

First Bethel United Methodist Church Beyond the Plate (July through September 2016)

This is our thirty-first report on beyond-the-plate ministries. Beyond the Plate strives to illuminate the ways First Bethel reaches out in ministry as God leads us to recognize needs and to face them with wisdom, strength of purpose, kindness, and generosity. "Nature decrees that we do not exceed the speed of light. All other impossibilities are optional." (Robert Brault - freelance writer and author)

June Recap

Light of Life Ministries Walk for the Homeless in June - Kudos to our very own walker/runner Terry Taylor, who was able to garner support for this ministry, including from First Bethel advocates. Our donations were included in the \$100,000 raised for programs and services that are made available to those in need. It is of essence to note that the Light of Life Ministries' mission statement is: "Providing a home for the homeless, food for the hungry, and building disciples for the Kingdom of God among the poor, addicted, abused and needy." Good work; good works.

July

Special Offering for July - The special offering for this month was Trustees. \$970 was gathered in to begin to enable improvements to our parking lots, soffit and fascia on the sanctuary building, education building classroom floors, education building roof replacement, office building roof replacement, new roof over the King School Road entrance to the sanctuary building, replacement of deteriorating partition doors in the education building, etc.

Summer Sundays - Our traditional one-service Sunday worship was preceded by stimulating outdoor Sunday school gatherings for children ages 3 and up, short devotions for adults in the wonderful new hillside worship center, and a continuation of the FaithLink class which meshes current events and issues with lives of faith.

Family Movie Night - For "The Peanuts Movie" shown on July 10, we had a small but fun group of families. The best part was the popcorn machine, which Lea Cook rented. We hope to plan additional family-oriented activities. Our organizers express that movie nights are fun and

easy to plan, and the renovations to Founders Hall make that a great space to do movies.

Daily Bread - First Bethel sends volunteers on a fairly regular basis for this much-needed ministry. On July 31, we headed to Pittsburgh's Northside to serve a much-needed meal, prepared in our own kitchen, to the homeless and poor of our city. This remains a hugely welcome effort, and we can attest that taking the opportunity to help with the food prep, serving, and to greet some truly appreciative recipients is absolutely heart-warming.

August

Special Offering for August - Pastor's Aid was the recipient of this month's special offering, which gives our pastor the ability to act judiciously in critical situations. \$305 was collected for this effort.

Master Wildlife Artist - On August 3, Larry Barth, who grew up at First Bethel and whose parents (Don and Alice) have been long-time, dedicated church members, was the presenter at a meeting of the Three Rivers Birding Club, held at Phipps Garden Center. The meeting was followed by a book signing for Larry's book, "Birds, Art and Design". This book is an absolute wonder, detailing much of the breadth and genius of Larry's work, and we are very fortunate to have a donated copy. To even glance through the book is most inspiring. It resides on a shelf in our Library next to one of Larry's early carvings, a lovely little goldfinch.

KSK Sales Event - We can't say enough about the absolute pride we have in our King School Kids organization, and on August 10 (in the most delicious way!) they made it possible for us to help them ensure their facility is safe and functional. Proceeds from the sale of every imaginable kind of hoagie went toward the first of

several installations of new floor coverings in the education building. Profit from the sale was \$360. (p.s. The floor in the Anna Braum room is beautiful! Check it out to see how well your dollars from this fundraiser were spent.)

Celebration of Gifts - On August 14, we got together to celebrate the many gifts God has so generously bestowed upon us, and the occasion truly did feel like a celebration. Twelve performers participated, and an enthusiastic group of audience and performers numbering somewhere near 30 were in attendance. Most of the performers were singers or musicians showing off various skill sets, Grace Passios demonstrated some very impressive karate (!!), and two artists displayed talents. Some of the participants shared gifts that we have enjoyed for years, some gifts we witnessed for the first time - and we didn't even know about them. Wonderful surprises! We hope to make this celebration a regular occurrence. We'd like to make it an annual event and will experiment with different times of the year to facilitate calendars.

Pirates Game - August 21 was the night of our exciting Pirates game. We were not able to bring home a winner (:o(, but our 25-member First Bethel crowd was enthusiastic. Despite the outcome, it was a beautiful afternoon at the ball park. We offer thanks to our intrepid organizer for once again coming through with a delightful "together" opportunity and look forward to continuing this tradition next year.

July and August Recap

Youth - Have you been taking notice of the exciting happenings involving our youth this summer? (Go-Ape Zip-line and Ropes Course, Midnight Picnic, Movie Night, Car Wash, Splash Lagoon, Laser Tag). Times of fellowship and fun encourage camaraderie, trust, and faith development, offer occasions for discussion of issues important to young people, and create opportunities for interaction with Christian adults. Watch for updates and newly planned opportunities for our young people.

September

Special Offerings for September - Trustees were the recipients of this vital offering to update and

maintain our church building and grounds. \$365 was collected.

Church Picnic - This annual event took place on September 11 in Peterswood Park. Close to 80 people (including tons of kids) attended. We had hotdogs, hamburgers, and lots of other good stuff to eat. The traditional softball game enjoyed great participation, and a fun time was had by all! Our picnics are wonderful events with excellent fellowship opportunities. On a quieter, more solemn note, Pastor Tom led a special time of prayer and remembrance for the lives lost in the terroristic attacks on our nation that took place 15 years ago. We continue to heal.

Appalachian Service Project Spaghetti Dinner - A spaghetti dinner, catered by Pasta Too and hosted by our ASP volunteers, was held on September 18 in appreciation for your support of the ASP mission. Roughly 60 meals were served to appreciative partakers, and the dinners were absolutely delicious. ASP participants worked the kitchen, took orders, served food and drinks, and shared photos and stories from the June trip.

Taize Prayer Service - This service of quiet music and prayer took place in a breathtakingly beautiful candle-lit sanctuary with flowing crimson adornments leading eye and heart to the altar and beyond. If you missed this opportunity for prayer and reflection, the next service is scheduled for the evening of October 18.

Men's Retreat - Our Men's Retreat took place September 23-25 at the Laurelville Mennonite Retreat Center. "Acts of God" was the focus of the retreat and Pastor Tom led the discussions.

Chook, Chook, Chook - September 24 was the date of the Annual Rotary Club Chicken BBQ Dinner. Our clever Ms. Phil again beat the drum to gather us in to help ensure dollars for the United Methodist Home of Hope in Nyadire, Zimbabwe, and you have helped 50 teens to be able take their "O-Level" exams.

If you, like me, have wondered what O-Levels means, I was able to find the following information. O-level exams in Zimbabwe are intended to be equivalent to the General Certificate of Education standard tests offered in the United States, United Kingdom, Australia,

New Zealand, and in other English-speaking countries. Ordinary Level (thus O-Level), is a subject-based academic qualification (think language arts, math, science, etc.). Passing O-Level exams in Zimbabwe is considered a pathway to new, more in-depth, and academically rigorous studies, which leads to a life with possibilities. The exam process is expensive. The kids we're dealing with in Zimbabwe have few sources of support or income. Inability to take the O-Levels because of a lack of financial resources traps these kids in a lifetime of poverty. That's where and why we step in and step up.

The Nyadire Connection (TNC) altogether sold 794 tickets for the Rotary BBQ. Of these tickets, our own Ms. Phil sold ~557 and says a "big, big chunk of these sales came from First Bethel". Based on this (and we will update you on how things go after the decision is made in the Spring), she's feeling certain that the Rotary will grant the \$5,000 that TNC is requesting. Included in that amount will be the \$500 bonus for having sold the most tickets to the BBQ four years in a row. At \$100 a pop, \$5,000 will be just enough to buy a lifetime of possibilities for our 50 Zimbabwe teens. First Bethel is a blessed and giving community. Thank you so much for significantly supporting this mission.

Continuing Sale - Don't forget to check out the bright red UM Cross and Flame water bottles for sale in the Narthex. All proceeds will benefit life-changing mission endeavors made possible by our ASP trips. \$8.00 to help change lives - best deal in town. (...and, looking forward, red is a great color under the Christmas tree :o)

Financial Snapshot -

Church Income YTD: \$177,412
Church Expenses YTD: \$225,584
KSK Income YTD: \$326,580
KSK Expenses YTD: \$261,838

Fulfilling the Faith -

September: Income: \$2,501 Shortfall: \$1,533
YTD: Income: \$27,453 Shortfall: \$8,855

SHIM - During July, August, and September, 147 lb of foodstuffs and other needed items were donated by our congregation. Thank you for continuing to contribute to this critical and most worthy cause, and a special thanks to those who

take the time and make the effort to deliver our gifts to SHIM.

Just Sayin' - We are blessed to be able to count on so many people in so many ways to step in at almost a moment's notice to simply carry on.

Ongoing and Around the Corner!

Exercise Y'all - Don't forget the walking we do on Friday nights at 6:00 p.m. All are welcome. (Meet at the parking lot of the Community House on Maple Springs Road in South Park.)

ASP - First Bethel is already registered for ASP for the week of June 18-24, 2017, which is the second week of the summer youth program. We plan to send three teams (21 volunteers) next year. The volunteers requested West Virginia as their first choice of location, and the second choice was wherever there was the greatest need within a seven-hour driving limit. Our ASP-designated fund balance as of September 25, was \$6,289.35. What a great start towards next year's trip!

We have included a detailed financial summary here, so that you can truly see the incredible direct financial support we receive from the ASP volunteers and our First Bethel church family. ASP costs were offset by direct financial donations of \$714 from our church family; \$140 in Angel Tree Gift Cards; \$1,780 in ASP volunteer direct contributions and support of our fundraisers, especially ASP Bistros. In addition, ASP volunteers and their families donated all of the cost of gasoline for both rental vans, all highway tolls, the ASP thank you cards, the M&M containers, and the bandanas. We also received \$750 in corporate and matching funds from Highmark.

The ASP volunteers are grateful for your support, and are already enthusiastically prepping for the 2017 mission.

Just A Thought - Life becomes easier when you learn to accept an apology you never got. (another bit of wisdom from Robert Brault)