

## ***The Pastor's Notebook***

“We had hoped...” I think these might be the saddest words in the Bible. They were uttered when Cleopas and his friend are walking back to Emmaus from Jerusalem on Easter evening. They had not yet experienced the resurrected Jesus and so the only emotion they knew was the deep disappointment at what could have been...but wasn't.

To have come so close to realizing the dream, all Jerusalem shouting as Jesus entered the city just as Zechariah prophesied, made it all the more difficult. Jesus of Nazareth, receiving a hero's welcome as he entered Jerusalem, clearing the temple of corruption, shutting up the self-righteous big wigs with clever answers to tricky questions, had set the city on edge with expectation.

But people in power don't give up that easily and he was no match for a coup accomplished in the middle of the night. They woke to find the one who would redeem Israel already condemned and nailed to a Roman cross along with all their hopes.

Heads hung in sorrow, Cleopas and friend head home to Emmaus only to meet a clueless stranger who turns out to know far more about the story than they do. Hearts burning within them they don't want the conversation to end and pressed him to stay for dinner.



But then the stranger does something “oddly familiar,” blessing and breaking the bread, and before they can say a word the now-recognized Jesus vanishes. Without waiting for morning they rush back to join the joyful chorus, “The Lord has risen!”

Friends, this is a story for all who live in that place of deep regret, of hopes and dreams dashed, of disappointments that weigh heavily on the heart and cause heads to hang in sorrow.

For in the oddly familiar Jesus appears to us at table when bread broken is a sign of the promise both fulfilled and anticipated.

Jesus appears to us when walking together on the long and painful journey home.

Jesus inspires us when we sense that the time for faithful action is at hand but we're hesitant or afraid.

And the words, “Lo I am with you always,” makes our hearts burn within us because it is truer than we can ask, imagine or believe. For the far-off God has come near so that all fear, sorrow and yes, even death itself, might one day disappear.

Friends, may the wonder of Easter continue to fill your heart with courage, passionate faith, and undying love!

*-Pastor Tom*

## ***We Have Heard***

In 1938, Scottish minister George MacLeod began the Iona Community to connect more working people with the church. Members, now spread worldwide, strive for peace and justice. This prayer from the Iona Community offers praise to each member of the Trinity:

“We have heard about you, God of all power. You made the world out of kindness, creating order out of confusion ... We have heard about you, Jesus Christ ... the poor man who made others rich; the healer who let himself be wounded ... the Savior who died and rose again ... We have heard about you, Holy Spirit. You broke the bonds of every race and nation, to let God speak in every tongue ... you showed how love made all things new.”

## ***Spring Is Coming!!!***

And with it so is the **annual garage sale** at First Bethel. This year’s sale will be on Saturday, May 5<sup>th</sup> from 7AM to 2 PM, with the proceeds going to the men’s projects benefiting First Bethel.



This is just a reminder that it’s not too early to start thinking about what goodies you might want to donate. A visitor at the sale could see your item and recognize it as something he/she just can’t live without.

If you need someone to pick up your donations, or if you have any questions, call either Ken Williams (412-915-6726) or Jim Walter (412-915-3666).

Hope we see you at the SALE!!!

## ***Library News – This ‘n’ That ...***

Have you noticed how many new books we’ve had recently?

Some of our latest arrivals are always in a display behind the Library desk, on First Bethel’s website and our bulletin board in the hallway leading to *Kings School Kids*.



We are so thankful for books donated recently. Among them is this addition to our new *Large Print* section: **The Blossom Sisters** – A tale of family, forgiveness and never giving up. By the popular *Fern Michaels*.

This month, we’d like to remind our readers about some of our older books that are true classics. They include: **To Kill a Mockingbird**, **Grapes of Wrath**, **Jerusalem**, **Lincoln**, **A Tree Grows in Brooklyn** and **Where the Red Fern Grows**. And there are newer works heading for classic status, including: **Unbroken**, **The Worst Hard Time**.

And we want to remind everyone, again, about two other resources, both in display cases in the Library:

**National Geographic** – The popular magazine arrives each month. Take one home with you. No need to check it out. Students may use them for various class projects.

**CareNotes** – These eight-page booklets are written to help people in times of need. Among the many categories in the Notes are aging, bullying, cancer, divorce and forgiveness. Take as many CareNotes as you wish.

-- *Your Library Staff*

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## ***Recycling Ministry at First Bethel Church!***

Did you know that you can help the church and the environment at the same time by recycling your paper and aluminum? We have received \$171 so far in 2018 because people have collected aluminum and paper for the church. Our Recycling bins are located in the upper parking lot. Thank you so much!!



**Recycling**

# ***ASP Bistros a Huge Hit!***

By Gloria Stephan

ASP Bistros were held on five Sundays during Lent and the results were the best we've ever had. Bistros are fundraising dinners held to support our Appalachia Service Project.



Delicious homemade meals are prepared, desserts are donated, many give of their time and talent, and donations are collected to help fund our mission trip on June 17th. We served a total of 622 meals and collected \$4544.

Folks of all ages participated, and amazing things happened as we broke bread together to support the ASP ministry. New records were set for number of meals served and/or money collected on three of the five weeks, and the Men's Ministry Group wrapped up by setting the number of meals served and the donations to the highest level ever. Thanks to everyone that helped, we're already talking about next year.

<b><u>Sponsoring Groups</u></b>	<b><u>Date</u></b>	<b><u>Meals</u></b>	<b><u>Donations</u></b>
ASP Volunteers-McDermot	2/18/2018	107	\$738
Parents Dinner Group First Bethel Ladies &	2/25/2018	123	\$844
Martha Circle	3/4/2018	112	\$811
Music Ministries	3/11/2018	134	\$950
Men's Ministry Group	3/18/2018	<u>146</u>	<u>\$1,201</u>
		<b>622</b>	<b>\$4,544</b>

**“Nothing is so strong as gentleness, and nothing is so gentle as true strength.”**

**- St. Francis de Sales**

## ***The Commission Moves Forward***

*The 32-member Commission on a Way Forward was appointed by the Council of Bishops to assist the bishops in their charge from the 2016 General Conference to lead the church forward amid the present impasse related to LGBTQ inclusion and resulting questions about the unity of the church.*



The Commission will meet in Los Angeles on March 19-22 to prepare a final report to be submitted to the Council of the Bishops for consideration by the bishops at their April/May meeting.

“The Commission is focused on suggesting a way forward that pays attention to our public mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, especially with those who are not yet a part of our churches,” said Bishop Ken Carter, resident bishop of the Florida Area. “We are also focused on contextuality in a global church, and our continuing call to learn from each other and listen to each other.”

Bishop Carter, who is the incoming president of the Council of Bishops, is one of the three moderators of the Commission, together with Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball of West Virginia Area and retired Bishop David Yemba from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

In preparing for the final report, the Commission will continue to work with traditional, contextual and progressive values drafted in the sketches of models that were presented to the Council of Bishops at their November and February meetings.

In the report given to the Council at the February meeting, the Commission shared with the bishops two sketches that carry forward many of the values and principles of the three sketches presented to the bishops at the November meeting.

The bishops offered feedback but did not vote on the revised sketches, instead asking the Commission to continue working on a final report to be presented at the April/May meeting. At that meeting, the bishops, in collaboration with the collective work of the Commission, will decide on a report to be presented to the Special Session of the General Conference called for February 23-26, 2019 in St. Louis, Missouri.

For more information see: [umc.org/wayforward](http://umc.org/wayforward)

# ***Book Club Notes!***

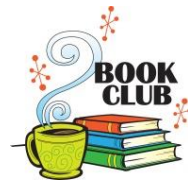
There's plenty to read and discuss with the next 2 months of Book Club selections! Take a look, get a book, and join us!

**Friday April 20 @ 7:30PM**    **A Bigger Table**  
**by John Pavlovitz**

Pastor John Pavlovitz invites readers to join him on the journey to find or build a church that is big enough for everyone. How can we extend unconditional welcome and acceptance in a world increasingly marked by bigotry, fear, and exclusion?

**Friday, May 18 @ 7:30 pm**    **The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks**  
**by Rebecca Skloot**

"Her name was Henrietta Lacks, but scientists know her as HeLa. She was a poor black tobacco farmer whose cells—taken without her knowledge in 1951—became one of the most important tools in medicine, vital for developing the polio vaccine, cloning, gene mapping, and more. Henrietta's cells have been bought and sold by the billions, yet she remains virtually unknown, and her family can't afford health insurance. This phenomenal New York Times bestseller tells a riveting story of the collision between ethics, race, and medicine; of scientific discovery and faith healing; and of a daughter consumed with questions about the mother she never knew." ([www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com))



**2018 meeting dates:**

- Thursday, June 14
- Thursday, July 19
- Thursday August 16
- Friday, September 21
- Friday, October 19
- Friday, November 16
- Friday, December 21

We usually meet at Panera Bread in South Park Shops the third Friday of the month. There are some scheduling conflicts for Panera's back room, so we may be meeting in the back of the main restaurant area. In June, July and August we plan to meet on the third Thursday of the month.

"I find television very educating. Every time somebody turns on the set, I go into the other room and read a book."

- Groucho Marx

## ***Dismantling Racism***

First Bethel's Dismantling Racism group will begin meeting again on Sunday, April 29 at 6:00 at the Panera in South Park Shops. All who are interested in joining the conversation and discussing ways to help build bridges of understanding and trust are invited!

## ***Calling All Youth And Young Bistro Helpers!***

Please attend a "Thank You" ice cream social on Sunday, April 8 at the church from 4:00-5:00. (Youth Group participants will stay until 6:00). There is no cost for this event. Please see Charlene Pauline if you have any questions.



## ***Jumonville's Spring Dinner Coming***

Join friends and supporters of one of the premier Christian camps and retreat centers on May 6 for their Spring Dinner – “Honoring our Past, Building our Future.”

For more information visit: [jumonville.org/event/spring-dinner](http://jumonville.org/event/spring-dinner)

## ***Martha Circle Update!***

The Martha Circle will meet Wednesday April 11, at 7:00 pm in the Susanna Wesley Room

Matthew 28:5 – “The angel said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here, he has risen, just as he said.’”



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*To Our First Bethel Friends*

*Your many expressions of sympathy and prayers for me and our family were such a blessing. We felt surrounded by your loving care and a sense of peace at a difficult time.*

*- Alice Barth*

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## *So Many Questions When Answering “The Call”*

by Gloria Stephan

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” And I said, “**Here am I; send me!**” **Isaiah 6:8**

The 2018 ASP theme verse starts with a question and the response to God’s call follows quickly. Unlike Isaiah or the fishermen that dropped their nets to respond to Jesus saying, “Follow me”, our response is seldom so immediate. Oh, the questions we ask when we hear the call or feel the nudge to serve.

Our Appalachia Service Project trip is less than three months away, and volunteers are asking lots of questions like, “Where will we go?”, “What do we eat?”, “Where will I sleep?”, “What will my project be?”, “What if I don’t have any construction skills?”, “What team will I be on?”, “When do we get home?”.

Don’t get me wrong. I welcome and encourage questions, but it always makes me think about how difficult it is for us to “let go and let God”. I can answer most of the usual questions, but I can never tell volunteers exactly what to expect on an ASP trip.

ASP suggests to us that God sends out the call, and God’s people are the called....

- to stand with those who are hurting and struggling
- to speak on behalf of those who do not have a voice
- to serve all people – “right where they are, just the way they are.”

ASP is celebrating 50 years of answering the call to serve among the people with humility and enthusiasm in the same way that Isaiah answered the call from God. Won’t you consider joining us, or supporting those who are answering the call?

First Bethel’s ASP trip is scheduled for Sunday, June 17 – Saturday, June 23. For more information, contact me at [gstephan57@gmail.com](mailto:gstephan57@gmail.com) or see the ASP website at [www.ASPHome.org](http://www.ASPHome.org).



## ***What Are Those Guys Up To?***

That's a pretty fair question, but trust me – it's all good!

You've probably heard that there is a growing men's ministry at First Bethel Church whose purpose is to build strong men of faith and service while supporting our church.



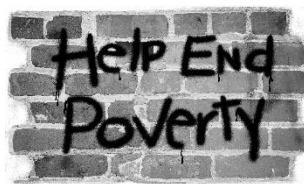
Well, here are a couple of exciting events sure to build strong bonds of faith and friendship for everyone:

- ◆ **GARAGE SALE** – The Men's group will be hosting a GARAGE SALE on May 5 and they are looking for any "garage items" you might like to donate. (No paint or tires, please) See Ken Williams or John Brevard for more info!
- ◆ **CONCERT COMING IN MAY** – **The Bell'Art Ensemble**, a group of 5 professional chamber musicians dedicated to taking music out of the concert hall into a more welcoming and intimate environment, will be performing in our sanctuary on May 19 at 7:00 pm Don't miss them as they return to First Bethel! Check out their website at: [www.lrcmp.org](http://www.lrcmp.org)

The Men meets the **FIRST SATURDAY** of every month at 8 a.m. in Founders Hall. There's a program, discussion, refreshments, and an opportunity to join other men in serving God and our neighbors. Hope to see you there! See Ken Williams or John Brevard for more information!

## ***The Many Faces Of Poverty***

A special event will be held Saturday, April 21 at First UMC, 332 North Water Street, in Kittanning. It's designed for those from local churches to expand their understanding of being in ministry with those struggling to survive and connect with God in community. Discover some new ways to reach out and include all of those who need to hear and experience God's love and grace.



The day will include worship, guest speakers, a panel discussion and displays with resources and information. Lunch is included. Cost is \$10/person or \$30 for 3 or more people. See Pastor Tom if interested.

## ***New Study Coming!***

**Living the Questions 2.0**, a highly-acclaimed study of the Bible, offers an alternative to programs that provide participants all the answers. LtQ strives to create an open-minded environment for interacting with one another in exploring Christianity. Video presenters include: Diana Butler Bass, Brian McLaren, John Bell, Amy-Jill Levine & Marcus Borg!

**Our first series, “Invitation to Journey,” began on April 4 and lasts from 6:30-7:30 pm and will run 7 weeks. Topics will include:**

- \* Invitation to Journey
- \* Taking the Bible Seriously
- \* Stories of Creation
- \* Thinking Theologically
- \* Lives of Jesus
- \* A Passion for Christ: Paul
- \* Out into the World



*If believing in the literal interpretation of the Bible is essential to your faith this study will challenge you, but don't let that stop you. Everyone is welcome! Sign up in the Narthex or call 412-835-0700.*

## ***Following God's Lead***



Jazz musician Thomas Dorsey traveled an unlikely road to become the “father of black gospel music.” At age 11, he dropped out of school to be a vaudeville performer and blues pianist. While Dorsey recovered from a nervous breakdown at age 21, his mother urged him to serve the Lord with his talents. It took several years, but the musician committed to composing spiritual songs — rejected by many mainstream churches as “the devil’s music.”

In 1932, after Dorsey’s wife and infant son died during childbirth, he channeled his grief into the piano, writing “Precious Lord, Take My Hand.” Known to be a favorite song of Martin Luther King Jr., it ends with these lyrics: “Through the storm, through the night, lead me on to the light. Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.”

## ***Meadowcrest Nursing Center Ministry***

Did you know we have a regularly-scheduled worship service at a local nursing center?

First Bethel serves the residents and staff of the Meadowcrest Nursing Center on Braun Road in Bethel Park. Plan to join us for our monthly visit as we bring songs, prayer, stories, and a healthy serving of God's love to our neighbors. **We'll gather on Friday April 13 at 3 pm. Everyone is welcome!**



**Nursing Home Ministry**

## ***The True Source of Power***

The story is told of someone who plugged a power strip into itself and then couldn't understand why the system wouldn't turn on! We get a kick out of such tales, yet how often do we try to "power" our own lives? We frequently think we need to be the source of our own strength, joy, peace, energy and wisdom.

Jesus doesn't teach us to find life within ourselves — or in any human being or earthly circumstance, object or philosophy. Rather, calling himself the good shepherd, Jesus says, "I have come that [my sheep] may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10).

We don't access that abundant life by "plugging into" ourselves. Instead, Jesus invites us to plug into his power — and joy, peace, hope, truth — through prayer and Scripture, worship and service, fellowship with other Christians and the beauty of God's world.

## ***Wednesday Morning Bible Study!***



Would you like to get a jump on the scripture reading for the upcoming Sunday service? There's a place for YOU! Weather permitting, our Scripture Study Group will meet Wednesdays at 9:45 AM in the Oxford Room. Dig into the background of the reading and uncover interesting facts and meaning you may have overlooked. Everyone is welcome! If you have any questions, please contact Stephanie Alstadt or call the church office at 412-835-0700.

## ***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.

## ***Curing vs. healing***

In "We Know How This Ends," author Bruce Kramer writes about "living while dying" from Lou Gehrig's disease. While not denying his impending death, Kramer focuses on getting as much out of life as possible. Part of that involves the following distinction:

"Know the difference between curing and healing," he writes. "Curing implies that things will be brought back to the way they were. ... Expecting a cure will only result in frustration and disappointment. But healing can take place."

In Scripture, curing and healing are generally used interchangeably, yet one can happen without the other. We know people with disease or disability whose spirits are vibrant and faithful. Though they haven't been cured, their lives are marked by God's healing touch. Even in the Gospels, Jesus' curing of ailments was often a sign of his greater healing: sins forgiven, community restored, faith embraced.

For what have you prayed for a cure? Might healing be the greater need?

## ***2017 Church Conference Goals***

In November, our Church approved a series of goals at the direction of Bishop Cynthia More-Koiki. In these early months of 2018 the King's Light will share those goals with those unable to attend the meeting.

This month we present 2 more goals:

### **Engaging in ministry with the poor.**

Short Term: By year end 2019, host a poverty simulation day in partnership with at least one other local organization.

Medium Term: By year end 2023, establish a separately funded adult-only ASP trip.

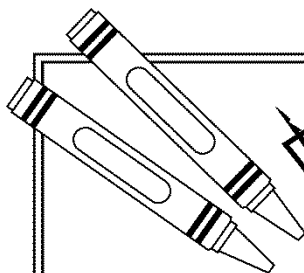
Long Term: By year end 2024, establish an anti-poverty chapter based at First Bethel United Methodist Church with the minimum number of participants to grow by 10% annually.

### **Developing Principled Christian Leaders**

Short Term: By year end 2018, host the following separate studies, Disciple Bible Study, Living the Question, Christian Leadership Development, and Spiritual Gifts, with a combined 50 person participation between the studies.

Medium Term: By 2023, in cooperation with our District Superintendent, we will invite a Leadership Team from another effective local United Methodist Church in order to train our own leadership team comprised of individuals from within our organization.

Long Term: By year end 2027, we will have developed our own leadership team program to train new leaders of our own congregation and other local churches.



# PUZZLE

## RESURRECTION HOPE



Romans 6:5 reveals the hope we have because  
Jesus rose from the dead on Easter.



*Directions: First solve the math problems. Then put the corresponding words in the blanks; for example, the word next to the answer "1" goes in the first blank, the word next to the answer "2" goes in the second blank, and so on.*

2+2 = \_\_\_ united      2x3 = \_\_\_ death      7+6 = \_\_\_ resurrection

3x3 = \_\_\_ certainly      18-16 = \_\_\_ have      4-1 = \_\_\_ been

0+1 = \_\_\_ if      2x4 = \_\_\_ we      13-1 = \_\_\_ him

2+3 = \_\_\_ in      20-6 = \_\_\_ like      2+5 = \_\_\_ his

2x5 = \_\_\_ be      8+3 = \_\_\_ with

"For 1 we 2 3 4

with him 5 a 6 like 7 ,

8 will 9 also 10 united

11 12 in a 13

14 his." Romans 6:5, NIV

Answer: For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. Romans 6:5, NIV