



The Echo

February 2026 Edition

A Publication of Bethany United Methodist Church

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March Newsletter Article Deadline: February 17th, 2026
Please submit articles to the church office at office.bethany@gmail.com

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Our Mission is to make disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Our Vision is to
CONNECT with God in community,
GROW in our likeness to Jesus Christ,
SERVE our neighbors.

From the Pastor's Desk...

Dear Beloved Bethany Community,

I do not know about you but between the winter weather, full of freezing temps and the continuous newscycle of terrifying and devastating news, January has felt more like 100 days, rather than 31 days. I hope you all are staying safe, warm, and taking care of one another as we prepare for the potential of more snow. But for this month, I wanted to share with you a letter that was written by the Council of United Methodist Bishops regarding the tumultuous times that we are living in. I offer this letter as an opportunity to find words for what some of you may be feeling. I also recognize that all of us may not agree on immigration enforcement, or borders and that is okay. And I hope we all can agree that losing any person and people being treated inhumanely, is not the way God's sacred creation ought to treat one another. Friends, we as Americans and more importantly as Christ followers, are better than what we are witnessing at this moment in time.

Grace and peace to you in the name of Jesus Christ.

In recent days, events in Minnesota and beyond have caused deep grief, concern, and alarm across our connection. The use of lethal force in public spaces, the detention of naturalized citizens, members of our indigenous communities, children, documented and undocumented immigrants, and the treatment of other vulnerable persons have weighed heavily on the hearts of many in our church. These actions have unsettled communities, strained trust, and intensified fear among those already living at the margins.

Scripture reminds us that "when one part of the body suffers, we all suffer with them (I Corinthians 12:26). As a Connectional church, we are reminded that we are one body that cares for and needs each other. The whole body is suffering, right now, today! The violence being perpetrated on our streets, the loss of safety, and the inhumane treatment of God's children, are hurting us all. We cannot stay silent in the face of the evils of our day.

The United Methodist Church deplors the use of violence, fear, separation, and intimidation as a means of creating social order. Such means do not build beloved community. We reaffirm our longstanding commitment to the sacred worth of every person and to the way of peace taught and embodied by Jesus. We stand against the separation of children from their families. We detest the inhumane, evil actions that are perpetuated by governmental authorities.

Our Social Principles are clear: "We reject governmental use of threats, extortion, unlawful detentions, extrajudicial killings, and other forms of coercion to silence political opponents and those objecting to unlawful or immoral government policies and practices." They further affirm that the church has both the right and the responsibility to educate and equip its members to be advocates for justice in the wider world (§163D).

This is a moment that calls for prayerful courage to speak against actions that are bringing harm to our neighbors. This is our time to have an effectual faith that stands with those who are suffering. This is our faithful response to our baptismal vow that summons us into what is required of us "to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with our God" (Micah 6:8). We must continue to work for justice to help heal the brokenness in our communities and in the world.

We ask you to pray for peace and for justice. And we ask that we work together with our communities so that we can create a world where the sword is turned into plowshares, and the lion lays down with the lamb. May we be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ, who empowered by the Holy Spirit, do our part to bring comfort, just practices, and healing for all God's suffering people.

**In Christ's peace,
Bishop Tracy S. Malone
President, Council of Bishops
The United Methodist Church**

In Christ's Love,

Pastor Blaine



Prayer Lists...

Members: Tom and Jan Gorden, Barbara Long, Charlotte Saufley, Sandra and Rosa Campbell, Brian Shifflett, Dollie Wilfong, Jerry Sheets

Our Shut-ins: Audrey Bradshaw, Ramona Garrison, Carolyn Roller, Nadine Moore

Extended Family: Lisa Begoon Ruleman, Robbie Saufley's cousin; the family of Doug Ochletree, Robbie and Charlotte Saufley's neighbor; Robert Priest, friend and co-worker of Bill Kile, Donnie Fulton, son of Gerald and Jan Fulton; Shay Suter, Dale's friend's granddaughter, Beverley Miller, Jordan Dunsmore's mother; the Carter family.

We pray for all of our food Pantry Neighbors, all of our unhoused friends in our community living out in the cold, and for all those in our community and world.



We extend our deepest Christian sympathy to Joe and Tina Morris and family, as they grieve the loss of Tina's mother, Lois Baker who passed away on Monday, January 19th.

February Calendar...

- **Sunday Service: Every Sunday at 9:30 am**
- **Food Pantry: Mondays from 4:00 – 5:30 pm**
- **Lenten Book Study:** Mondays, February 23rd, March 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd, and 30th, at 10 am and 6 pm – Sunday School Classroom
- **SPPRC Meeting:** February 2nd at 6 pm – Sunday School Classroom
- **Young at Hearts:** February 3rd at 12 pm – The Galley – 2430 S. Main Street, Harrisonburg
- **Coffee Hours with Pastor Blaine:** February 5th from 9:30 am - Noon – Valley Pike
- **Fellowship Hall Reserved:** February 5th from 6 pm – 8 pm
- **Friday Family Game Night:** February 6th at 6:30 pm – Fellowship Hall
- **Women's Ministry:** Ice Cream "Social" – February 11th at 4 pm – Smiley's Ice Cream, Bridgewater
- **Youth Ice Skating:** February 15th from 2 – 3:30 pm – Generations Park, Bridgewater
- **Church Council Meeting:** February 17th at 6:30 pm – Fellowship Hall
- **March Echo Articles Due:** February 17th

- **Ash Wednesday Dinner, Project, Service:** February 18th beginning at 6 pm – Fellowship Hall/Sanctuary
- **Coffee Hours with Pastor Blaine:** February 19th from 3 – 5 pm - Valley Pike
- **Fellowship Hall Reserved:** from 6 – 8 pm
- **Donuts and Devotions:** February 21st at 8 am – Fellowship Hall
- **Young Adults Gathering:** February 22nd from 3 – 4:30 pm – Alpine Goat Brewery, Weyers Cave
- **Lenten Book Study:** February 23rd at 10 am and 6 pm – Sunday School Classroom



February Birthdays...

1 st	Jackie Dunsmore	13 th	Rebekah Castle
1 st	Megan Kile	14 th	Bradley Dunsmore
2 nd	Reid Hill	17 th	Ashley Oliver-Thomas
3 rd	Gary Ruleman	18 th	Laura Lucas
4 th	Ron Castle	21 st	Sandra Campbell
4 th	Pam Lynn	27 th	Charlotte Saufley
12 th	Robbie Saufley		

If your birthday is listed on the wrong day, or has been missed, please notify the office at office.bethany@gmail.com



ASH WEDNESDAY IS COMING! February 18th.....Please plan to be a part of our Ash Wednesday. On this special day that marks the beginning of the Lenten season, we will have dinner at 6PM followed by a short mission project. Our project will be putting together “Bags of Love”, gift bags that will be given to foster children and teens as they are transitioned into a foster home. This is a great opportunity to make a real difference in the lives of these young people who are experiencing a very difficult life event. We will be putting together bags for boy and girl children and teens. With suggestions from the Department of Social Services as well as some of our church family experts, we have put together some examples of the items you can donate in the Welcome Center. You can donate individual items, a group of items or make a monetary donation. We hope to put together multiple kits. A list of suggested items is available. Afterward, there will be a very brief service with the imposition of ashes in the sanctuary. Ash Wednesday is an opportunity to begin the preparation of our hearts and minds for Easter.

ASH WEDNESDAY DINNER.....We look forward to sharing a soup and sandwich dinner at our Ash Wednesday event on February 18th at 6 pm. Please sign up in Welcome Center to bring a crockpot of your favorite soup or sandwiches or a dessert. This is always a wonderful time of fellowship and a special evening for us to celebrate the beginning of Lent.



LENTEN BOOK STUDY.....Lent is almost here, which means our Lenten Book Study is about to get underway! This year we will be reading, "An Unlikely Lent" by Rachel Billups, and we will have our Lenten Book Studies on Mondays at 10 am and 6 pm beginning on Monday February 23rd! There will be a sign up sheet for books out on Sunday February 1st and books will be ordered on Thursday February 5th. If you are unable to sign-up, please contact Laura Lucas to get on the list before books are ordered.

LENT ACTIVITY BAGS.....We are providing activity bags for Lent. Each bag will have symbols, simple activities and a weekly reflection for individuals, couples or families. The hope is to offer meaningful reminders of Jesus' final journey to the cross for our redemption. The Lent bags will be available on Sunday, February 15th and at the Ash Wednesday event.

SPPRC MEETING.....There will be an SPPRC meeting on Monday, February 2nd at 6 pm in the Sunday School Classroom. All members are encouraged to attend.



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FUN AND FABULOUS FRIDAY GAME NIGHT.....The rescheduled date is February 6th. This gives you even more time to invite more friends to join in the fun! Bring your favorite game and a snack to share. Hot and cold drinks will be provided. This event for ALL ages is sure to be a fun and uplifting time during these cold, long winter days. If you don't want to play a game, just come to chat.

YOUNG ADULTS.....The Young Adult Gathering at The Alpine Goat Brewery that was postponed due to snow, will happen on Sunday February 22nd from 3-4:30 pm. We look forward to seeing our Young Adults and encourage them to invite their friends, as we spend time together building relationships and asking some real life questions!

WOMEN'S MINISTRY.....Women's Ministry members are presented the following Winter/Spring 2026 schedule. Open to all Bethany ladies and their guests. Please bring money for your purchases when a cost is indicated for the event. Posters with more details can be found throughout the church.

Feb 11: Smiley's Ice Cream in Bridgewater at 4:00 pm

March 16: Bible Study on Creation from 1 – 3:00 pm at Barbara Somer's home

March 26: Pizza and a journal activity at 6:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall

April 16: Dinner at the Galley at 6:00 pm, South Main Harrisonburg

April TBA: Lunch and local hike organized by Gail Reese

May 20: "Tasting the Bible" lesson and planting activity from 1 – 2:30 pm at the home of Nicole Carter

May 21: "Tasting the Bible" and planting activity at 6:00 pm at the home of Elizabeth Williams

JOIN THE PRAISE AND WORSHIP TEAMS!..... Ever thought about joining? Does it look scary?



Believe us, it's not! It's a great time to come check out being a part. We will be starting to practice some new music soon. We have a lot of fun together and it will be even more fun with you! If you are interested please talk to Dale Roller or any member of the singers or band.



SUNDAY MORNING REFRESHMENTS! WE NEED YOU!..... Sunday morning refreshments are greatly enjoyed by many, young and old. This hospitality is part of being a welcoming church and a time for the church family to visit with one another. We need folks to take one Sunday a month to put out refreshments and clean up after the service. We have had the 2nd and 4th Sundays taken! Thank you to those folks! We still need someone(s) for the 1st and 3rd Sundays. You do not need to provide food unless you wish to do so. There are always snack items available. Making coffee not included. Paper products are always provided. Concerned you can't commit to a specific Sunday every month? Contact info for all who volunteer to assist will be provided so that if you need to trade Sundays that can be easily arranged and there are always a few folks willing to fill in at the last minute. Sign up individually, with your family OR get a partner or another family and split the set up/clean up if you choose. We are trying to make this as easy as possible. We need to relieve the folks who have been filling in, but are also responsible for other things on Sunday mornings. Please consider this once a month commitment that will be a great blessing to all! We hope to start this schedule in February.



THE APPLE DUMPLING SQUAD IS BACK!..... On Wednesday, March 4th the Apple Dumpling Squad makes a return! We will be making apple dumplings starting at noon. We need peelers, dumpling makers and wrappers, plus some dish washers! There's a job for all. Please give an hour or two and assist in making this project a success. The cost of the dumplings will be \$5 each. Forms will be available for you to take to school or work for larger orders. We will make 500 dumplings. A list of ingredients to be donated is in the Welcome Center and we need flat boxes for delivery. Proceeds will go to our Friends of Barnabas Mission Trip in August, and this will be the team's primary fundraiser. It's a delicious treat for a great mission. Thank you for your support!



YOUTH ICE SKATING..... On Sunday February 15th, the youth are invited to the Bridgewater Ice Skating Rink – Generations Park for a time of fun and fellowship, as we are renting out the rink from 2:00–3:30 pm. We will cover the rink time and skate rental, as we hope our youth will invite their friends! There is a signup sheet at the Welcome Center.

YOUTH AND CHILDREN ACTIVITIES..... To encourage involvement with our youth and children, the church office would like to hear from our parents. For our youth parents and youth please send your fall schedules as they come available to our youth director, Kaitlin Bower at (kaitlinbower@veronaumc.com). If you are willing to share your children's fall schedule please send to the church office at (office.bethany@gmail.com).

YOUNG AT HEARTS 2026 LUNCHEON SCHEDULE

Tuesday, February 3 2026 - The Galley Diner - 2430 S. Main Street, Harrisonburg

Tuesday, March 3 2026 - The Thomas House- 222 Main Street, Dayton

Tuesday, April 7 2026 - Kathy's - 705 Greenville Avenue, Staunton

Tuesday, May 5 2026 - The Galley Diner - 2430 S. Main Street, Harrisonburg

Tuesday, June 2 2026 - Cline Community Center @ VMRC

Tuesday, July 7 2026 - The Thomas House - 222 Main Street, Dayton

Tuesday, August 4 2026 - O'Neills - 221 University Blvd, Harrisonburg

Tuesday, September 1 2026 - Wood Grill - 1711 Reservoir Street, Harrisonburg

Tuesday, October 6 2026 - TBD

Tuesday, November 3 2026 - The Thomas House - 222 Main Street, Dayton

Tuesday, December 8 2026 - Kathy's - 705 Greenville Avenue, Staunton

FINANCIAL UPDATE FROM JANE ELKINS, FINANCE CHAIR....There is so much to be thankful for at Bethany. Our bills are paid, nothing major is broken, and we have money in the bank. Your generosity and faithfulness make that possible, and we are deeply grateful.

As we look ahead to 2026, there is one important concern we want everyone to be aware of. Our proposed budget for 2026 is \$242,000, up from \$228,000 in 2025. It's a significant increase, but a necessary one.

A major part of this increase comes from something we cannot control: health insurance costs. In the United Methodist Church, congregations pay for their pastor's health insurance. Next year, Bethany's share will rise by \$7,296. It's hard to believe, but the total cost of the pastor's health insurance is now \$19,920 per year, and that does not include the pastor's own contribution. The rest of the budget increase is due to salaries and apportionments—expenses that are essential to the life and ministry of the church.

In 2025, giving totaled \$211,000, which was less than we budgeted. However, because we were careful with spending, we ended the year \$1,204 ahead. It is always a blessing when we can keep spending in line with giving, and we are committed to continuing that stewardship.

Looking to 2026, we expect expenses to rise by at least \$14,000. These are not costs we can delay or avoid. To keep our budget balanced, giving will need to increase by about 7%.

The good news is that Bethany has funds set aside for rainy days, and we are in no danger of being unable to pay our bills in 2026. But we do need to be mindful that costs continue to rise, and there is no indication that will change.

For those who are not currently giving, we ask you to prayerfully consider beginning. For those who give faithfully year after year, we ask you to prayerfully consider increasing your giving if you are able. Bethany is a generous church in so many ways beyond the budget. You support the pastor's discretionary fund, the food pantry, Friends of Barnabas, and countless other ministries. You provide food, supplies, and volunteer labor. You repair things around the church so we don't have to hire contractors. Your gifts—financial and otherwise—make a real difference.

We are grateful for all you do. With your continued support, Bethany will remain strong, faithful, and ready to serve in 2026 and beyond.

MISSIONS UPDATE... by LORI MOONEY

February means Happy Valentine's Day. Spend it with your loved ones if they are close by or give them a call to tell them you love them if they aren't so close.

We are helping Jackie with the Ash Wednesday project. We are collecting items for our "Bags of Love" that will be given to give kids or teens that will be transitioning into a foster home. There is a list of items and examples set

up in the front hall. You can donate items or give money to us to purchase the items. Please be sure to mark any money donations that you want it to go to Ash Wednesday project or “Bags of Love.” We hope to put together several bags to donate to Social Services for them to give out. Ash Wednesday is February 18th. Please plan to attend this special service. We will have soup and sandwiches for supper together, help with the mission project, and then receive the imposition of ashes.

Mission spotlight of the month: Food Pantry. Every Monday night, we have a food pantry downstairs for our neighbors. We roughly serve about 50 families each week with this worthwhile event. It is an amazing outpouring of love. We get to know our neighbors, and they get to know us. They receive some food to help them get through the week and sometimes they receive a little more. If you would like to help with the Food Pantry or just come by to check it out, please contact Pat Lynn. We are there every Monday from 3:30, open at 4 and close down at 5:30pm.

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

Lori Mooney, 540-820-7394, Brownsugarcookie@yahoo.com
Sarah Simmons, 540-292-0956, sarahsimmons4@aol.com

2025 FOOD PANTRY UPDATE by KATHY FRIZZELLE

THANK YOU for all you do to help feed our neighbors! TOGETHER we can make a difference!

For the last 15+ years, our food pantry – through a partnership with the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank (BRAFB) as well as through the generosity of our volunteers, our financial supporters, and our prayer warriors --has blessed many through the immediate meeting of physical needs, in addition to meeting spiritual needs through compassion, friendship, and prayer. A number of our neighbors have even been encouraged enough to begin attending church again!

With your help...For 2025, the Bethany Food Pantry was able to serve: A total of 9500 individuals:

0-17 years	3465
18-59 years	4664
60+ years	1371.

The reasons our neighbors find themselves needing assistance at our food pantry are myriad, but so many offer humbly that they never dreamed to find themselves in need and unable to adequately provide for their families. Their tearful gratitude is heart wrenching at times!

THANK YOU also to those of you who have been helping to provide for a real need that we are *not* able to obtain through the BRAFB -- diapers of all sizes and diaper wipes. Did you know that...

- 1 in 3 US families reports experiencing diaper need.
- 5 million children in the U.S. aged three or younger live in poor or low-income families.
- Infants require up to 12 diapers per day, toddlers about 8.
- Disposable diapers can cost \$70 to \$100 per month per baby.
- No state or federal child safety-net program allocates dollars specifically for the purchase of diapers.

- SNAP and WIC are not available to purchase diapers. They are nutrition-only programs administered by the Department of Agriculture.
- Without transportation, buying diapers at a convenience store rather than a large “big box” store can significantly increase the monthly cost of diapers.
- Most childcare centers, even free and subsidized facilities require parents to provide a day’s supply of disposable diapers.



*Babies without clean diapers are exposed to more potential health risks and are less likely accepted into daycares, leaving parents unable to work outside their home. This is an incredible opportunity to follow the commandments of Jesus: to love your neighbor as yourself (Gal. 5:14); to carry each other’s burdens to fulfill the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2); and when we “feed the least of these, it is as though we did it for Him” (Matt. 25:40). Never underestimate the difference YOU can make in the lives of others!

For anyone interested in volunteering on Mondays at the food pantry, or to offer financial support, or even to just find out more about the food pantry operation, please contact Mrs. Pat Lynn (PatLynn42@yahoo.com) or Kathy Frizzelle (540-421-0941).

