. Others include:



- **The Littlest Reindeer** – His name is Rory.
- **Christmas Day in the Morning** – Look for hidden pictures in this beautifully illustrated classic.
- **Sarah's Song** –The lives of two women are changed forever.
- **A Christmas Snow** – Trapped in a blizzard, a bitter woman discovers the true meaning of Christmas.
- **A Treasure of Christmas Miracles** -- The subtitle is **True Stories of God's Presence**.

There are many others.

It's always a joy putting our Christmas books on display in December.

-- Your Library Staff --

Food for Thought

“Yet as I read the birth stories about Jesus I cannot help but conclude that though the world may be tilted toward the rich and powerful, God is tilted toward the underdog.”

- Philip Yancey

Shepherds at First Bethel!

We wish to thank all those who help in making gifts for the Shepherds to deliver to our home bound. Marilyn Kebe, Charlene Phillips, Linda Pore and Kings School Kids, Andrea Swift and Doris Woll. Lea Cook takes care of announcements, and Martha Circle puts the gifts together.



We wish also to acknowledge the Shepherds who visit: Donna Hennen, Lem Irick, Kathy and Rick Rickenbach, Lorna Schlutz and Dorrie Walter.

If you are interested in helping in any way, please call Barb Dillon at 412-833-2991.

Meadowcrest Christmas Service

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



Our next visit to Meadowcrest for a time of singing and worship will be December 8 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!

Christmas wonder

I want to see into the heart of a thing ... I want the God-given way of seeing life, not to possess and to control, but to stand back in wonder and gratitude.

- Esther de Waal

Book Club News!

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:

- **December 15** - "Wait, What? And Life's Other Essential Questions" by James E. Ryan
- **January 19** - "A Thousand Splendid Suns" by Khaled Hosseini
- **February 16** - "On My Own Two Feet: From Losing My Legs to Learning the Dance of Life" by Amy Purdy



Martha Circle Update!

The 70th Anniversary luncheon held Nov. 5 went well – we heard lots of good comments about the chicken, pasta and wonderful side dishes. , plus the sheetcakes that were donated. Doris Woll's decorated cakes were a big hit, especially by the persons lucky enough to take one home. Many thanks to our Circle members for their help!



We will meet Wednesday, December 6 (note week change) to decorate the tree in the Susanna Wesley Room and have our Christmas party.

We do not meet in January.

Have a very blessed Christmas season and a Happy New Year!

Luke 2:10 – "The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold I proclaim to you good news of grteat joy that will be for all the people!"

- Donna Hennen



First Bethel United Methodist Church

Registration and Commitment for 2018

Sunday June 17 to Saturday June 23

Name: _____

Address: _____

E-mail: _____

Phone: _____ / _____
home mobile

Birthday: ____/____/____ **Age as of 6/17/2018:**

Youth (14-17) Young Adult* (18-24) Adult* (25 + up)

I understand that a non-refundable deposit of **\$50**/youth and young adult or **\$100**/adult is due to First Bethel UMC by 2/4/2018

I agree to actively participate in at least two fundraising or preparation activities to support the ASP trip

*Criminal and Child Abuse clearances required. ASP requires a minimum of 2 adults per team and follows Safe Sanctuary guidelines.

Return to Gloria Stephan gstephan57@gmail.com or drop off at First Bethel Church, 5901 Library Road, Bethel Park 15102

Appalachia Service Project is a relationship-building ministry “with construction on the side”. Each summer, youth and adults from across the nation participate in **ASP** to make homes warmer, safer and drier. Summer repair projects range from foundations to roofing, flooring to walls and porches and everything in between.

ASP addresses basic housing needs in over 30 Central Appalachia communities, but it is much more than a construction program. Faith is put in action while relationships are built with the families we serve, and each another.

**First Bethel’s trip will be
Sunday, June 17 to Saturday, June 23, 2018**

We plan to send 21 volunteers for three work crews (ideally each with 2 adults & 5 youth). Construction experience is welcome but not necessary. Trip cost is approximately \$500 per volunteer, which includes \$325 in direct fees to **ASP** to cover lodging, food, construction materials, project selection, construction guidance, and the **ASP** staff assigned to each summer center.

It takes another \$175 per person for costs of transportation (rental vans and gas), first aid kit contents, basic common tools, safety gear, and other supplies for the work week.

All volunteers must provide a deposit, and commit to helping with the fundraising and preparation activities that make this trip a reality. Adults often choose to provide \$325 to cover their **ASP** fees, but this is not required. Sponsorships are available, just ask!

For more information, see the **ASP** website at www.ASPHome.org

Call the First Bethel UMC office at 412-835-0700, or contact Gloria Stephan at 724-941-1877 or gstephan57@gmail.com

ASP is a 501c non-profit organization

All trip funds are managed through our church’s **ASP** designated account

Thanks for Thanksgiving Dinner!

On Sunday evening, Nov. 19, members of the First Bethel Youth Group hosted a Thanksgiving dinner and invited adult friends to join them for the meal! Organized by Charlene Pauline and with food

provided by parents of the teens, the Susanna Wesley Room was filled with laughter, great conversation, and fun. Many thanks to those who hosted and prepared the meal and for all the adults who came in support of the youth!



A Holiness Invasion

“Advent” means “coming,” of course, and the promise of Advent is that what is coming is an unimaginable invasion. The mythology of our age has to do with flying saucers and invasions from outer space, and that is unimaginable enough. But what is upon us now is even more so — a close encounter not of the third kind but of a different kind altogether. An invasion of holiness. That is what Advent is about.



—Frederick Buechner, *The Clown in the Belfry*

“Despite my incessant desperation, I simply cannot paint the perfect picture within which I would wish to live out my life. And because I cannot, God picked up the brush of love, positioned the canvas of history and painted a manger.”

- Craig D. Lounsbrough