

The Pastor's Notebook

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, the Swiss-American psychiatrist once said, “The most beautiful people we have known are those who have known defeat, known suffering, known struggle, known loss, and have found their way out of the depths. These persons have an appreciation, a sensitivity, and an understanding of life that fills them with compassion, gentleness, and a deep loving concern. Beautiful people do not just happen.”



How true. After a lifetime of sermons, Bible Studies, and pilgrimages all over the country for the latest seminar that was going to change my life I have come to believe that the most important element for a meaningful life is remembrance – knowing and being willing to admit to times of great pain and struggle in one’s own lives. Those able to channel such remembrances are most likely to be the kind of person who lends hope, compassion and beauty to the world.

Just as God identified with our pain and humanness, we who dare to do the same will find that our hearts are softened when confronted with the harsh realities of the world. We who dare to look into our own hearts and remember the pain of losing a father, mother, child, friend or spouse, will find it near impossible to inflict intentional pain on others. We remember what it is to hurt.

My dad grew up in a poor family during the Great Depression and he often recounted to my sister and me the times when his family received food baskets from the church. He told of putting cardboard in his shoes because the soles had worn out. He recalled his own father, desperate for work, coming home dejected when he couldn’t find even the most menial job. My dad could be strict, but when confronted with another person in need, when challenged by a situation of abject want or sorrow I could actually watch him go back to his early days of struggle and connect with the hurt, humiliation, and fear of being without, of being alone.

Friends, our world aches for those who remember what it is to be in need, afraid, hungry, or sick. Our world, spinning in chaotic fashion, cries out for those who care enough to act.

God in Christ demonstrated astonishing love and compassion toward us, and showed us that the way, truth and life that's found in him will drive us to our knees for forgiveness and strength and to our neighbors to help. Far from a faith of mere speculation, Jesus gives us a glimpse of true beauty, which is not merely on the outside, but deep in our hearts which will overflow into actions of self-sacrifice, humility, and kindness.

May these summer days give us an opportunity to reflect, remember, and respond to those who need a gentle word of understanding, an uplifting gift of encouragement, or a bold act of defense against those things that strip away the God-given dignity of others. May we continue to grow in faith, hope, and love, becoming the kind of disciple worthy of the most beautiful name, disciple of Jesus Christ!

- Tom

Making and Keeping Promises

As twelve youth were confirmed on June 3rd, I couldn't help but think back to when they were baptized. During Baptism, the parents, Godparents AND the Congregation make promises about how the child will be raised in the Church. For the Congregation that means promising the space, materials and staff (mostly volunteers) for the Nursery, Sunday School, VBS, Fellowship, Choirs, Missions, Confirmation Class and a whole lot more. Yes, the parents have to ensure that children participate as much as possible-but the Church has to provide the opportunities. What a joy it was to see those promises kept. What a Blessing to know that whatever life holds for these Confirmands, their Church family has given them a foundation of Faith.

Then, on June 10th, as we welcomed new Members into the First Bethel family, they, too made these same promises of support. I hope you noticed that on both occasions the Congregation reaffirmed those same promises "to support First Bethel with our prayers, our presence our gifts, our service and our witness." Let's all remember to keep our promises!

Confirmation Class Joins Church!

The people of First Bethel Church were delighted and proud to welcome into membership the 2018 Confirmation Class on Sunday June 3 at 10 a.m. After a four month journey, and with the promise of opportunities to delve even deeper into the Christian faith this summer, these young people bring many gifts to the congregation including their curious natures, deep compassion, and a liveliness that will be a gift to all. We congratulate the parents and families of:



Hanna Armstrong
Michael Doman
Shannon Evans
Jack Hatten
Owen Newman
Grace Passios
Julia Pauline
Alyssa Scabilloni
Lexi Schlutz
Katie Sullivan
Joshua Zahniser
Jake Zeminski

Welcome into full membership at First Bethel United Methodist Church!

**It's Almost Time for the
Church Picnic!**



September 23th 4:00 p.m.

**Don't miss out on the games, food and fun
at Peterswood Park!**

Serving God's People!



Ministry Scheduler Pro is an online scheduling program used by First Bethel to schedule volunteers for several ministries. You can access everything online and there's even an app! 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. You can enter dates when you're unavailable to serve, request subs, and view the published schedules any time. Let us know if you want to be a part of these ministries and you don't have Internet access – that works too!

Why We Go To Church

A church goer wrote a letter to the editor of a newspaper and complained that it made no sense to go to church every Sunday. He wrote: "I've gone for 30 years now, and in that time I have heard something like 3,000 sermons, but for the life of me, I can't remember a single one of them. So, I think I am wasting my time, the preachers & priests are wasting theirs by giving sermons at all."

This started a real controversy in the "Letters to the Editor" column. It went on for weeks until someone wrote this clincher: "I've been married for 30 years now. In that time my wife has cooked some 32,000 meals. But, for the life of me, I cannot recall the entire menu for a single one of those meals. But I do know this "they all nourished me & gave me the strength I needed to do my work. If my wife had not given me these meals, I'd be physically dead today. Likewise, if I had not gone to church for nourishment, I would be spiritually dead today!"

When you are DOWN to nothing, God is UP to something! Faith sees the invisible, believes the incredible & receives the impossible! Thank God for our physical & our spiritual nourishment!

- Submitted by Marilyn Kebe

Book Club Notes

The August book selection is **Just Mercy by Bryan Stevenson**. *Just Mercy* is at once an unforgettable account of an idealistic, gifted young lawyer's coming of age, a moving window into the lives of those he has defended, and an inspiring argument for compassion in the pursuit of true justice. (amazon.com)

Next meetings are:

- Thursday, July 19 **Ella Minnow Pea by Mark Dunn**
- Thursday August 16 **Just Mercy by Bryan Stevenson**

Then back to the third Friday of the month

- Friday, September 21
- Friday, October 19
- Friday, November 16
- Friday, December 21

We meet in the back room of Panera in South Park shops at 7:30PM

Annual Conference Report

by Ruth Finlay, Lay Delegate

Annual Conference is an interesting experience but is always overwhelming! I will attempt to cover a few highlights here.

The first full day always begins with a laity section for the non-clergy attendees. This year we all met together and after general instructions as to the workings of annual conference the Rev. Dr. Junius B. Dotson, General Secretary of Discipleship Ministries, presented an enthusiastic message on "Making, Shaping and Engaging Passionate Disciples." This initiative is entitled "See All the People" and the emphasis is on developing meaningful relationships with those within, and especially outside, the church. During that time, the clergy of the annual conference met together. The agenda looks overwhelming!



That afternoon was highlighted by the State of the Church address given by Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi.” She not only announced that the United Methodist Church in Western Pennsylvania is doing well and “each day is going on to be perfected in love,” but that there are several areas of concern - our health, church numbers, and racial inclusion – that needed to be addressed. Throughout the conference there were readings of appointments for clergy of all districts.

Thursday schedule also included section meetings to review legislation for vote at this conference. Details on the legislation may be accessed by referring to the website, wpaumc.org.

Throughout the conference there were numerous reports from agencies such as the Anti-Racism Ministry Team, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, Bread for the World, Mission U. UMCOR, the United Methodist Women, the United Methodist Youth, etc.

There was a service honoring the retirees of the conference. The Rev. Dr. Paul Taylor, our retiring district superintendent, gave an inspiring message on the subject, “This is the Time.” Also the Memorial Service, remembering those who have passed away during the previous year was inspiring. Among those remembered was Earl Killian, husband of Deb Ackley Killian who many of this congregation know.

The music for our time together was varied, from old standard hymns and songs to contemporary music performed by the conference praise band – there was something for all! Also the conference clergy choir presented a concert of choral anthems.

An overlying theme for this conference was unity. There has been a lot of debate and discussion on race and gender issues for a number of years. In February 2019 there will be a special session of Gen. conference in St. Louis to vote on a compromise the bishops are presenting. After many gatherings and conversations, the Council of Bishops has recommended the “one church model” relative to LBGTQ issues of ordination and same-sex marriage. This would lead to a change, allowing local options on these issues. What an important time in our denomination! We pray for unity and understanding in our church and in the world!

An ASP reflection by George Karpacs **(A First-time ASP Participant-2018)**

As I reflect upon my journey to Clay County, West Virginia, written below are my memories of our week spent in Appalachia.

Twenty-one participants departed on June 17, 2018, traveling in three vans, as part of First Bethel UMC's annual delegation to Appalachia to address the needs of financially distressed homeowners. This First Bethel's 19th year participating and ASP's 50th year of service.



This year's ASP team traveled to Clay County, WV, the first year of service to homeowners in this impoverished county. My wife Jennifer and I were first year ASP participants and we served on one of three teams, working on three separate projects.

We were one of three other churches, one from the Chicago suburbs and a second from near Ocean City, Maryland. Our specific project was to remove, repair, and replace a rotting floor in the bathroom and bedroom of a trailer, having been damaged by a devastating flood that hit the area in 2016.

Many of the homes in the region were damaged by these 2016 floods. FEMA and other governmental organizations were unable to fully address the needs of the homeowners and are retracting some payments. Fortunately, with the financial assistance of ASP providing tools and materials and our volunteer labor, we at First Bethel UMC provided, much was accomplished throughout the week. We thank you for the bistro's and ALL other financial support provided.

Our team removed a bathtub and replaced sections of a rotted floor, Jaime Gray's team built a porch and a set of steps, and Corey Pauline's team insulated and dry walled. As part of our project, we also insulated areas that needed to be insulated. Additionally, we build and spread love, hope and the Good News of the Gospel in fellowship with the family's we served. Our theme this year of "A Call To Action" is taken from Isaiah 6:8.

This was a rewarding and enriching experience for me and Jennifer. I must mention First Bethel's youths were, for the most part, very disciplined and did an excellent job on the three work projects. If you haven't gone on ASP before, consider being a participant next year. In closing, I recall the words of ASP's founder Tex Evans: "We meet people *where* they are exactly as they are."

In His Service,
George Karpacs

Give Blood on Sunday July 15

Sometimes we wonder if we make a difference in the world. With as many problems as exist, what can one person do to make things better. Well – keep on reading!

Blood donation saved my mom, grandma and oldest brother. My grandmother was internally bleeding. We didn't know until it was almost too late. Blood donation kept her here with us longer, until she gained her wings. My brother's caffeine addiction lead to severe internal bleeding, but with blood donations he survived. My mom had a massive stroke and blood disorders and wasn't expected to live. She received many transfusions and we had her for an extra eight years! I feel it necessary to give back. You don't realize the influence you have by just taking a little time out of your day to donate. You are saving lives!!!!



Representative from Central Blood Bank will be at First Bethel Church on Sunday July 15 from 8:00 a.m. to 1:30 pm in the Susanna Wesley Room to receive life-saving donations. Plan to help your neighbor during the summer, the time of greatest need for Central Blood Bank. Call

412-835-0700 for more information!

***Library News* – Summertime reading for girls!**

We are delighted to have these three new books, the first two donated in memory of *Connie Siren*.

- **A Letter to My Teacher** – A touching story about a girl’s experiences in the second grade – and how her unforgettable teacher changed her life. Adults will enjoy this one as much as the little ones. And it will probably make a teacher cry. The drawings by celebrated illustrator *Nancy Carpenter* are marvelous. A reviewer said the book shows “how much the kindness and encouragement of teachers can mean to you as a child.” 31 pages.
- **Dear Girl: A Celebration of Wonderful, Smart, Beautiful You** – Advice on asking questions, being alone, having a good cry, what to wear, cutting your hair, and making your room “awesome.” *Hoda Kotb*, co-anchor of NBC’s *Today* show, described this easy-to-read 38-page picture book as “beautiful, beautiful.” Recommended for ages 4-8.
- **A Smart Girls Guide: Friendship Troubles** – This popular book from *American Girl Publishing* has drawn much praise from its young readers (and their Moms). It quizzes girls about friendship problems and gives tips on how to solve them. Subjects include bullies, on-again-off-again friends, being told you aren’t “cool” anymore, how to avoid hurting a friend’s feelings, and feeling good about yourself. It covers 87 pages, with cute pictures throughout. Ages 10+

- Your Library Staff

Sunday Announcements

If you would like an announcement in the bulletin for your committee or program please be sure to email it to the office at fbumc@verizon.net by Wednesday at 12 noon. Thanks!



I'm Glad You Asked

By Gloria Stephan

Are you comfortable talking with strangers about your faith? Is it easy for you to tell your friends and family how transforming a mission trip can be? Can you bring up the subject of being 'called to action' at your workplace? Do you quickly build solid relationships with folks you meet casually at church?

None of this is normally comfortable for me, but I've found that ASP gives me an opportunity to do all those things.

Very often as I'm checking out of a store with items for the trip, someone will ask me where I'm going and what we will do there. Or, I'll be telling my friends and family that I'm packing and preparing for a week in Appalachia, and the questions flow naturally. Sometimes they ask what the work will be, but often they want to know what church I go with, how ASP works, and why we go.

That gives me an opening to talk about things that I don't usually get to express.

Beyond the week on ASP when faith is put in action doing home repairs, many other things happen. We connect with each other, we build and strengthen relationships, and we are transformed. ASP has added a new tagline "Connect. Build. Transform." to their more familiar "Warmer. Safer. Drier". You see, it's not all about the construction. Days filled with work, prayer, fellowship and service add up to so much more.

This year, our theme is 'Called to Action' and some of our volunteers will be sharing their personal experiences in worship and in future issues of the Kings Light. Listen to what they say and notice what they talk about. Although they may speak to the projects, or the weather, they'll more likely tell you about the people, the communities, and how they were personally changed by their week on ASP.

This year's ASP trip was to Clay County West Virginia on June 17. Thanks to all who have supported this ministry with their gifts and prayers. For more information, or if you want to join us next year, contact me at gstephan57@gmail.com or see the ASP website at www.ASPHome.org. You'll be glad you asked!

HEALTHY LIVING News!

Choosing to live better comes in all different ways. With Healthy Living we are looking at 5 ways to bring on good health - nutrition, moving, thinking, meditation and sleeping - and how best to live out each one.

So far the group of folks who have come are having a good time learning, sharing and taste-testing some awesome food, and they're always asking, "When are we going to get together again?"

Love
yourself
enough
to live
a healthy
lifestyle.

You will not find a friendlier bunch and so please think about joining us on July 15th at 6:30 for a short movie clip, taste-testing and an exercise in positive thinking! We plan to have lots of fun in our short time together.

It is always kid friendly, so please bring the little ones so they can try new foods!

- Linda Barnicott



Lord Jesus, thou who art the way, the truth and the life; hear us as we pray for the truth that shall make all free. Teach us that liberty is not only to be loved but also to be lived. Liberty is too precious a thing to be buried in books. It costs too much to be hoarded. Help us see that our liberty is not the right to do as we please, but the opportunity to please to do what is right.

—Peter Marshall, Chaplain of the U.S. Senate

Special Offering

It has been a very difficult summer for many in our neighborhoods. The flood waters have ravaged the area and a growing need for assistance is obvious.

July's special offering is **SHIM, the South Hills Interfaith Movement**, which provides basic human needs like food, clothing and utilities. SHIM operates three food pantries, a community clothing room and is a screening site for the Dollar Energy Utility Assistance program. SHIM offers programs focused on parenting, education, youth development, financial assistance and employment counseling.



There are many needs in our communities, to be sure, but there is enormous generosity and compassion in our church and neighborhood to meet the challenge. Thanks for your assistance!

“If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other.”

-Mother Teresa of Calcutta

Parking Lot is Looking Good!

Over the past couple of weeks there has been a whole lot of patching and paving going on at the church! Our Upper Parking Lot has been patched and major repairs and repaving have occurred to the lower lot. In addition, the bottom half of the lower lot has been sealed and its entirety has been relined. We thank everyone for their patience and offer a reminder that you can help by making or renewing a pledge to “Building the Faith,” which will cover part of the \$25,000 cost. The remainder will be covered by our line of credit. Thanks for your consideration!



**Parking Lot
Repairs**

Enter The River

It's becoming more clear that the issue of racial tension in America is going to be solved, not by politicians, but by the women and men of our diverse communities. At First Bethel we are looking to be part of that solution.

Join your friends on the Dismantling Racism Team as we look into deeper understandings and consequences of subtle forms of racism, including white privilege. "Enter the River" is a fascinating and eye-opening book that helps us understand, in a non-judgmental way, the benefits of being part of the majority ethnic group and the challenges that come to those who are not.



We will continue our discussion of the book on July 22 at 6 pm in the parlor and let's remember the words of Anthony Coniaris, "When all other doors in life are closed to us, Jesus will be for us the ever-open door. ... To call any situation hopeless is to shut the door on God."

Please join us as we serve Christ by growing more in his likeness and love.

Summer Worship Schedule

Don't forget to join the entire First Bethel family for worship!

Beginning **June 3 thru September 2** we will join together for one Sunday worship service at **10:00 a.m.**

The Adult Study group, **FaithLink**, will gather at 9:00 a.m.

For those who like to get an early start on their day we will offer casual, **OUTDOOR worship at 9 a.m.** in the Hillside Worship Center.

If raining, we will meet in the Susanna Wesley Room

First Bethel Welcomes New Members!

During the 10 a.m. worship service on June 10 we welcomed into membership some very special people:

Laverne McConnell
Jeff Bradley
Laura Halsey Bradley

We are honored that you have chosen First Bethel Church to be your family of faith and look forward to serving the Lord through compassionate ministry together. Welcome!!

Stop, Look, and Listen!

Literature, painting, music — the most basic lesson that all art teaches us is to stop, look and listen to life on this planet, including our own lives, as a vastly richer, deeper, more mysterious business than most of the time it ever occurs to us to suspect as we bumble along from day to day on automatic pilot. ...



When Jesus [says] that the greatest command of all is to love God and to love our neighbor, he too is asking us to pay attention. If we are to love God, we must first stop, look and listen for him in what is happening around us and inside us. If we are to love our neighbors, before doing anything else we must see our neighbors. With our imagination as well as our eyes, that is to say like artists, we must see not just their faces but the life behind and within their faces. Here it is love that is the frame we see them in.

—Frederick Buechner, *Whistling in the Dark*