

January 2024

A publication of Bethany United Methodist Church, Weyers Cave, VA

WHAT'S INSIDE

- 2 From the Pastor's Desk
- 3 Mission Update & BUM Bites
- 4 Thoughts from a Member
- 5 January Announcements
- 6 2023 Annual Conference & Advent Thank Yous
- 7 Prayer List & Birthdays
- 8 January Calendar
- 9 Coloring Page

If you would like ...
and currently don't
receive the church
newsletter
and other important
updates by email, please
send your email address to
Cindy Kite at
office.bethany@gmail.com.



A Christian Prayer to Welcome the New Year:

Our Father and our God, as we stand at the beginning of this new year, we confess our need of Your presence and Your guidance as we face the future. We each have our hopes and expectations for the year that is ahead of us—but You alone know what it holds for us, and only You can give us the strength and the wisdom we will need to meet its challenges. So help us to humbly put our hands into Your hand, and to trust You and to seek Your will for our lives during this coming year. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, we pray. Amen.

May this prayer bring you comfort and hope as you step into the new year. Wishing you a blessed and prosperous 2024!





From the Pastor's Desk ...

A Season of Newness

Dear Bethany Family,

My own heart has grown throughout the Christmas season, and it's because of the people of Bethany UMC. From the wonderful Christmas choir to the laughs and smiles of the Christmas program, to watching the candlelight illuminate the Sanctuary on Christmas Eve; I was reminded of Christ's love for us as humans, over and over again. The generosity and love you all have for me as your pastor and Ashley, cannot be overstated and we are so overwhelmed by your constant love. There is something special about this place, and I truly believe it is the people that make up this church family!

As the clock strikes midnight on 2023; I would be remiss to celebrate the highs and lows of the year. Over the last 365 days we have lost families and gained new families. We have celebrated our children, youth, and adults; and we have had lots of hard moments. We have had a number of baptisms and we have celebrated our saints who have passed on. We have laughed together and praised God

together, and we have cried together while continuing to thank God for showing up for us in those difficult moments. We have loved our neighbors faithfully through food pantry and missions; and we have continued to be a light for the Gospel of Jesus Christ! As your pastor for the last 16 months, I have witnessed more love here and learned so much what it means to be a pastor. And the resolve of this church family leaves me feeling hopeful and excited for 2024 and beyond!

The New Year will bring more opportunities to share the love of Jesus with our community and world. Our 70th year anniversary of this church in this building is something that needs to be celebrated. 70 years of people loving Jesus and neighbors. 70 years of being a place where God is praised and worshipped. 70 years of being a space for people to bring their hurts, hang-ups, and shortcomings. This year we will celebrate the faithfulness of God who has continued to make a way for 70 years. We will celebrate the families, friends, and neighbors who have made this space a welcoming and loving space. And we will prepare for the next 70 years of what God is going to do here. How?

I'd suggest that all of us over this next year do a few things to remember and prepare:

- Share the memories that have defined your faith journey here at Bethany.
- Find something that you are passionate about and gifted with and get involved here.
- Continue to pray for this congregation and for what God has in store for Bethany.
- Invite others to join this faithful and love-filled congregation, as we seek to grow God's kingdom.

If we can do these things, we will honor the memories that have made this space so special, while heading into the future with a renewed hope that God will continue to make this space a place where God's kingdom comes.

In Christ's Love,

*Pastor
Blaine*



Donuts & Devotions

All men in the church are invited to join together for "Donuts & Devotions" on Saturday, January 20 at 8 am in the fellowship hall. This will be a time of donut eating, coffee drinking, fellowshiping, sharing of devotions, and praying! Plus a little

laughter along the way.

We meet on the 3rd Saturday of each month. There's no commitment. Come when you can! Questions? Contact Pastor Blaine or Chuck McCarty.

This is your chance to get involved with something new at Bethany this year!!





Missions Update ... by Lori Mooney

January 2024, a new year and a new you. Make a commitment to come to church every Sunday that you can, give an offering, give of your time to help with special events or be on a committee, and thank you for being you. Welcome in the new year with a bang.

Let's make this year another banner year of helping others.

Mission spotlight of the month: Food Pantry

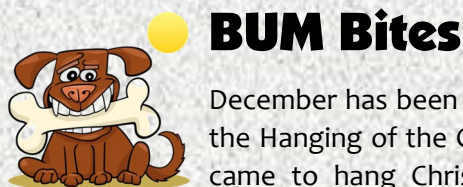
Our Food Pantry on Monday nights was started many years ago by Jean Dunsmore and we have carried this on for quite awhile. We love helping our neighbors who need food. Your monetary donations will help buy food from the Verona Food Bank to put it on the table of those who need it. Please think about making an extra donation and mark it for the food pantry. If you would like to help on Monday nights, please talk to Pat Lynn or Kathy Frizzelle. We would love to have you

there.

If you know of someone who needs help, please let us know.

Lori Mooney, co-chair, 540-820-7394
Brownsugarcookie@yahoo.com

Nancy Colvin, co-chair, 540-910-0272
nwcolvin@gmail.com



BUM Bites

December has been a time of serving, growing, and reflecting for our youth! We started with the Hanging of the Greens. The youth were instrumental in serving the pizza meal to all who came to hang Chrismons on the tree! They also guided and helped the children while decorating. It warmed my heart to see all age groups come together with the start of the Christmas season.

The youth continued their service by making sandwiches, filling glass mason jars full of soup/chili, creating decorative cookie plates, and decorating boxes. All of this came together beautifully to be distributed to Weyers Cave, Grottoes, and Verona Fire Departments. It was a magnificent way to show appreciation to those community members.

This month for Bible Explorations, we took a deep dive into Jesus' parables. We focused on 4 of His parables, discussed multiple meanings, and created our own parable to share with family and friends.

Our youth had several aspects of our Christmas program! From Mary and Joseph, to singing with the choir, to participating in skits, the youth showed their true talents all while glorifying God!

Many of our youth families have been involved with lighting of the Advent wreath. This humbles me to see the influence of our youth with their families and our church. Remarkable!



Gifts of our youth keep shining outside of church as well. Gifts include masonry, basketball, singing with school choirs, and completing finals. Our youth are shining in every area of their lives. We are so proud of them!

The new year is going to bring celebrating our confirmands, more Bible Exploration, and preparing for the 30 Hour Famine. Celebrate our youth any chance you get!

Blessings to all,

Bridgett Crawford



Looking Back at the Past and Ahead to the Future

by Jackie Dunsmore

2024! Happy New Year and Happy 70th Anniversary Bethany! Honestly, when Cindy asked me to write this I just couldn't get started. I have so many feelings in so many different directions about 2023, Bethany and 70 years of God's faithfulness. It is difficult to put into words.

I haven't been here all 70 years, but I'm blessed to have been a member at Bethany most of them. My faith was born and nurtured here. I have fond memories of Sunday School where Carolyn Roller and Louise Byers taught Bible stories and Ms. Byers challenged us to memorize the books of the Bible in order (I didn't quite make it!). I remember Mr. Boyd VanPelt handing out sticks of gum after every service and belting out his wonderful baritone voice with every hymn. I am grateful for Pastor Jim Harris who had a profound impact on my life as a teenager and Stanley and Mae Houff, and Debbie and Sam Sauflay as youth leaders. There were Christmas programs and cantatas and lots of music. There was Pat and Lois Lamb who challenged our church to become more mission-minded and whose influence helped create the mission-focused church we are today. I remember apple butter making, fall festivals, beef barbeque dinners, retreats at Camp Overlook, revivals, homecomings, Vacation Bible Schools, and food, **always** food at every fellowship event. On our wedding day, as I was ready to walk down the aisle with my dad, I remember standing on a concrete slab of the new addition (no roof yet). Glad it wasn't raining!

Tears stream down as I remember these many things and so many more with such gratitude to those mentioned and others, many who have gone to be with Jesus. I'm thankful that I grew up in and still belong to a church of faithful folks who love God, love each other, love the children and youth and encourage each one as if they were their own.

Let's also not forget that life is real. There were struggles... societal changes... financial hardships... conflict... shared tragedies... changes in worship... times of questioning... maybe even complacency and doubt. As we know, a church family is made up of people and we people can be... well... people! Yet through it all God's faithfulness remained steadfast and the church on the hill continued in worship, ministry and love for our community and one another.

2023 has been a difficult year in almost every facet of our lives. Coming out of Covid, we must admit that our world is quite a mess. Besides living in a world besieged in war and poverty, our own governments inability to accomplish much of anything, an unsettled often angry society where we seem to be hyper-focused on what divides us rather than what brings us together, we also have our own family and personal struggles that can often seem overwhelming. Unfortunately, Bethany has not been immune from this societal unrest as our own denomination has experienced the loss of many churches and we, the loss of beloved church members.

So here we are facing 2024. What about Bethany and the next 70 years? I think our recent Christmas program spoke to this question. If you weren't there, watch the recording. There was young and old, new faces and long time members, laughter and tears, a diversity of people and parts. Yet, there was one simple story. The story of God's redeeming love for mankind and his desire that we show that love to one another. The Bethany family is certainly in agreement that to love God and love one another is the essential tenet of our faith. I'm not sure our individual differences should ever outweigh this belief that binds us together. I am thankful that Bethany has remained Bethany through all the joys and challenges of these past 70 years. Now, we have a wonderful pastor and we have a great opportunity before us. The statistics tell us that MOST of the people in our community are indifferent to God and even more so to the established church. They won't come to us. We must reach out to them. What will that look like? How do we share Jesus with folks who don't even realize they need him? This is the challenge of the future. I don't know the answers, but I do know that I am excited and ready to join hands with my church family as we pray, seek and follow God's direction for our church in 2024. God has and will be faithful and he has the plan for Bethany's part in the redemption of His world. One thing I know for sure... it begins and ends with love... and my Bethany family... I love you.

Hebrews 10:23

*Let's hold firmly to the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is **faithful**.*





New Members Class



Have you been attending Bethany for a while? And just haven't gotten around to joining the church or never been asked to? If so, Pastor Blaine

will be leading a "New Member Class" immediately after the worship service Sunday, January 21, and wants all who are interested in membership at Bethany to attend. If you plan to attend the class or have any questions about membership, please contact Pastor Blaine.

Sunday, January 28 is going to be a BIG and EXCITING day at Bethany UMC.

We will be welcoming NEW MEMBERS and CONFIRMANDS into our loving church family. Mark your calendars for this day, as it will be a worship service that celebrates new birth here at Bethany as we kick off our **70th Year Anniversary** as a church. If you or someone in your family would like to be baptized, please let Pastor Blaine know.

BUM Christmas Post Office



The BUM Christmas Post Office has had a busy time during Advent. Thank you so much for "mailing" your Christmas cards through our post office. All proceeds will go towards the youth summer mission trip. If you haven't checked the baskets for cards mailed to you, please do so. The post office will be closing on Sunday, January 14!!

Young Adult Social



There will be a Young Adult Social on Saturday, January 6 from 4-6 pm in the fellowship hall for those between the ages of 18-30. Please bring your favorite appetizer to share with all. (There may even be a prize for the "best" appetizer.) We want to get the young adults of Bethany together for socials throughout the year. Won't you please join us for our first social?

*"Be connected. Be faithful. Be involved.
Become bold in serving God by trying something new in 2024."*

January Coffee Hours

Want to talk to Pastor Blaine outside the church? Maybe get to know him a little better? Find out what makes him tick? Besides college football? If so, make plans to join him at his "Coffee Hours" this January. It's the perfect time to sit, enjoy a cup of coffee or tea and some good conversation in a casual atmosphere.

January coffee hours will be held at Rumor Mill at Valley Pike on ...

Thursday, January 18 from 9:30 am - 12 pm.

He would love to see and visit with you there!



Volunteers Needed for Karis

Karis (the local thrift store started by Pleasant Valley C-OB) is looking for volunteers.

All the proceeds go to local charities. Karis volunteers needed for Mondays to do furniture pick up and delivery.

One to two Mondays per month. Average work day is 8:00 to 3:00.

If you can help, call Jerry Brunk at 540-421-1702.



2023 Annual Conference

by Rosemary Wagoner

This year at Annual Conference Bishop Sue Haupt-Johnson made an effort to return the Annual Conference back to John Wesley's purpose for AC of being in mission and discussing what should be preached about.

There were limited meetings outside of conference business and opportunities to network with each other and be in mission. The Laity session was held before conference started. There was an evening event just focused on Mission. A display of ways we're in Mission will be in the lobby soon. One mission close by is the Embrace Center in Waynesboro.

Other interesting things were bringing back Resolutions. Resolutions usually call for the conference to take a stand on an assortment of church rulings. Another notable vote

was asking the conference to support the Christmas Covenant which will create regional conferences. There are times at General Conference when issues are discussed that don't affect all the conferences at General Conference. One example is the pension and liability issue in the US. It is rather complicated and took many hours to make sure we're in compliance but it doesn't affect those outside of the US, and this motion was approved. Another thing that was different is the Ordination service which was held during a session during the day. It was after the Retirement Service. I think it is fitting to see the new classes of ministers after celebrating the many years of service by those retiring.

I would like to share the link to the letter from the current and 2 past Conference Lay Leaders. Here is the link, <https://doc.vaumc.org/AC2023/CLL%20Letter%20to%20the%20VAUMC%20June%202023%20FINAL.pdf>



Thanks to All Who Helped Make the Advent Season Special

We were so truly blessed to have such a special Advent season this past December. And there are a few folks who we need to thank. First, thank you to Pastor Blaine, Jackie Dunsmore and the entire Worship Committee for planning such an awesome worship each Sunday. Thank you to all our families who lighted the Advent wreath. Thanks to those who ran the sound, worked in the A/V booth in the back, decorated the foyer and sanctuary and helped with refreshments on Sunday mornings. There are so many to thank, I don't want to list names because I don't want to forget anyone. You know who you are and know we see you and appreciate you!



Financial Update by Cindy Kite

There is still one more Sunday offering to post and the December online giving. And there are still bills for December that need to be paid and reimbursed.

Therefore, I can't give you the 2023 totals yet.
There will be a full 2023 report in the February newsletter.

Giving statements will go out by the end of January.

If you need yours sooner, please let me know.

Most will be emailed; however, I will mail them upon request.

All expenses that need reimbursed, should be to the office
NO LATER than January 10.

January

7th MacKenzie Crawford

8th Krisalyn Mooney

13th Abby Michael

15th Mark Whitecotton
Sharon Northrop

18th Abe Smith

21st Barbara Miller

Pam Roller

Randy Roller

Garrett Simmons

26th Jeremy McLaughlin

27th Jean Houff

28th Peggy Lucas

30th Sarah Simmons

11th Paige Crawford

13th Rebecca Castle

14th Bradley Dunsmore

18th Laura Lucas

21st Sandra Campbell

If your birthday is listed on
the wrong day, or has been
missed, please notify the
office at

office.bethany@gmail.com.

February

1st Jackie Dunsmore

Megan Kile

2nd Reid Hill

3rd Gary Ruleman

4th Pam Lynn

Ron Castle

6th Dylan Snyder



Prayer List

Members

Pam Lynn, Laura Lucas, Jackie Dunsmore,
Leslie Wagoner, Kathleen Stump,
Gary Ruleman, Carolyn Roller,
Hazel Truslow

Extended Family

Sandie Donald - daughter of Carolyn Swartz
& sister of Cindy Kite
Samantha Steed - mother of Tabby Steed,
Shawna - sister of Maggie Huffer,
Alexis - daughter of Tara Stroop

If you have someone you would like placed
on the prayer list, please call or email
Cindy in the office.

All prayer requests will be removed after
4 weeks unless otherwise requested.

We extend Christian sympathy to
Tom & Jan Gorden and family upon the
death of Tom's brother,
James Robert (Bobby) Gorden.

If you would like to send Tom & Jan a card,
their address is ...

7762 Greenhouse Road, Weyers Cave,
VA 24486

We also extend Christian sympathy to
Carolyn Swartz & Cindy Kite on the death of
their sister-in-law and aunt,
Hannah Smiley, on January 2.

If you would like to send cards,
Carolyn's address is 5711 Oak Villa Lane,
Rockingham, VA 22801 and
Cindy's is 66 Brendan Lane, Weyers Cave,
VA 24486.



The Echo

January 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		2 12 pm - Young at Hearts Luncheon at Thomas House in Dayton	3	4	5 	6 4-6 pm - Young Adult Social in the Fellowship Hall
7 10:430am - Youth Bible Exploration 11:30 am - 4 pm - Fellowship Hall Reserved	8 4 pm - Food Pantry 6 pm - Worship Meeting at Valley Pike	9 10 am - Caring Cards	10 All 2023 Receipts Due to be Reimbursed!! 	11	12	13 
14	15 4 pm - Food Pantry 	16	17	18 9:30 am - 12 pm - Coffee with the Pastor at Valley Pike 	19 	20 8 am - Men's Donuts & Devotions 10 am - 1 pm - Fellowship Hall Reserved
21 10:45 am - New Members Class 	22 4 pm - Food Pantry February Newsletter Articles Due!!	23	24 	25	26	27 BE THE REASON SOMEONE SMILES TODAY
28 NEW MEMBER SUNDAY!!	29 4 pm - Food Pantry	30	31 	COUNT ME IN! 		



Bethany United Methodist Church

3700 Lee Highway
Weyers Cave, VA 24486

www.mybethanyumc.org



"The Echo"

A Publication of Bethany United Methodist Church
3700 Lee Highway, Weyers Cave, VA 24486
(540) 234-8880
www.mybethanyumc.org

Blaine Oliver-Thomas, Pastor
850-508-7245
blaineoliver-thomas@vaumc.org

Dale Roller, Praise Band Leader
Bridgett Crawford, Youth Leader
Cindy Kite, Secretary/Treasurer
Danny Perry, Sexton

February Newsletter Deadline: Jan. 20, 2024

Please submit articles to Cindy Kite at
office.bethany@gmail.com

Webmaster: bethanyumc.website@gmail.com



connect. grow. serve.

At Bethany we ...

Connect with God in community
Grow in our likeness to Jesus Christ
Serve our neighbors