

The Pastor's Notebook

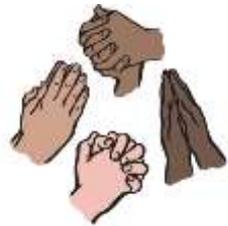
Recently, a group of folks at the church began discussing common conditions being experienced in their lives these days - anxiety and its close sibling, worry. There seems to be so much of both to go around. Have kids? You worry. Going out on a date? You're anxious. Turn on the news? You can begin to think the whole world has gone mad. Wake up in the middle of the night? The knot in the pit of your stomach chases a return to peaceful sleep away.

When these symptoms of unrest and apprehension sweep down upon me I am reminded of one of my favorite passages of scripture, Philippians 4:6-7, in which the Apostle Paul advises his followers, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Not might, but will.

I know, when I'm anxious or afraid it's easy to focus on things great and small such as physical insecurity, advancing age, changes in the family, the swirling uncertainty on the world stage, or not having enough to meet the financial needs of the future.

Believe me when I tell you that the only thing that can eliminate this threat to inner peace is prayer. Anxiety lives deep in our hearts and minds, and so it is there that we must confront the fear that plagues us.



Now, please when I suggest prayer as a remedy to this type of fear, I am not talking about simple or panicky appeals uttered in the heat of the moment, and Paul wasn't either. What he's speaking of is the peace of mind born of a prayerful life - ongoing dialogue and communion with God that doesn't ever stop, - that reminds us that we are never alone or at the whims of our worst nightmares. When we sincerely reorient ourselves towards the Lord, we reestablish

patterns in our thinking that, over the course of time, begin to seek and trust God first, instead of resorting to worst-case scenarios and dread.

Our inner life is similar to our beloved rivers in Pittsburgh . These three great rivers have been flowing so long in the same river beds that to change their courses would take a mighty effort and time. But I am confident that when prayer becomes deeply ingrained in my mind, my anxiety will turn into dependence on God and God’s rich promises. Then, when I begin to fear for the world or my family, when I wake from my sleep and the monsters begin to harass me, I will respond with faith in the God who can scatter them all and restore balance, confidence, and tranquility before the break of dawn.

God’s peace be with you.

Pastor Tom

A Firm Foundation

During his childhood on the Atlantic Coast, Gregory Elder devoted much time to creating elaborate sandcastles. “Whole cities would appear beneath my hands,” he writes. One year, when bullies repeatedly crushed his handiwork, Elder finally placed large rocks and concrete chunks at the base of his kingdoms. The returning bare-footed thugs soon learned a painful lesson.



Many people consider today’s church under attack from a number of areas – a materialistic society, heresies and sin, the arrogance, faults and moral failing of church leaders. Elder writes. “They forget that the church is built upon a Rock (Matthew 16:18), over which the gates of hell itself shall not prevail.”

While these are trying times to be sure, God will not fail to restore the church to its servant role and lead the faithful through troubled waters, past bullies, and into a bright future.

My Mashugumah Moment by Sarah Kobylinski

mashugumah: /muh/shoog/uh/mah n: an unpredictable and unforgettable experience that exercises a range of emotions; mostly excitement, but sometimes fear

origin: Robin Gray

For many of us, *mashugumah moments* are uniquely defined and personally felt. Those times in our lives where unforeseen circumstances do the driving, and we are the ones along for the ride. But it is also in these moments that we awaken new layers of ourselves we didn't know existed—confidence, fortitude, and downright grit.

The creator of this word, Mrs. Robin Gray, inspired the direction of this article. While her *mashugumah moment* may be different from mine, it is nonetheless a word that became the strength that bonded our team in love and laughter. Because quite frankly, my *mashugumah moment(s)* happened everyday on this journey.



On the surface, our mission was characteristic of ASP: build a 6'X10' porch for a family in need. However, the transformation extended well beyond the manual labor of digging holes, measuring deck boards, or using a miter saw to cut spindles. Of course, being witness to the

visible change that isolated pieces of lumber can make when our team cut, drilled, measured, and sawed them certainly produced a child-like triumph I hadn't felt for some time. How quickly that layer of confidence and self-assurance grew alongside that porch!

But ASP is more than carpentry. It is a higher mission that serves as a humble reminder of the world that exists outside our own. Because below the surface of our projects is the heart and soul of what *roots* and *re-roots* our personal transformations: love, hope, and compassion. These growth spurts are different for everyone, as a *mashugumah moment* is circumstantial to its actual setting.

For our team, though, the emotional handiwork of measuring and sawing was grounded in not just a personal call, but an innate understanding of how love and compassion foster *and* transform families as well as team members who may be overwhelmed by the ugliness of nothingness. The

void needn't be felt; however, but filled. When our self-assurance and confidence layers up, *because of* the love and compassion we extend toward others, well, that's when the magic happens on ASP. Barriers of loneliness and loss are broken down and replaced with a new outlook and in our case, a new porch! ASP awakened a part of my heart that, once I *rooted* and *re-rooted* myself in the hope and compassion my mother carried, was I able to stir those layers of fortitude and downright grit to make every moment a *mashugumah moment*, indeed.

Helping Hands Welcome!

Fall will soon be here and the start of a new school year will quickly be upon us so now it is time to get back into a regular schedule. When you are penciling in activities how about putting in just one more. Pick just one new thing to do to help the Outreach Committee fulfill their goals for this year. You don't have to solve all the world's problems but you could do just one thing to help another person. That one thing could be tie a knot on a fleece blanket to help keep a homeless person warm which we will be doing on Sunday September 30th between the services.



You could bring a food item to help SHIM keep their food pantry shelves full so they can help those less fortunate have enough food to feed their families.

Another thing you could do is help prepare the Daily Bread meal between the services on Sunday November 11 or if you have a few hours you could go over to the North Side and help serve that food to the less fortunate. There are many areas of the Church that could use just one more pair of hands. Where will you find that one thing you could do to make a difference in this world?

The next Outreach meeting is Monday September 20th at 6:30 and we sure could use a few extra hands.

Thanks!
Sally Irick

Music Notes by Ruth Finlay

I hope you have all enjoyed our music this summer. I mention here those who have so willingly given of their talent and time. We are blessed with so much talent! Those folks are: Tom Barnicott, Pam Bright, Gil Bigenho, Jessie Best, Gary Graney, Jeff Leonhardt, Lorna Schlutz, Regan Gray and Katie Sullivan. And we don't want to forget Ken Williams and his barbershop quartet. We also thank our guest accompanists, Diane Lindley and Deborah Bigenho who were there when Phil couldn't be!

On another note, it is almost time for our choirs to begin another season. If you have never participated in our music ministry, please give it serious thought.



It's a wonderful way for you to be connected to a small group, working for a common goal, and enjoying fellowship in the presence of God. Here is what we are offering this year with the dates when rehearsals will begin.

- Chancel Choir (Youth and Adult singers) - September 6 7:30 pm More singers are needed (Especially men!!)
- Wesley Ringers (Youth and Adult handbells) - September 27 6:30 pm More ringers are needed!!
- Angels of God (Singers K-6) - September 12 6:30

There are also many opportunities for vocal and instrumental solos and small groups throughout the season. If you have a talent, or think you might, let us know!

Remember the "Coffee House Gathering" on the first Saturday of each month, beginning in October, at 6pm!

If you have questions or would like more information about our programs, please call or email me at 412-833-3982 or jrfinlay1030@gmail.com. See you in church! - **Ruth**

2018 ROTARY CHICKEN BAR B Q

SATURDAY SEPT. 29th

At

WESTMINISTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Rt. 19 in Upper St. Clair

11:00 AM to 7:00 PM

EAT IN or DRIVE-THRU

Ticket Price: \$12.00

**BENEFITS Continuing education for
Zimbabwean teens through "O" - Level Exams**



Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall.

Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.

All the king's horses and all the king's men
CANNOT put Humpty together again....*Unless...*

YOU BUY A CHICKEN BAR-B-Q TICKET THIS YEAR!

If you cannot enjoy the dinner yourself, then your ticket shall be donated to SHIM or other needy families.

TNC (The Nyadire Connection) has approximately 45 teens who must take their "O" level exams at a cost of \$100.00.

Please consider doing what John Wesley said: "DO ALL THE GOOD YOU CAN FOR ALL THE PEOPLE YOU CAN ANY TIME YOU CAN."

Please see or call Phil Himmler for tickets: 412-491-9238 (By the way – we want to win the \$500.00 Bonus again!)

Great Scott – It’s Tupperware!

A Tupperware fundraiser will be held to offset Amy Scott’s medical expenses following her recent kidney transplant surgery. The event will be at the church on **Sunday, September 30th from 10AM to Noon.** Amy will receive 25% of the proceeds of all catalogue and online orders, and she’ll receive 50% on all ‘cash and carry’ items that will be available for you to take home that day. Tupperware products are practical and durable and make great gifts.



You Can Make a Difference!

Most individuals want to help save lives, but avoid talking about suicide because they are unsure of how to identify someone at risk or they are concerned about saying the wrong things or making a situation worse. Saving lives begins with learning what to do.



We will be offering QPR Training at First Bethel Church in mid-October and invite you to join us. **QPR stands for Question, Persuade, and Refer**—the 3 simple steps anyone can learn to help prevent suicide. The most widely taught gatekeeper training in the world, QPR is designed to help any and every one learn how to recognize the warning signs of suicide, offer hope, and help save lives. Participants will learn how to intervene with an individual at-risk, persuade them to get help, and guide them to the appropriate resources.

For more information please call Pastor Tom at 412-722-8316 or see the group facilitator, Jane Black, at church.

“If Jesus meant for his followers to rule the world, then why did he teach them to wash feet?”

- *Barbara Brown Taylor*

Blessings by Gloria Stephan



In Nadia Boltz-Weber's book "Accidental Saints" in a chapter titled "You Are Not "The Blessing"", she says, "I've never known how to keep from feeling self-important when I help people. Being the one who gets to serve is a position of power. No matter how selfless I'd like to think I am, there's always something in it for me – even if it's the satisfaction of knowing I am a good Matthew 25 Christian, that I am "being Christ" to someone else."

She goes on to say that we are certainly called to care for each other, but it's dangerous to think of ourselves as the "blessing" someone has been waiting for, and such a perspective can deteriorate into "a blend of benevolence and paternalism".

Then what was Jesus saying about being a stranger and being cared for? Nadia says "Christ's presence is not embodied in those who feed the hungry (as important as that work is), but Christ's presence is in the hungry being fed."

"But we do get to experience Jesus in that holy place where we meet others' needs and have our own needs met."

"We are all, at once, bearers of the gospel and receivers of it...and we never know when we experience Jesus in all of this. All that we have is a promise, a promise that our needs are holy to God. A promise that Jesus is present in the meeting of needs."

Walter Kroch, President/CEO of ASP once explained that the ASP logo has the cross first, and the hammer second which is intentional. Relationships and home repair go hand in hand and the blessings are in the needs being met. That's where we encounter God.

Our next ASP mission trip will be in June 2019. For more information, or if you want to join us, contact me at gstephan57@gmail.com or see the ASP website at www.ASPHome.org. Blessings are guaranteed!

Library News!

Many books have been donated to our Library in recent weeks, including these three:

KILLERS OF THE FLOWER MOON – The subtitle of this powerful and disturbing true-life story is *The Osage Murders and the Birth of the FBI*. It is a chilling account of what was done to Osage Indians on their oil-rich land in Oklahoma a century ago by conspirators, robbers, killers and the U.S. government -- a story of arrogance, betrayal, greed and racism. The author, celebrated *New Yorker* writer *David Grann*, researched this book for years. He told NPR: “This is one of the worst racial injustices and criminal conspiracies in American history. And it was never taught in school.” Grann’s book was ranked among the best of 2017 by *Time* magazine, the *Wall Street Journal*, *Amazon* and many others. The *New York Times* said “It will sear your soul.”

SEEDS OF HOPE – A young Amish woman’s faith is put to the test in this story of hope ... and love. The setting of this heartwarming tale is Paradise, PA. It is the latest book in *Barbara Cameron’s Harvest of Hope* series.



SIMPLE TRUTHS: On Values, Civility, and our Common Good –This is a collection of 166 messages adapted from the one-minute radio commentaries of the *Rev. Stephen Bauman* of *Christ Church* on Park Avenue in New York City. “The small task I took on,” Bauman said, “was to write and speak to things that were right in front of us ... fashioning little parables ... that might tweak our minds to awareness of simple truth.” Among reviewers of the book, first published in 2006, was longtime broadcaster *Dan Rather*, who said, “Softly and tenderly, this little treasure of a book whispers hope.”

~Your Library Staff

Mission of Peace 2018

Dear friends,

Hello, my name is Regan Gray. I am an upcoming senior at Bethel Park High School and a long-time member of First Bethel United Methodist Church in Bethel Park PA. To fill you in on my life, I am currently a member of the National Honor Society, a captain of the cross-country team, a member of the symphonic band, and a Youth Representative on my church council, as well as a Girl Scout Ambassador. I plan on attending college where I plan on studying International Journalism in the Fall of 2019.

I have recently gone through the extensive application process to go on Mission of Peace. I have been fortunate enough to have been accepted to go on the 2018/2019 trip to the Philippines and will be representing the Western Pennsylvania Conference. My trip will be from December 27 to January 15. There, I will be helping to establish positive relationships through activities like visiting churches, communities, schools, and missions. I will also be going on home visits, worship, and staying with host families from the churches and communities that we will be visiting.



In order to accomplish all these things, I need your help. I ask that you keep me in your thoughts and prayers during this awesome opportunity. Also, I need to raise \$5,200 for the trip to cover traveling expenses, meals, housing, and other unique opportunities. Would you prayerfully consider giving a gift of \$50, \$100, \$200 or more to help support this relationship building opportunity and allow me to participate in this amazing and unique experience. Of course, whatever amount your heart leads you to give is the right amount.

The easiest way to give is to send a check to **First Bethel United Methodist Church at 5901 Library Rd. Bethel Park, PA 15102. Attn: Mission of Peace.**

Thank you in advance for all support whether be financially or in your thoughts and prayers. I could not take this journey without your help. I am looking forward to the life changing experiences that Mission of Peace has to offer.

Thank you,
Regan Gray

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!"



- Submitted by Marilyn Kebe

“Our ability to reach unity in diversity will be the beauty and the test of our civilization.”

- Mahatma Gandhi

Women's Retreat Is Coming!

Save the date and your spot. Women's Retreat is Nov 9-11, 2018. It will take place at Olmsted Manor near Kane, PA. The leader this year will be Rev Lisa Grant. The study topic will be "Embracing Wholeness".



The cost will be \$122.00 each for a double room. Single Rooms are limited for \$144.00 and you may need to share if needed. A \$15.00 deposit will hold your space.

Brochures will be available in the Narthex in the coming Sundays. Any questions call Amy Scott 412-874-0250 or ask any of the women who have gone in the past. Thank you.

It's Church Conference Time!

What's a Church Conference? It's the gathering of all members of the congregation, along with the District Superintendent, to carry out necessary church business for the coming year. It's also a time to review our progress and thank God for being our strength and hope through all of life's ups and downs.



Please put **Monday Oct. 1 at 7 pm** on your calendar for our 2018 Church Conference! We will be the very first conference conducted by our new District Superintendent, Rev. Dawn Hand. The meeting will begin at 7 pm. Plan to welcome DS Dawn to First Bethel Church!

Martha Circle

Attention women of First Bethel! The Martha Circle, a mission-minded group open to all women of the congregation, begins its monthly meetings again on Wednesday September 12 at 7 pm. Our guest speaker will be Regan Gray, who will be sharing her story and her expectations for her upcoming Mission of Peace trip. Please bring an item for the SHIM Food Pantry. See you there!

The New Spirit of Taize

Our quiet, reflective prayer service returns to First Bethel on Wednesday September 19 at 7:30 pm with some changes:

- The addition of new, more melodic songs
- Fresh devotional pieces to guide our quiet time



With these slight alterations, we believe Taize Prayer will become even more accessible to those seeking the peace and hope of God.

Our Taizé service is based on a style of worship developed at the Taizé community in France founded in the 1940s by the late Brother Roger. Originally a refuge during the war, Taizé has developed into an ecumenical prayer center for visitors from all over the world. Today, the Taizé community is made up of over a hundred resident brothers, both Catholics & Protestants, who want to be a sign of reconciliation between divided Christians and between separated peoples.

Join us and be a sign of reconciliation and hope as well.

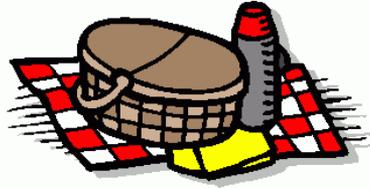
Meadowcrest Nursing Center Ministry

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

Our next two visits for worship and singing will be September 14th and October 12th 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!

Wish no more!
It's here!

WOW!



Church Picnic

September 23, 2018

at Peterswood Park

Pavilion #4

From 4:00 to 8:00

Food, Fellowship and Fun!

Everyone is asked to bring a side dish or dessert to share.



If you can help on the day or assist with the planning please see Lynda Pore.

Please sign-up in the Narthex by Sept. 16th.

(Directions will be on the table.)

Everyone is welcome!



Sunday Morning Worship Schedule

*We're back to TWO worship Services beginning
Sunday morning September 9th!*

Join us for Worship at 9 or 11 each Sunday morning!

FaithLink Adult Study gathers at 10:00 a.m.

Kid's Sunday School returns at 10:00 a.m.!

Book Club News

Our gathering of the First Bethel Book Club returns to Friday night on September 21 at 7:30 pm as we discuss a fascinating and challenging book by Bryan Stevenson, “Just Mercy”

Among many positive reviews is this one from the New York Times Book Review:

“Unfairness in the justice system is a major theme of our age. . . . This book brings new life to the story by placing it in two affecting contexts: [Bryan] Stevenson’s life work and the deep strain of racial injustice in American life. . . . You don’t have to read too long to start cheering for this man. Against tremendous odds, Stevenson has worked to free scores of people from wrongful or excessive punishment, arguing five times before the Supreme Court. . . . The book extols not his nobility but that of the cause, and reads like a call to action for all that remains to be done. . . . The message of the book, hammered home by dramatic examples of one man’s refusal to sit quietly and countenance horror, is that evil can be overcome, a difference can be made. *Just Mercy* will make you upset and it will make you hopeful. . . . Stevenson has been angry about [the criminal justice system] for years, and we are all the better for it.” - **Ted Conover**

Wonder of Wonders

What do you think about miracles? Countless words have been written about this unique, inspiring, yet perplexing subject including those below. Take a look:

“I believe in miracles. While I believe in the possibility, under God, of any kind of miracle, I am committed especially to the miracle of the changed life. When a human being goes from despair to hope, when a lost soul comes home, or when a mean and destructive person becomes kind and fruitful, the greatest of all miracles has occurred.”

-Ellsworth Kalas

Will heaven be boring?

As a youngster, I imagined heaven as a big, dim room with thick carpet and worried that filling an eternity of days would be boring. I never dreamed anyone shared that concern until I read Sam Storms' words: "Heaven is not one grand, momentary flash of excitement followed by an eternity of boredom" (One Thing).

So, what is heaven like? Scripture offers only a few intriguing glimpses: Ezekiel's vision of four fiery creatures and the hem of God's garment gleaming in rainbow light; Jesus' parable of the rich man and Lazarus, depicting heaven within shouting distance of Hades; Jesus' mention of many rooms in his Father's house; Stephen seeing Jesus at God's right hand; John of Patmos' view of the new Jerusalem, descending from God.



We can't know exactly what heaven looks like — or how we'll fill all our "free time"! (Doubtless, worship around God's throne will be a big and joyous part.) But we know there will be no hunger, thirst, tears, death or pain (see Revelation 7, 21 and 22). All peoples and languages will be included, with healing for all nations. "There will be a new episode of divine grace every day!" Storms writes. Most importantly, Jesus will be there — the Lamb of God, our Shepherd, sheltering us with his presence. For now, that's all we need to know.

- Heidi Mann

"I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality... I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word."

- Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The challenge of Scripture

GQ magazine recently included the Bible on a list of 21 books not worth reading, calling the text “repetitive” and “foolish” among other things. Pushback came from both secular and religious folks. Writing in USA Today, Tim Swarens argued that even if you don’t believe in God, the Bible helps you understand Western culture, history, current events and your neighbors.

For Christians, the Bible – the book which contains within its words God’s LIVING Word - reveals God’s love and will. No, it isn’t always easy to read or process, but no other book contains such good news.



As Danielle Shroyer writes in Original Blessing, “Scripture is a sacred book meant to provoke us in ways that will move us toward God. And often, that is the very last thing we are looking for. We would rather have an answer, a simple plan, even a nicely tidy moral story. But Scripture gives us none of these things, because the holy is anything but domestic. We go looking to find a plan and instead are sent on a treasure hunt.”

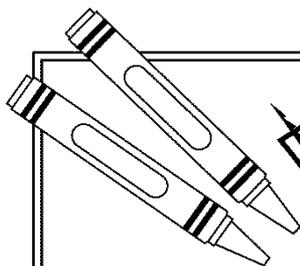
Bible Quiz

Paul declares that nothing “will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Which of the following does Paul specify as unable to block God’s love?

- A. death; life
- B. angels; demons
- C. present; future
- D. height; depth
- E. all of the above

death ANGELS
LIFE depth
FUTURE present HEIGHT
demons

Answer: E (See Romans 8:38-39, NIV.)



PUZZLE

IT'S A MIRACLE!

Jesus performed many amazing miracles during his earthly ministry.

Directions: Match the words and pictures of different healings, from one column to the other. Then fit the word pairs in the blanks below to complete Matthew 11:5, NIV.



blind



leprosy



lame



deaf



dead



hear



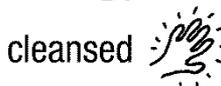
walk



raised



sight



cleansed

The _____ receive _____, the l _____, those
who have _____ are _____, the
_____, the _____ are _____ ...

MATTHEW 11:5, NIV

Answer: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised Matthew 11:5, NIV