



Bethel United Church of Christ



www.bethelucckc.com

The LINK is a monthly publication LINKing together the people of Bethel United Church of Christ

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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Pentecost—"Wear Red"—May 28
- Strengthen the Conference Event at Bethel—June 3
- Pride Festival and Parade—June 9-11
- Homies—June 16
- Blanket Sunday — June 18
- Wine Study & Bible Tasting—June 25

**BENEVOLENCE—SPECIAL MISSION OFFERINGS
SYNERGY SERVICE, STEPPINGSTONE (ECH) & CWS
BLANKET SUNDAY**

About Synergy Services



Synergy Services, Inc. began in 1970 as Synergy House, the only shelter for runaway and homeless youth in western Missouri. Through the years, a series of both serendipitous and strategic mergers expanded the organization's reach to include young children and women victimized by abuse.

Today, Synergy provides a full continuum of care to assist individuals and families with immediate respite from violence, and services which empower clients to find and choose good options for future safety and success. In addition to our work to treat the effects of violence, we provide supportive services to families in crisis in an effort to prevent violence. Additionally, we focus on community education and social change in an effort to build a safer and more humane society.

Their fully integrated programs include crisis hotlines, emergency shelter, transitional housing, therapeutic services, advocacy, mentoring and violence prevention programs throughout Greater Kansas City.

Synergy's clients represent a broad cross-section of the population spanning gender, age, race and six county lines in Kansas and Missouri. Most often, clients have annual family incomes of less than \$25,000, making it difficult to access the variety of services they need through traditional means. We provide these services, which are so critical to the well-being of the family and community, to anyone that needs them regardless of ability to pay.

About Steppingstone (ECH)

Kansas City Steppingstone is a transitional living program that helps young people ages 16-21 transition safely and



successfully into independence. The program is based on positive youth development strategies and provides housing, employment services, education counseling, life skills training, and permanency planning.

An important part of the Steppingstone program is providing safe, stable housing accommodations in either campus or community apartments. When a youth is initially referred to Steppingstone, he or she meets with a case worker who administers an extensive Functional Status Rating (FSR). Based on the FSR, an individualized care plan is developed.

Steppingstone offers life skills training to help youth find work, with self-sufficiency being the end goal. The program helps youth create an education and career plan, develop work readiness skills, learn how to apply for jobs, dress for interviews, and more.

Church World Service (CWS) Blanket Sunday—Father's Day



For over 75 years, Church World Service has been helping people of faith bring God's hope and healing to people in the U.S. and around the world. When difficult times happen, a kind and loving response can make all the difference. That's why the CWS Blankets program was created—to give a kind, loving and tangible response to someone facing a difficult time, reminding them that they are not alone. Through the generosity of CWS partner organizations, congregations and individual supporters, our most vulnerable neighbors around the world can feel safe and keep warm with fresh linens and clean sleeping quarters. When our neighbors are in need, even \$10 for a single blanket goes a long way.

SWEET GARDEN OF PRAYER



Beloved Bethel,

As I write this, I have just come from my weekly Zoom meeting with clergy from across the Missouri Mid-South Conference. As Pentecost is this coming Sunday (May 28), the subject was the Holy Spirit, and more specifically, why we in the United Church of Christ are often afraid of Her.

My colleagues noted that people are afraid of the Holy Spirit because the Spirit changes you—and people are afraid of change. People fear change for many reasons. One is that they fear they are not up to the challenges change brings—can they learn a new way of doing things? I find the “new math” challenging, yet our school kids manage it quite well. Change requires an adjustment period—from a few hours or days to, well, a few decades. People are still referring to the UCC’s *New Century Hymnal* as “that new hymnal” and many churches (like us) aren’t yet using it. That “new” hymnal was published in 1995—34 years ago!

I think the biggest reason for fear is that the word change holds a stigma—a suggestion that whatever is changing had something “wrong” with it. The “old math” wasn’t wrong. The “new math” isn’t wrong, either. The answers are still the same. When people say they want to change the world, there is an implicit suggestion that the world is somehow screwed up. For decades, theologians, writers, and speakers have been talking about fixing a “Broken World,” that God loves “broken” people—even that everyone is “broken” in some way. With all due respect to Henri Nouwen, one of my favorites, you are NOT broken. The church is NOT broken. The world is NOT broken.

Change is NOT fixing. Change is growth. We are GROWING.

As we grow, things must adjust to accommodate that growth. When you grew as a youngster, you needed new clothing to adjust to your size. You needed a “big kids bed” instead of a crib, then a bigger bed, and now likely a “king” or “queen” size bed. You began with mother’s milk or formula, went on to baby food, on to other food, and now enjoy eating things your child self would have found to be “disgusting”. Because, your nourishment required adjustments as you grew.

The same thing happens with Spiritual Growth. I recently saw the movie “Are You There, God? It’s Me Margaret”. The main character doesn’t fear the changes that come as she moves into adulthood. Instead, she looks forward to them. That was a source of inspiration to generations of girls who grew up with the book by Judy Blume. As a church grows spiritually (as it should!), adjustments to accommodate that growth need to be made. We can view the Spirit as something to fear, and build up personal and physical walls—or bind ourselves with old practices the way the Chinese used to bind up girls’ feet to keep girls dependent and weak. Or, we can embrace growth and welcome opportunities to accommodate it. Like the girls in the movie chanting, “We must, we must, we must increase our bust!” we can look forward to where the Spirit takes us, and wiggle our toes with adventure and strength.

Bethel has come a long way from the “babyhood” of our faith that would have built walls between us and others. The Spirit has taught us that ALL people are wonderfully and fearfully made in the image of God. We have adjusted our worship to include many forms of music and prayer that touch and inspire our souls.

Our Spiritual Growth calls us to make adjustments—like the beds we slept in as children. We welcome additions—the way we welcome new members of our families. I’ve never been afraid of a baby. No reason to fear an infant idea—or the Holy Spirit growing us in new ways.

God’s Peace, Blessings, and Joy,

Pastor Laura

Wear Red

for Pentecost

May 28

PRAYER CARE

Jamie Elder, Randy Pace; Larry Jurgensen; Nelda Ravenscraft; Lauri Arbuthnot; Joe Luttrell; Preston Corn; Gerry McGuire; Debbie Robinett; Cathy Leslie; Marilyn Helmich; Elaine McDuff; Linda Jackson; Bobbi Wendle; Alice & Jim Inman; Vern Bohlmeier.

Former Bethel Pastor and wife, Harold & Ann Zimmerman; Ful-

vio & Kathy Hayes' friend, Brandy; Pat Armstrong's friends, Audrey and Isabelle; Randy Pace's friend, Justin; Kim Heft's brother, Warren; Gerry Hendrix's sister, Marilyn; Vince Watkins' father, Harold & step-brother Glen; Bev Duer's sister, Nancy; Marilyn Helmich's son, Rick; Mary Fleener's friends, JT & Nancy; Cathy Leslie's friend, Eddy; Marty Pace's sister & brother-in-law, Michelle & Dan;

Rachel Wolfe's aunt & uncle, Beverly & Reggie; Vickie Cox; Pat Armstrong's friends, Sam, Hazel & Lisa; Lauri Buck's friend, Kristi; AnnaLee Kapp's relatives, the Hershman family & her friend Julie; Bob Atkinson's brother, David; Marilyn Helmich's daughter, Carolyn; Randy Pace's friend, Marvin; Kathy Corn's friend, Ginger.



BETHEL BIRTHDAY CARDS GOING ELECTRONIC

Bethel is going to start sending your birthday cards as an E-card. If you have an email address you will receive your card electronically from Vicki Thompson's email address farketb@gmail.com. Children and those that do not have email will receive their cards by snail mail..



JUNE BIRTHDAYS

- 4 Tom Parr, Jr.
- 6 Olivia Bunch
- 7 Dale Reith

- 12 Lauri Buck
- Samantha Hendrix
- Melinda Teague
- 15 Kathy Harms
- 16 Lauren Thorson

- 20 Nathan Mason
- 21 Curt Lane
- 23 Hance Pierson
- 28 Sara Niederhauser

BACKPACK SHEPHERDS HONORED

On Thursday, May 11th the Backpack Shepherds outreach ministry of Good Shepherd and Bethel United Church of Christ received a special honor. Lakewood Elementary School recognized both churches as Business Partners of Excellence. Backpack Shepherds was nominated by Lakewood staff in recognition of its many years of commitment to feeding students there who are in danger of being hungry on weekends during the school year. This award is given by North Kansas City Schools as part of their Culture of Excellence recognition program. Making the presentation was Lakewood Principal Margaret Helwig. Also, present were retiring District Superintendent Dr. Dan Clemens, incoming District Superannuant Dr. Rochel Daniels, and Lakewood teachers. Accepting the award on behalf of all Backpack Shepherd volunteers in both congregations were: (back row) Fr. Galen Snodgrass, Judy Kile, Joyce Manley, Melinda Teague, David Talbot. (front row) Kathy Potter, Rev. Laura Callender, Gerry Hendrix, Nancy Marcy.



Big plans for Lakewood are in the works. The school, which was built in 1957 and presently serves 235 students, will be demolished this summer and a new state of the art elementary school will be built on the present site to serve 600 students. The new school will reopen in 1 ½ - two years. In the meantime, students will attend school at the Norclay Building which serves as an annex building to North Kansas City High School. Backpack Shepherds will continue to serve Lakewood students all throughout their time in temporary classrooms.

Kathy Potter, Backpack Shepherds School Liaison, Church of the Good Shepherd

PRIDE FESTIVAL AND PARADE—JUNE 9-11

June is PRIDE Month and Kansas City's annual PRIDE celebration will be held June 9-11, with a festival and parade. Bethel will have an entry in the parade on June 10th, and walkers/riders are encouraged. We have invited our sister congregations who are part of the HONA (Heartland Open and Affirming) coalition of which Bethel is a part, to join us in the parade. HONA will have a table at PrideFest. Volunteers will be needed to help staff the table over the course of the festival in 1-3 hours sessions. Please let Jan Rickert know if you would like to participate in one or both of the activities.



In her recent message Pastor Laura reminded us that God loves EACH AND EVERY ONE OF US, no matter what, and that nothing can destroy that love. Our fellowship can and should be messengers of that love to our brothers, sisters and others who are part of the LGBTQ community.

REV. MARY'S STRENGTHEN THE CONFERENCE BIKE RIDE—JUNE 3

Rain or Shine—Join Transitional Conference Minister, Rev. Mary Nelson, at Bethel on Saturday, June 3 at 4 PM. Ride with Mary in the Bethel parking lot. Anyone (young and old), is invited to wheel around Bethel's parking lot to Eastgate School parking lot next door and back to Bethel (or any portion thereof). There will be two prizes awarded for BEST DECORATED WHEELS—one for kiddos and one for adults. By wheels, we mean whatever human-powered wheels you use (walkers, strollers, wheelchairs, bicycles, unicycles...). Decorate your ride and join the fun and maybe win a prize.

Potluck dinner at 5:30 PM. Bring a yummy dish to share. Bethel will provide hot dogs and hamburgers. All are invited. There will be a free will offering in support of Strengthen the Conference. Rev. Mary will speak about her Strengthen the Conference Ride and all the great things happening in the Missouri Mid-South Conference. All monies collected will stay in Missouri in support of the Missouri Mid-South Conference. Sign up in the Narthex. Sunday morning, June 4 at 8:30 AM, Rev. Mary will set out from Bethel to begin her ride to Levasy for the next stop in her journey to travel across Missouri ending at Eden Seminary in St. Louis June 10.



BETHEL BOOK CLUB

The Bethel's book club is reading *"The Dictionary of Lost Words"* by Pip Williams. The book for July is *"Women Talking"* by Miriam Toews. If you are interested in joining the group please contact Jan Rickert or Maggie Basch.

BETHEL HOMIES

June 16 TOUR of Fort Leavenworth, Museum & Lunch BE at the Bethel UCC parking lot at 10:00 for rides. For a tour of Ft. Leavenworth, Museum & lunch at Petras Imbiss, 427 Delaware, Leavenworth, KS. **You must bring current Photo ID or we'll have to leave you at the Main Gate!**

Please give me a call or text if you're going, or need a ride, so I can get a count for the restaurant, and meet you at the parking lot. Remember, all **HOMIES** meetings are scheduled for the **3rd Friday of each month**. HOMIES, watch for the upcoming HOMIES Newsletter for July. If you want the Newsletter, let Randy Pace know, he'll put you on the email list.

July 21 TOUR to Big Brutus, 6509 NW 60th St, West Mineral, KS 66782, later Lunch @ Two Brothers Mining Co, in the Kansas Crossing Casino, 69 Hwy and Rt 400, just south of Pittsburg, KS. (Bethel Pkg Lot, 9 AM for rides)

Aug 18 TOUR - WW-1 Monument & Museum. Lunch at the Museum Cafeteria (Bethel Pkg Lot, 10:00)





In Vino Veritas—Wine Study and Bible Tasting

Wine Study and Bible Tasting for June will be on **Sunday, June 25, at Sail Away Wine, 309 Armour Rd, North Kansas City, MO 64116 starting at 4 PM.** Please note the date, time, and location adjustment!!! Make sure you come early in order to get your “Wine Passport” which will allow for you to taste wines of your choice. Sail Away Wine also serves food. Instead of our typical Bible study, we will be hosting “Bible Trivia”. As always, please RSVP to Pastor Laura so she can make reservations. For the summer, Wine Study and Bible Tasting will be “going on the road” with sessions at area wineries—we give a new meaning to the term “field trip”.

UPCOMING EVENT—JULY 2 - FISH FRY

July 2—11:30 am

Bethel UCC



A time for food and fellowship. All are welcome. Suggested donation: \$15 - Adults & \$8 - 10 yrs. & Under or give what you can.

**Signup in the Narthex of Contact
Bethel UCC Church Office:
816-453-2628**

Bethel UCC
4900 NE Parvin Road
Kansas City, MO 64117

CONFIRMATION CLASS THOUGHTS

Here is some food for thought. The Confirmation Class, as they prepare to make their commitment to Bethel, was asked to write down three things they love about the UCC and Bethel specifically, and three things they would like to see changed (or adjusted!).

Here are some of the things they loved:

- That all people are embraced and welcomed (including LGBTQ, POC, and those with differing religious views).
- The “democratic” polity.
- The worship includes congregation members’ participation and involvement.
- Bethel’s AWESOME music variety.
- Bethel’s small size giving everyone a chance to know and support each other.
- All questions and opinions being respected.
- Bethel has FUN.
- Bethel has a lack of people trying to manipulate or intimidate others to force their own agendas.
- Bethel is made up of intelligent, thoughtful, and caring individuals.

Here are some of the things they’d like to change:

- That the UCC as a whole lacks a statement of core beliefs that can be observed across all member churches.
- Bethel’s belief that it is “friendly and welcoming” is more “aspirational than effective”. People are friendly “after you get to know them,” but the congregation could use a class on how to talk to strangers.
- Too much of a “we’ve always done it this way” mindset.
- Bistro should be every week to get people to interact more.
- Sprucing up the walls with more color, artwork, etc.
- Organizing and cleaning up the nursery to make it more welcoming.
- More fun activities for the children—outdoors things—to get the kids more excited about coming to church.
- More church history information included in sermons.
- Moving church back to 9 am so there is more time for fellowship after the service.
- More ecumenical activities with other churches/moving “outside our comfort zone”.
- Efforts for sustainability for the church.
- The Church needs to consider why it is putting so much money into facilities when multi-use buildings sharing space with other community organizations would make more sense.

PASTOR LAURA’S OFFICE HOURS

Pastor Laura’s drop-in office hours: 9:00-12:00 Mon-Thurs, Sabbath – Friday.

Pastor Laura’s cell phone: 360-461-6166

BETHEL FINANCIAL UPDATE—WHERE WE ARE & WHAT WE NEED

To meet 2023 monthly budgeted expenses, we need \$14,346 in contributions. Current fund contributions for April were \$13,528.

UPDATE ON THE UGANDA MISSION FROM CHARLES SMITH

Charles Smith, missionary to Uganda who visited us in April, sent us a note of thanks for the opportunity to share his work with you, and a deep thanks for the financial support. He is now back in Uganda. Printed below is the newsletter he sends every few months.

Charles Mission News

May 19, 2023

Faith

The Prison Ministry team continues to move forward in faith. We had faith that we would be able to resume prison ministry when the 2020 lock-down prevented us from entering the prison. We continued to meet and to prepare materials. God rewarded that faith by growing the team. In January 2022, President Museveni announced the end of coronavirus restrictions. However, the prison remained closed to the ministry. We continued to prepare.

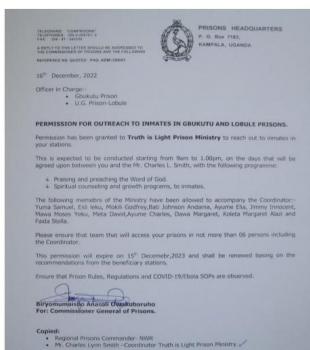
We returned to the prison for ministry in August 2022. We resumed ministry in faith that God would use us to deliver his message, and that his message would be received. Attendance by the prisoners reached numbers previously unimagined by me, 32% of the prison population. A friend who, years ago, spent four days in prison told me how important it is to the prisoners that a ministry team visits them faithfully. We endeavor to do that.



Prison ministry team preparing Bible study material for sharing in the prison. Afterward we break our prayer and fasting with a common meal.

A month later we received permission to talk to the officer in charge of Koboko's other prison. He invited us to begin ministry at Lobule prison. At the same time we were directed to contact Uganda Prison Headquarters and seek a letter recognizing the ministry.

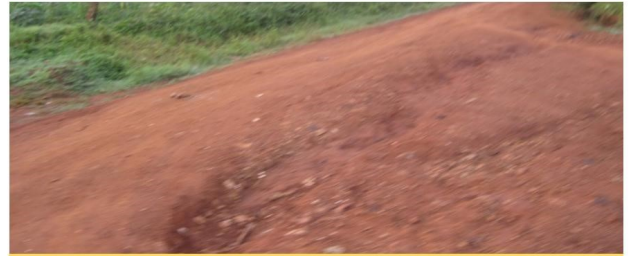
We were suddenly turned away from Gbukutu prison. We were told it was Ebola. We asked the officer in charge of Lobule prison, and he said no Ebola concerns in our part of the country, please continue to come. Later we learned it was persecution at Gbukutu because we are not all one denomination, specifically the denomination that was being favored. We continued to pray about it and have faith. God opened a way to receive a letter from Uganda Prison Headquarters officially recognizing Truth is Light Prison Ministry. God further used this to overcome the persecution to his ministry through us. I mentioned requesting this letter in the last newsletter. I mention it again because it is part of a bigger story, growing the team's faith and the inmates' faith that we will come when allowed, and we remember them in prayer too.



Letter from Uganda Prison System's Commissioner General.

The prison ministry team has begun to recognize the growth God has blessed us with, and the bounty of the harvest, even in the prison. Prisoners have requested permission to join us when they are released. The officer in charge of the prison said it is okay, and if they ask when they are eligible for release, he will provide them with our contact information. We have faith that they will be hungry for God, not just seeing us. Two were released just before Easter and they did visit a team meeting before returning to their homes. Unfortunately, their homes are too far away for them to participate regularly.

This is just the most recent fruit of the ministry. We continue to pray for provision. God has put it in our hearts to reach more prisons. This means I need to raise money for a vehicle. A Land Cruiser is sturdy and will survive the Ugandan roads so we can reach the prisons safely. The team is praying that people, perhaps someone you know, will contribute towards this.



Road ruts are common.

Together this ministry is moving forward – in faith.

Thanksgivings

- The prison ministry is back in Gbukutu prison (again).
- For safe travel to the US and back to Uganda.
- For you.

Prayer Requests

- Please join me in praying about transport options for the prison ministry; what this will look like and how to finance it.



Commission
TO EVERY NATION



Donation Mailing Address
Commission To Every Nation
P.O. Box 291307
Kerrville, TX 78029-1307

Phone: 800-872-5404 (press 1)

Email: charles.L.smith@wavecable.com

Giving link: www.cten.org/africa-missionaries/charles-smith

Blog: <https://charlesofsta.wordpress.com/>