

July 2026 Newsletter

Monthly Updates from Bethany Presbyterian Church



From our Senior Pastor

Rev. Dr. Brian Janssen

Happy 250th Birthday to the United States of America. I wonder what an appropriate celebration will look like. Obviously, we will have fireworks shows and back yard barbecues, we will have kids with sparklers and concerts, and patriotic anthems galore and we should. There are so many freedoms which we take for granted in our nation and that is ok. We are not called to daily contemplate what good fortune we have inherited which was bought at a price by so many service men and women through our history. We are called to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

Yet our nation is unique in its character and founding. Other nations had, before ours, experienced rebellion and reform. England itself experienced the overthrow of its monarch in the 1680's but it's experiments in republican democracy ended in dictatorship and the eventual reestablishment of the monarchy. Shortly after our revolution and founding, France revolted against its monarch unleashing an era of violence that has few equivalents or parallels. Their revolution also failed such that by 1804 Napoleon Bonaparte had become their emperor. Historian Gordon Wood suggests that one of the many reasons our nation was successful in its founding was that "while philosophers in Europe were trying to define the first principles of liberty, Americans were already experiencing liberty in their everyday lives." Our founding documents did not seek to create liberty whole cloth but to preserve the liberties we already had.

It needs to be mentioned, because it is taken for granted, that one of these freedoms which our founders sought to preserve was the freedom to worship God, without the constraints of the government establishing a state church. Pennsylvania was, in many ways, the grand experiment for this kind of religious freedom. Established by Quakers the colony, and eventual state, by 1776 had Quakers, Methodists, Episcopalians, a small number of Roman Catholics, and of course Presbyterians. This freedom of worship was valued by many, if not all citizens, many of whom were the descendants of people who had fled the religious wars of Europe in the 17th century to come to these shores.

I know that many of you will be on vacation the weekend of July 4th, which falls on a Saturday this year. Wherever you are though, I would encourage you to be in church on July 5th, worshipping the God who comes to us in Jesus Christ. Freedom is a beautiful thing, perhaps the only thing more beautiful is the cross which brings us all a true victory and the freedom to love one another. Have a beautiful and safe July 4th and celebrate this great nation of ours! But always worship the Lord with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself. Amen.

Blessings in Freedom,
Pastor Brian

From our Interim Associate Pastor

Rev. Dr. Larry Ruby

Dimples

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. John 14:3

I have a dimple - just one on my left cheek. It's not one of those really sexy deep dimples like Kirk Douglas' chin. No, it's just a little one, but it reminds me of a special moment in my life and the lesson I learned that still comforts me today.

Growing up in Hopewell township was great. Lots of friends. Great memories. One of the places we loved to go was in the hills near our house where there were lots of caves for exploring and lots of chasms to cross. One of the neighborhood favorites was a gully about 12 feet wide and 20 feet deep. Someone had rigged a rope on a nearby branch that was used by the bigger kids to swing across while the little kids had to walk around. It was a real rite of passage to be able to swing across. I, of course, was determined to swing across, but I just couldn't quite make it. Here's where the dimple comes in. On one of my desperate attempts to cross to the other side I lost hold of the rope and plummeted to the bottom of the gully. As I hit the bottom my knee hit my left cheek. After the swelling went down, there it was, my new dimple. I still have it to this day.

But that's not the end of the story. When I told my big brother Dave what had happened and that I couldn't swing across the gully he grabbed me by the hand and took me back to the scene of the crime. He easily swung across and threw the rope back to me and said, "OK now it's your turn!" "No way, I said! I almost killed myself the last time I tried!" "We're not leaving until you do." He replied. "Just trust me, I won't let you fall." So, I swung out the first time but I wasn't even close. I took a running start and almost made it, but not quite. Dave pushed me back so I could make it back to the start. He yelled, "One more time. You can make it!" I jumped as hard as I could and just as I reached the other side, I could see his arms were there to catch me if I needed them, but as I let go of the rope I realized I had made it! He gave me a big hug, put the rope in my hand and pushed me back across the gully and said "now, do it again!" No problem this time... or ever again! All I needed was a little help and someone who believed in me.

You've probably figured out by now that this story isn't really about dimples or even childhood memories. It's about learning that we are not alone as we face the "gullies" of life. There is One who has experienced every challenge we face and even more. There is One who has gone before us and prepares the way. There is One who loves us and will never leave or forsake us. His name is Jesus. So, trust Him. He believes in you and He won't let you fall!

Be Blessed,
Pastor Larry Ruby

Strategic Plan Update

Bethany's Strategic Plan: Year One – Laying Foundations

At the end of May, Session shared the first year of Bethany's new Strategic Plan with the congregation. This plan is the result of prayer, listening, conversation, and reflection on who God is calling us to be in the years ahead. While the plan looks three years into the future, our first year is intentionally focused on laying foundations—building relationships, listening carefully, strengthening existing ministries, and discerning where God is leading us next.

Rather than launching a large number of new programs all at once, Year One is designed to help us better understand our congregation and community so that future decisions are grounded in prayer, wisdom, and real experience.

Growing a Vibrant Intergenerational Church

One of our goals is to strengthen Bethany as a church where people of all ages find meaningful connection, belonging, and opportunities for discipleship.

To support this work, we are establishing a Prayer Team that will pray regularly for the congregation, ministry leaders, and the implementation of the strategic plan. We believe every healthy ministry begins with prayer, and we want this work to be rooted in seeking God's guidance together.

We will also conduct a Family Needs Assessment through listening sessions, surveys, and conversations with families from different stages of life. These conversations will help us better understand how Bethany can support children, youth, parents, and grandparents as they grow in faith.

In worship, we will focus on creating an even more welcoming environment through improvements in hospitality, accessibility, signage, communication, and the overall guest experience.

Integrating New Members into the Church's Life

Bethany has been blessed by many new faces in recent years. A second focus of Year One is helping people move from simply attending worship to becoming fully connected participants in the life of the church.

Strategic Plan Update Cont.

Creating Spaces for Meaningful Relationships

Strong congregations are built on strong relationships. During Year One, Bethany will invest in listening and relationship-building across the congregation and community, including ethnographic interviews and listening sessions.

Increasing and Investing in Youth

Finally, Year One includes important groundwork for strengthening ministry with children and youth through assessment, volunteer development, and support for families.

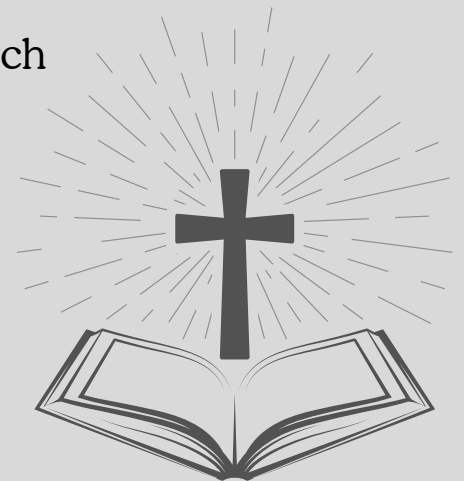
Looking Ahead

The Strategic Plan is not a fixed roadmap that answers every question in advance. Rather, it is a framework that helps us move forward together with purpose, flexibility, and faith.

If you would like to learn more, have questions about the Strategic Plan, or would like a copy of the presentation slides that were shared with the congregation, please contact me.

Grace and Peace,

Rev. Dr. Brian Janssen and The Session of Bethany Church

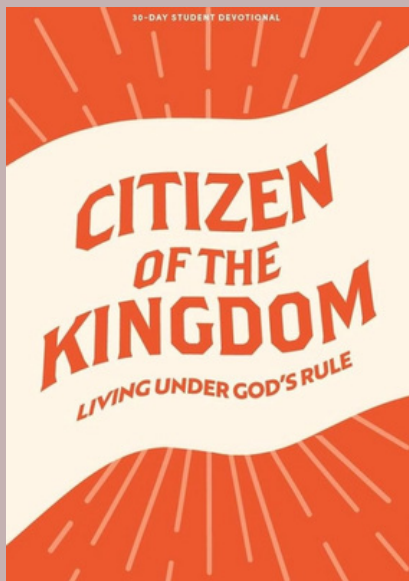




♥♥♥♥ from Abbie Gardner, Youth Director ♥♥♥♥

We are in peak summer time as we are enjoying vacations, going swimming, having picnics, and all the great things that come along with summer!

While we slow down from our routine BYG schedule, we still have had a lot of fun with our pop-up events! We get to casually meet for fro-yo, milkshakes, and wings! Check out our schedules to see what we're up to the next few weeks!



We also have been going through monthly devotionals. June's devotional theme was "Set Apart" and July is "Citizens of the Kingdom".

We love having this connection over the summer and having the routine of reading these daily devotionals.

So while we take a break from our usual Bible studies in the Youth Lounge, we are still growing closer to God and with each other.

We look forward to this coming fall when we're back to our weekly Sunday meetings! We are also very excited about getting our crew together for **LAURELVILLE MUD WEEKEND!**

Laurelville Mud Weekend is all of the best parts of summer camp squeezed into a weekend to make an **AWESOME** fall/winter retreat for youth.

Laurelville Info and FAQ Form

We are asking families to fill out this form to let us know which weekend works best for their schedules so that we can register for the best weekend for our group! We may do separate junior high and senior high or do the one combined weekend. Scan the QR Code!

We are asking for the form to be submitted by August 2nd with the \$30 deposit due that same day. The deposit is non-refundable as it's our obligation to Laurelville.





From our Music Director Nadina Robusto

Music Ministry July News! In addition to our Choral Courtyard and Sacred Music Sampling Classes, starting in July, we have two NEW PROGRAMS that we'd love to share with you!

Bell Tree Hour: Check out our new instrument technique! Pick up a few mallets and learn to play the bell tree. Our hand bells will hang from a tree and during this class, you will learn to strike the bells with your mallets to make a joyful and beautiful noise to the Lord! Meet us in the choir room Wednesday mornings in July, at 9 AM (with the exclusion of July 15)

Creatives in the Chapel: Join us in the Chapel and Welcome Center on Thursday mornings in July to hear about some of our members' incredible talents and how God has worked through their creativity!

July 2- Tim Anderson and Sharon Salvini- Photography;

July 9- Joe Oyler- Writing (and a presentation of his book and it's Epilogue, Almost Forgotten, which is written about the men from Bridgeville and South Fayette that gave their lives while serving in the military);

July 23- Joe Oyler- Mountain Dulcimer Music Demo;

July 30- Bonnie Hendershot- Song Writing

Look for our fliers and online media for upcoming news on these incredible events!

Sacred Music Sampling started at the end of June and will continue in July. This is a short class/demo that features our music/technology used during worship. All ages are welcome, though children under 18 need to be accompanied by a parent/guardian. Join us to check out some of the music and tech we use in worship!

July 7- Sound Room- learn about the soundboard and new console

July 21- Organ- learn about the pipes and the manuals used in worship- which includes an opportunity to play the organ

July 28- Recording Equipment- learn about the process of creating produced audio

Choral Courtyard is off to a lovely start! We've been meeting in the courtyard to sing on Tuesday mornings and all agree it is the best way to start the day- lifting our voices to God. We are also BLESSED by the beautiful work that our property team and volunteers have done in the McDivitt Memorial Garden. A very special thanks to both Doreen and Bob Grove and Joe Kuchta for their incredible gardening contributions! We are blessed! Please join us to sing and enjoy the beauty of God's creation while we lift our voices in song to our Creator! July Choral Courtyard meets 9:30 on July 7, 21, and 28. Hope to see you there!



MUSIC CONTINUED

**CHORAL
COURTYARD**

Start your day singing praises to God!
(No experience necessary)
Learn some new choral anthems and sing
some favorite hymns with us at
Bethany Presbyterian Church
740 Washington Avenue

**TUESDAYS 9:30 AM
JULY 7, 21, 28**

**CREATIVES
in the Chapel**

July 2- Tim Anderson and Sharon Salvini- Photography
July 9- Joe Oyler's Book- Almost Forgotten, written about the men from Bridgeville and South Fayette that gave their lives while serving in the military
July 23- Joe Oyler- Mountain Dulcimer Music Demo
July 30- Bonnie Hendershot- Song Writing

Bethany Presbyterian Church
JULY | 2, 9, 23, 30 | 10 AM

Sacred Music Sampling

Check out the instruments and sound tech we use in worship at Bethany Presbyterian! Mini courses are provided for free this summer! For more info, contact: music@bethanypresby.org

Tuesdays at 11 AM
June 30 - PERCUSSION July 7 - SOUND ROOM
July 21 - ORGAN July 28 - RECORDING
August 4 - STRINGS

VBS WAS A HUGE SUCCESS!
RAINFOREST FALLS EXPLORING THE TRUE NATURE OF GOD

THANK YOU SO MUCH TO EVERYONE WHO HELPED MAKE VBS HAPPEN THIS YEAR. SO MANY CHILDREN'S LIVES WERE TOUCHED BY THE LOVE OF JESUS AND THAT MAKES EVERYTHING WORTH IT.









UPCOMING EVENTS AT BETHANY

POPSICLE POP-UP!!

Join us on **July 12th** at 11am for popsicles and fellowship! It's the perfect summer treat!



Through July 26th Children can leave after the Children's Sermon and go to the Worship and Wonder room for Play and Pray.



Bible Study! --- Join us for Notes in the Margin, a discussion-based Bible study where we explore Scripture, ask questions, and grow in faith together. Whether you're new to faith, returning after time away, or looking to deepen your walk with God, you're invited. **Bi-weekly meetings beginning Tuesday, July 14th from 6:30 to 7:30PM!** Bring your Bible, your questions, and an open heart. No expertise required!

Book Club!--- Come join the Women's Ministry Book Club on **7/22 at 7pm** in Sunday School Classroom 224. The book we will be discussing is Max Lucado's **Miracle at the Higher Grounds Cafe**. Hope to see you there!

WOMEN'S MINISTRY!

Here's a look back at our Women's Ministry Flower Bingo and Upcoming Events!



WOMEN'S MINISTRY EVENTS 2026

7/22- Book Club! We will meet to discuss the Miracle at the Higher Grounds Café by Max Lucado with Candace Lee and Eric Newman. 7pm in Room 224

8/15- Safety Seminar for all ages from 2-4pm

9/20- Finger Knit Chunky Pumpkin with Our Fathers Farm- lunch immediately after the 10:45am service, Craft Class starts at 12pm.

9/29- Book Club! Book TBD
October-Event TBD

11/18 Book Club- Blind Date with a Book!

12/13 Ornament Exchange



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3	4
			9AM - Bell Tree Hour 11:30AM - Knitters	9AM – Quilters 10AM - Creatives in the Chapel 12PM – Rotary 6:30PM – Bloom in the Courtyard 7:30PM – AA	OFFICE CLOSED	INDEPENDENCE DAY
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Worship at 8:15AM & 10AM	4:30PM – Body Carpenter Workout 6:30PM – Men’s Huddle	9:30AM – Choral Courtyard 11AM – Sacred Music Sampling 7PM – ALANON	9AM - Bell Tree Hour 10AM – Fellowship of Prayer 11:30AM – Knitters	9AM – Quilters 10AM - Creatives in the Chapel 12PM – Rotary 6:30PM – Bloom at the Gazebo 7:30PM – AA		
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Worship at 8:15AM & 10AM 11AM – Popsicle Pop Up	4:30PM – Body Carpenter Workout 6:30PM – Men’s Huddle	7PM – Deacons Meeting 7PM – ALANON	11:30AM – Knitters	9AM – Quilters 12PM – Golden Oldies 7:30PM – AA		FOOD BANK
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
Worship at 8:15AM & 10AM	4:30PM – Body Carpenter Workout 6:30PM – Men’s Huddle	9:30AM – Choral Courtyard 11AM – Sacred Music Sampling 7PM – ALANON	9AM - Bell Tree Hour 11:30AM – Knitters	9AM – Quilters 12PM – Rotary 6:30PM – Bloom in Sanctuary 7:30PM – AA		DIAPER BANK
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
Worship at 8:15AM & 10AM	4:30PM – Body Carpenter Workout 6:30PM – Men’s Huddle	9:30AM – Choral Courtyard 11AM – Sacred Music Sampling 7PM – ALANON	9AM - Bell Tree Hour 11:30AM – Knitters	9AM – Quilters 10AM - Creatives in the Chapel 12PM – Rotary 6:30PM – Bloom at the Gazebo 7:30PM – AA		

Minute for Mission--- On July 12, we will have a speaker from **Sojourner House** join us. This is a mission that Bethany supports. It is in the East Liberty section of Pittsburgh and provides recovery services for mothers and their families. The speaker will share with us services that they provide as well as possible opportunities to be a volunteer.

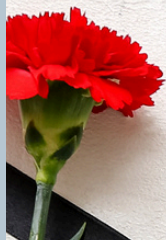


During the June 20th Food Bank distribution, 109 families were assisted which included 28 children, 68 adults and 91 elderly.



CONDOLENCES

The sympathy of the congregation is extended to Dolly McCrea and family, on the passing of Dolly's brother, Thomas McCrea who joined the Church Triumphant on June 10, 2026; and to the family of Marge Jablonski, who joined the Church Triumphant on June 11, 2026. She was a beloved member of our church family; and to the family of Terry Kohlmyer, who joined the Church Triumphant on June 10, 2026. He was a beloved former member of Bethany who loved the Lord.



July Birthdays



07/01 Barbara Baker
 07/01 Neva McAuley
 07/03 David Calgaro
 07/03 Malinda Fink
 07/03 William Koch Jr
 07/04 Hunter Briggs
 07/04 John Talerico
 07/05 Shawn Ruehle
 07/06 Jason Franchi
 07/06 Martha Gabelhart
 07/06 Rebecca Lewis
 07/06 Julia Casciola
 07/08 Brody Stark
 07/09 Myla Grady
 07/09 William Just
 07/09 Connie Rucker
 07/09 Frederick Gerstacker
 07/10 Kim Hartnett
 07/10 Madison Galbraith
 07/10 Renee Rusko
 07/11 Evelyn Barbish
 07/11 Larry Poglein

07/12 Melina Shildt
 07/12 Thomas Jones
 07/12 John Schneider
 07/13 Barry Fricker
 07/16 Diane Cook
 07/17 Nolan Strouse
 07/18 Hope Trotta
 07/18 John Sienerth
 07/19 Jan Underwood
 07/19 Bruce Haviland
 07/19 Madison McCausland
 07/19 Claudia Ziegler
 07/19 Landon Jackson
 07/20 Victoria Segeleon
 07/20 Deborah Gossic
 07/21 William Miklavic
 07/21 Nancy Schneider
 07/22 Emma Underwood
 07/22 David Colton
 07/22 Karin Cellone
 07/23 Dale Anderson
 07/23 Jason Sommerfield
 07/23 Michael Casciola
 07/23 Gabriella Schinosi
 07/23 John Hunter

07/24 Mark Rackley
 07/24 Jessica Mendenhall
 07/25 Nikki O'Brien
 07/25 Payton Miller
 07/27 Paige Morse
 07/27 Ellen Zissis
 07/27 Mary Wells
 07/28 Robbie Best
 07/30 Zachary McGinnis
 07/30 Tyler McGinnis
 07/31 Alexandra Tumulty
 07/31 Clara Talerico
 07/31 Domenic Poiche
 07/31 Ainsley Link



Happy Birthday!

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Thank you



A **BIG thank you** to all the Secret Sisters who donated toward the beautiful communion, bread tray, and memory of Lynne Suchoza. The remaining money will be donated to the youth group of our church; Lynne loved children. Our fellow Secret Sister is missed by all.