

The Pastor's Notebook

There's just enough time left in my ministry at First Bethel to tie up some loose ends, visit some shut-ins, organize some files, pack some books, photos and paintings...and reflect.

Yesterday I spent a while thinking about some things I haven't been able to complete given the constraints of time and the demands upon it and I became sad. The days have flown by since the announcement of my retirement last October and I wish I had more time to complete my work with you – strengthening our existing ministries and developing new activities for new people who have yet to enter First Bethel's loving embrace.

But I'm being selfish and frankly, foolish.

The great theologian, Reinhold Niebuhr once wrote, *"Nothing worth doing is completed in*

our lifetime; therefore we must be saved by hope. Nothing true or beautiful makes complete sense in any immediate context of history; therefore we must be saved by faith. Nothing we do, however virtuous, can be accomplished alone; therefore, we are saved by love."



The work we've been doing together is God's work, not just ours. It's born of God's generous Spirit, not simply mine. It's an effort that extends beyond my time with you and beyond any of our lifetimes. God is God for the long haul. And so, over these past 4 ½ years it's my prayer that:

- I kindled a little hope in you, that you might serve the Lord with vigor, even though you may not see the end result of your work.
- I stirred within you a hunger for Biblical Truth – the kind that scorns easy answers to complex questions and guides you to a deeper Truth that lives in the heart of God.
- I reminded you that we are all part of the Body of Christ. Whether we're young or old; certain of our faith or persistent questioners, physically/mentally challenged or

not, new hymn-lovers or old hymn-singers, insiders or outsiders, newcomers or long-timers, we are ALL part of the grand Body of Christ.

And God has more for us to do wherever we find ourselves in the coming months.

Friends, you have been a blessing to Linda, Brittany, Alyssa, Jon, Aria, Abigail, Autumn and me. We leave with hope and faith that is deeper and richer than it was when we came 4 ½ years ago. May you offer the same generous blessing to your new pastor and family during their time with you.

Thank you. God bless you. We will love you always.

- Tom

Outreach Offers Care and Joy!

The Outreach Committee would like to thank everyone who participated in helping make the holiday a little brighter for persons in need. We provided 20 angels from the Ward Home and 15 angels from Family Links. There were also donations made to King School Kids, SHIM, and TNC. FBUMC is a very caring and generous church!



We hope to see everyone at the **Souper Bowl luncheon on Sunday February 3rd**. There will be one service at 10:00am that day and following that service the Outreach committee will serve soup, sandwiches, and desserts. A free will offering will be taken to be donated to SHIM to help feed the less fortunate in our community.

Sunday February 17th will be our first date to go down to the North Side to feed the hungry at Daily Bread. If you would like to help please call the church office or call Sally Irick at 412-833-9324. Thanks!

- Sally Irick

A Different Kind of Valentines Card!



Share the love this Valentine's Day and help our Youth Group at the same time!

If you like to eat, buy clothes, and put gas in your car then you can help the youth of First Bethel Church. **Just purchase gift cards for your favorite retailer and a percentage goes to funding youth programs and service projects.** Giant Eagle/GetGo and Eat n' Park gift cards are available in the narthex on the 1st & 3rd Sundays of the month between services. Hundreds of others can be ordered by contacting Charlene Pauline!



2019 ASP Theme

by Gloria Stephan

ASP has introduced their 2019 theme: **Be the Peace!** From the Hebrew Bible, 1 Samuel 25:6 says...

*Thus you shall salute him:
'Peace be to you, and
peace be to your house,
peace be to all that you have.'*

This is a greeting David sent to a man named Nabal-- a man David had never met. When we approach any person, we should greet them in peace and with grace. This is how 'strangers' become 'friends we just haven't met yet.'

We are excited about this verse as it reminds us to embody the peace of our faith-- to bring that peace with us wherever we go and wherever we serve, but also to bring that peace with us home. Be the peace in your home, be the peace at work, be the peace in class, be the peace at the grocery store, be the peace in Appalachia. Be the peace.

First Bethel's ASP mission trip is scheduled for **Sunday, June 9 to Saturday June 15**. Youth ages 14 and up (or 13 going into 9th grade next fall) are invited to travel to Central Appalachia to build relationships and to make homes warmer, safer, drier. We also need two adult Group Leaders for each of our three work crews.

The registration deadline is Sunday, February 3 so don't miss this opportunity to put your faith in action.

For more information, go to www.ASPHome.org or contact Gloria Stephan gstephan57@gmail.com. Peace be with you!

Martha Circle News:

We think about Tom and Linda as they are preparing for a new venture in their lives after many years in the ministry. Our best wishes for good health and hopefully, relaxing moments go with them as they prepare for the rest of their lives. They will truly be missed by many in our circle and church.

Women in Ministry



Our next Martha Circle meeting will be on **Wednesday, Feb. 13 at 7:00 p.m.** This is our annual evening for relaxing conversation, friendship and fun (and maybe a little Pictionary?) See you there!

- Donna Hennen

Christian Symbols – The Chi Rho

“Chi” and “rho” are the first two letters in the Greek spelling for Christ (XPICTOC, pronounced “Christos”). The blending of these two letters into one symbol formed a “sacred monogram.” Early



Christians created many such symbols as codes to indicate their discipleship while avoiding detection by Roman persecutors. Many variations of the Chi Rho symbol exist, incorporating a cross, a shepherd's crook, the Greek letters alpha and omega, an anchor and other images.'

Sarris Candy Sale!

Yes, it's hard to believe but spring is around the corner and it's time to start thinking about...**EASTER!**

The Sarris candy sale will begin on Sunday, February 10th with orders due by Sunday, March 3rd. Since we will receive a minimum of 25%, supporting this sale is a great way to help address designated needs at First Bethel. Prices are the same as if purchased retail and you can enjoy the convenience of having orders ready to pick-up here at church beginning Wednesday, April 3rd.



Music Notes

Did you know that we are always open to welcoming new members in our groups? The Chancel Choir is open to all adults (and teens) who like to sing - we especially need men and altos!

The bell group, Wesley Ringers, would welcome new members at any time. We rehearse on Thursdays at 6:30 pm.

Children, grades K-5, the Angels of God, sing with Miss Phil on Wednesdays at 6:30 pm.

Do you think that you might like to sing but don't want to "sign up for life"? **We have a great deal!!** How about a limited time such as February through Easter (April)? Not a long commitment, but enough to "get your feet wet". We would love to have you. Call me with questions! (412-833-3982).

- Ruth Finlay

"In the coldest February, as in every other month in every other year, the best thing to hold on to in this world is each other."

- Linda Ellerbee

Men's Fellowship 2018 – A Summary

My parents always said, “It takes money to make money”. Maybe a better generic wording could be “it takes all resources to accomplish your best goal”. In the case of the men’s group and the church, we might say “whatever it takes to spread the work of Jesus”.

The men started the year with a garage sale that brought outsiders in with good deals to all and money to help spread that love of Jesus. Specifically, we helped Regan Gray fund her mission trip, supplied dinner to some good people at Thanksgiving (with the help of the congregation), we funded the repair of the disposal in the kitchen so all can enjoy food and fellowship and provided gift cards to the deserving staff at KSK.



One of the main objectives of the men’s group is to maintain the grounds around the church. Well, weather wise it was a wet year but we got some trimming and cleaning done. The group effort was dampened but individuals stepped up. Thanks John, Keith and others. Some of that rain led us inside to replace the lights in Founders’ Hall.

The last two items to help the church grow: We are planning another garage sale in May so save those items that we might sell and watch for signs announcing a concert like the Bell ‘Art Ensemble that came last year.

You have been great supporters of the men’s group and we look forward to another year growing closer to you. Spread the love and have a blessed new year.

- Ken Williams, President of the Men’s Fellowship

“You do not need to wallow in guilt. Wallow in the mercy of God.”

- St. John Vianney

Library News –Another Great Year!

In 2018, we added more than 60 books, many donated by church members. We have begun the new year with several additions, including these two by authors whose works have been popular with our readers.

ALMOST EVERYTHING: Notes on Hope by *Anne Lamott* – How do we cope with all the “despair and uncertainty” in the news? The political divide, disputes over gun control, climate change, even the future of democracy. In interviews, Lamott said these issues prompted her to write this 2018 book of essays. She said she has “a lot of faith in God, and in community and in goodness” and wants to share her thoughts on hope. A reviewer said Lamott “writes about things I think of.” Others said the book is “candid, caring, clever and, at times, hilarious,” “soothing and inspirational” and “about not giving in to hate.”

A SPARK OF LIGHT by *Jodi Picoult* -- The author, no stranger to controversial topics, takes on the abortion debate in this tense and tragic drama. The scene is a Mississippi clinic where a distraught gunman has shot people and is holding hostages. Among them is the police hostage negotiator’s teenage daughter, an anti-abortion activist disguised as a patient and a doctor who has his faith tested as never before. Picoult also touches on gun control and racism in this 2018 best-seller. The publisher calls it a “powerful and provocative” story that will inspire conversation “and, hopefully, understanding.”



SMITHSONIAN magazine is another new addition in our library. The monthly publication features articles with a historical context. The copies we already have for our readers include these diverse reports: America’s longest war (the 17-year war on terror) ... archaeologists use drones with cameras to look into the distant past ... kids’ video games “freak out” parents these days, just as Mom and Dad once worried about another craze – pinball.

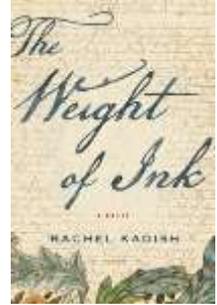
-- **Your Library Staff** --

Book Club Selects Real Page-Turners!

Well, it's certainly great weather for snuggling up with a book isn't it ?!

The book selection for March 15th is **“The Weight of Ink”** by **Rachel Kadish**. A National Jewish Book Awards Winner.

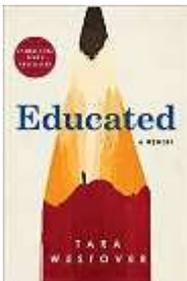
“Set in London of the 1660s and of the early twenty-first century, *The Weight of Ink* is the interwoven tale of two women of remarkable intellect: Ester Velasquez, an emigrant from Amsterdam who is permitted to scribe for a blind rabbi, just before the plague hits the city; and Helen Watt, an ailing historian with a love of Jewish history.



As the novel opens, Helen has been summoned by a former student to view a cache of seventeenth-century Jewish documents newly discovered in his home during a renovation. Enlisting the help of Aaron Levy, an American graduate student as impatient as he is charming, and in a race with another fast-moving team of historians, Helen embarks on one last project: to determine the identity of the documents' scribe, the elusive “Aleph.” Electrifying and ambitious, sweeping in scope and intimate in tone, *The Weight of Ink* is a sophisticated work of historical fiction about women separated by centuries, and the choices and sacrifices they must make in order to reconcile the life of the heart and mind”
www.amazon.com

The February 15th meeting will be a discussion of **“Educated”** by **Tara Westover** Amazon Editors' #1 Pick for the Best Book of 2018:

Tara Westover wasn't your garden variety college student. When the Holocaust was mentioned in a history class, she didn't know what it was (no, really). That's because she didn't see the inside of a classroom until the age of seventeen. Public education was one of the many things her religious fanatic father was dubious of, believing it a means for the government to brainwash its gullible citizens, and her mother wasn't diligent on the homeschooling



front. If it wasn't for a brother who managed to extricate himself from their isolated—and often dangerous--world, Westover might still be in rural Idaho, trying to survive her survivalist upbringing. It's a miraculous story she tells in her memoir *Educated*. For those of us who took our educations for granted, who occasionally fell asleep in large lecture halls (and inconveniently small ones), it's hard to grasp the level of grit—not to mention intellect—required to pull off what Westover did. But eventually earning a PhD from Cambridge University may have been the easy part, at least compared to what she had to sacrifice to attain it. The courage it took to make that sacrifice was the truest indicator of how far she'd come, and how much she'd learned. *Educated* is an inspiring reminder that knowledge is, indeed, power. --Erin Kodicek, *Amazon Book Review*

- *Happy Reading*
Gloria



A mosaic consists of thousands of little stones. Some are blue, some are green, some are yellow, some are gold. When we bring our faces close to the mosaic, we can admire the beauty of each stone. But as we step back from it, we can see that all these little stones reveal to us a beautiful picture, telling a story none of these stones can tell by itself.

That is what our life in [the church] is about. Each of us is like a little stone, but together we reveal the face of God to the world. Nobody can say: "I make God visible." But others who see us together can say: "They make God visible." [Christian] community is where humility and glory touch.

- *Henri J.M. Nouwen*

Kings School Kids



Registration

Is Going On Now For The

2019-2020

School Year



Please contact the

Kings School Kids Office at

412-835-6141

For More Information

Hurry!!!

Classes Fill Fast





Fat Tuesday



March 5th



6:30 pm

If you would like to help
with planning please contact Lynda at

412-835-6141

Stay Posted For Upcoming Information



Hymn History – Rock of Ages

Augustus Toplady wrote a number of hymns in his life, but “Rock of Ages” is by far his most famous. When Benson wrote about it in 1923, he claimed it “is to-day in more church hymnals than is any other English hymn.” Not only is it well known among churchgoers, but it is also recognizable in popular culture. A 2006 Broadway musical about rock ‘n roll (and a corresponding Hollywood film in 2012) adopted the name “Rock of Ages.”

There is a common story of the hymn being inspired by (and even written from within) a rock cleft that Toplady once took refuge in



during a storm. The particular rock is in Burrington Combe gorge in North Somerset, England, and it has a plaque on it with this claim to fame. It is, however, merely a legend.

As historian Louis Benson persuasively argues, Toplady was most likely inspired to write the hymn after reading the preface of John and Charles Wesleys’ *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper* (1745) which contains a prayer voicing many of the themes and words that are also found in the hymn. This is ironic, given the poor condition of

Toplady’s relationship with John Wesley; but one can perhaps see the hand of God in it.

Regardless of where and how Toplady got his inspiration, the hymn is a blessing. For generations it has remained a solid testimony to the powerful sacrifice of Jesus Christ and a great encouragement to countless believers around the world. May God continue its influence, and grant us many more songs with such enduring legacies.

Loved and Known

“Jesus knows me, this I love,” read the church sign. That twist on the classic children’s song emphasizes the importance of being both loved and known. “It’s not one or the other; it’s hard truth and ridiculous grace,” sings contemporary Christian artist Tauren Wells in “Known.”

Timothy Keller, in *The Meaning of Marriage*, describes the duality this way: “To be loved but not known is comforting but superficial. To be known and not loved is our greatest fear. But to be fully known and truly loved is, well, a lot like being loved by God. It is what we need more than anything. It liberates us from pretense, humbles us out of our self-righteousness, and fortifies us for any difficulty life can throw at us.”

A Thirst For Righteousness

While living in the Middle East, Bible scholar Kenneth Bailey gained new insight about Jesus’ Beatitude “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness” (Matthew 5:6).

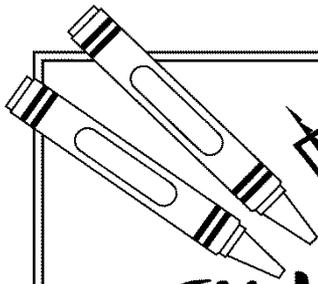
In Jesus Through Middle Eastern

Eyes, Bailey tells of traveling with friends through the Sahara Desert when it was 110 degrees in the shade, “and there was no shade.” One of their goatskin water bags leaked empty, and after consuming their remaining



water, they journeyed a day and a half intensely thirsty. Bailey’s vision blurred, and his mouth was so dry he couldn’t eat. Finally, they reached an ancient well, whose water was their salvation.

Bailey explains righteousness variously as peace, justice and right relationship with God. “As I staggered on [in the desert], my mind turned to [Matthew 5:6],” he writes, “and I knew that I had never sought righteousness with the same single-minded passion that I now gave to the quest for water.”



PUZZLE

WITH LOVE FROM ABOVE

The Bible is full of special words from our loving God.

Directions: Using the messages on the candy hearts, complete the Bible verses (all NIV) below.



God is our _____ and _____,
an ever-present help in trouble. Psalm 46:1

“Surely I am with you _____.” Matthew 28:20

And the _____ of God ... will guard
your hearts and your minds in
_____. Philippians 4:7

Whoever lives in _____ lives in God,
and God in them. 1 John 4:16

_____ love drives out fear. 1 John 4:18