

The Church Mouse

July 2026 Volume 26, Issue 7



The Flag and the Cross

I grew up on a farm with a flag pole centered amidst a circular bed of flowers situated in front my grandparent's home. Old Glory would be flown each day on a pole which my grandfather had fashioned in the garage. I've always been patriotic and am not sure where that sentiment had its origin but wonder if it was seeing that flag flying so majestically on Broadview Farm.

The years went by. I fell in love with American History in eighth grade and during high school felt called to join the Marine Corps upon graduation and years later while a student at Iowa State I noticed the Army ROTC students as they ran by my dorm and wanted to be out there with them. During this time a pencil sketch of the current president hung in a central place in my room and I participated in the ISU Young Republicans (as well as the Dairy Science Club).

As a teacher, I was blessed to teach Civics and especially enjoyed the short lesson I taught on the Pledge of Allegiance as it touched my patriotic side in a meaningful way. I recently listened to a segment on a podcast called The Best People with Nicolle Wallace where she interviewed Ken Burns, the iconic producer of historic documentaries like The Band of Brothers and The American Revolution. The interview with Burns, that aired on May 18, was a comfort and I've listened to it a few times on Spotify. Theirs was an intimate conversation about how "failures and successes inform each other and nudge the country forward." "Political turmoil is a hallmark of our democracy," says Burns.

The people of Bethel have been invited to participate in a book study this month with the folks at the West Union United Methodist Church where "The Flag and the Cross: White Christian Nationalism and the Threat to American Democracy" by Gorski and Perry will be studied. This learning opportunity, hosted by the UMC's Church in Society Team, will meet on Wednesdays at 9:00 am on July 8, 15, 22 and 29. Participants will need to purchase their own copy of this book while the study materials will be provided. Please consider joining me, at the United Methodist Church, as we nurture our understanding of this timely topic that should not be overlooked: "The concept of white

Christian nationalism encompasses the many ways bigotry, prejudice, xenophobia, patriarchy, and racism show up in Christian guise.”

Please join me on Sunday, July 5th at 9:30 am at the Rec Center where we will gather with others, especially the folks of the West Union United Methodist Church and St. Paul's United Methodist Church in Elgin, for worship and a time of fellowship. This will provide us a special way to mark our nation's anniversary as we give thanks to the King of Kings, Jesus the Christ who is our Lord and Savior.

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We are working with a new program for the newsletter. This is a work in progress; please be patient with us. The electronic version of our newsletter is much easier to read. We think you would like the email/electronic version much better than the printed one. Please let us know if you are willing to switch to the electronic version if you have requested a printed copy.

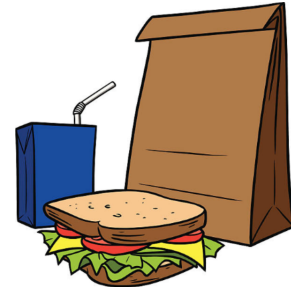
Volunteer opportunity

A summer program “Tigerhawk Meals”

Began June 1st here at Bethel Presbyterian Church

- Volunteers are needed to hand out the sack-type “Grab and Go” lunches to the kids, 11:30 - 12:00 a.m. The meals are packed fresh each day, we start at 10:30, so your time commitment for a day is about one-and-a-half to 2 hours.

- **You may help out as much or as little as your schedule allows.**



Contact Julie Aanes, Mission Team, for more information.

Session Roster Bethel Presbyterian Church 2026

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EXTENDED TABLE OFFERING

The gifts you bring to the Extended Table offering that are received on Communion Sunday are now supporting the Open Hands Food Pantry in West Union.

The extended table offering items requested are: **cake mixes, brownies mixes, cookie mixes, cans of spaghettios, spaghetti, and ravioli (for kids to eat while parents are at work), deodorants, sunscreens and gluten free foods.**

Thanks so much for your offerings to support Bethel's mission to reach out in our community!

This is one simple way we can share with those in need. We are called to be generous as God has been overwhelmingly generous to us!



On July 12th there will be an Ice Cream and Homemade Pie Social from 1 to 4 pm at the Lima Church. Free-Will offering.

CELEBRATIONS

Congratulations to our Bethel family members as they celebrate birthdays and anniversaries this month!

JULY 1 Randy & Mary Ruroden (A)
 JULY 2 Tom Buresh
 JULY 5 Galen Smith
 JULY 18 Dean & Teri Brockway (A)
 JULY 19 Ann Bruso
 Marissa Post
 JULY 22 Sue Updegraff
 JULY 23 Dave & Julie Aanes (A)
 Lee & Linda Johansen (A)
 JULY 24 Linda Johansen
 JULY 25 Robin Bostrom
 JULY 29 Dave & Kelli Lau (A)





Diaconate will meet
July 8th at 9:30.
Sue Updegraff will be hosting.

"They will receive their quarterly offering following worship on Sunday, July 12th. We appreciate your generous support of our mission.



Committed to
nurturing faith,
supporting mission,
working for justice,
and building community.

Sewing Circle will meet on Thursday, July 9th and July 23rd at 9:30 until 3:00



Members and friends of Bethel who seek healing and wholeness in their lives are kept in prayer.

Together we are remembering: Cathy Bemiss, Teri Brockway, Don Durscher, Sarah Updegraff Murray, Kirk Bruso, Rose Marie Knight (Julie Larson's mom), Baby McCoy and John Falb.

Stoney Brook – Kate Ewing, Kathy Meyer

Good Samaritan Center – Peggi Pape

Eastern Star Decorah – Doyle Gorden

Maple Crest – Tex Heyer

Copper Creek – Sandy Schnor

LAYLEADERS

05 In the Park
12 Martha Bartenhagen
19 Stephen Bartenhagen
26 LeAnn Popenhagen

POWER POINT

05 In the Park
12 Carrie Lee
19 Julie Aanes
26 Mark Bostrom

FELLOWSHIP TREATS

05 In the Park
12 Martha Bartenhagen



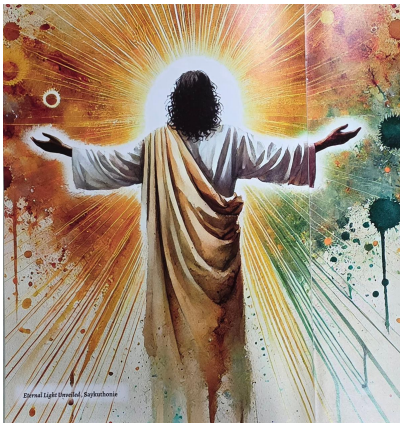
19 Nancy & Deb
26 LeAnn Popenhagen

COMMUNION

Communion will be served on Sunday, July 5 at worship in the park . Dawn Jacobsen and Ken Popenhagen will be servers.

Session took the following action at their meeting on
14 June 2026:

- Opened with devotion and prayer led by Linda Johansen;
- Shared with each other our Joys and Concerns;
- Approved minutes from Session's meeting on 17 May 2026;
- Received Treasurer's Report for May 2026;
- Pastor Lori 's reported on JKP's meeting held 19 May 2026;
- Heard that Pastor Stacey Nalean-Carlson will lead worship on 28 June;
- Heard that Pastor Lori will attend Synod school 26-31 July; Tom Buresh will lead worship on 2 August, and communion will be served 9 August;
- Heard that the summer meal program is going well;
- Heard that the women's Bible study is continuing to meet at Stoney Brook;
- Heard that members are invited to attend a study on the book "The Flag and the Cross" at United Methodist Church led by the Church and Society Team on Wednesday mornings at 9:00 a.m. from 8-29 July;
- Heard that ISG, Inc. will provide structural engineering services to evaluate the bell tower and make recommendations for repairs; Aaron Grimes will begin repairs to windows this month;
- Session will not meet in July; the next regular session meeting will be held on 9 August;
- The meeting was closed with prayer led by Rev. Kleppe.



Women's Bible Study
Stoney Brook ~ July 16 ~ 10:00 AM
Lesson 6: Finding Our Joy in Christ: "I Will Say It Again, Rejoice"

Main Idea: Christian joy emerges from a deep belief that God is good and God reigns forever.

To think about: Paul writes, "Do not worry" (Phil 4:6). Could it be that a definition of joy is the absence of worry?

Noisy Bucket offering for June was \$56.27. It will be collected again July 26th.
Thank you for your contributions to this ministry.



Compassion

"We can't heal the world today, but we can begin with a voice of compassion, a heart of love, an act of kindness." -Mary Davis

To be compassionate is to be Christ-like; it is to live out one's faith and it's understood compassion may be nurtured. The following activities are a prayerful way to develop a more compassionate countenance.

Loving-Kindness Meditation

1. Sit quietly and bring to mind someone you love easily (a close friend, a family member, or maybe a pet).
2. Silently repeat: *"May you be happy. May you be healthy. May you be safe. May you live with ease."*
3. Gradually extend this meditation to a neutral person (someone you barely know), and repeat: *May you be happy. May you be healthy. May you be safe. May you live with ease.* Next, move on to include a difficult person: *May you be happy. May you be healthy. May you be safe. May you live with ease.*

Practicing this form of meditation is to shape compassionate muscle memory.

Another compassion developing activity is:

The "Just Like Me" Reflection

When you're around someone — on the street, at work, or someone you're in conflict with — silently run through these phrases:

- *"Just like me, this person wants to be happy."*
- *"Just like me, this person has known pain and loss."*
- *"Just like me, this person has made mistakes."*

This prayerful meditation works especially well with people you find annoying or easy to dismiss.

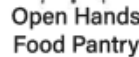
To learn about the PC (USA)'s stance on current issues and for guidance on what you can do...

The Presbyterian office of Public Witness (OPW) is the public policy information and advocacy office of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). its task is to advocate, and help the church to advocate, the social witness perspectives and policies of the General Assembly. The church has a long history of applying these biblically and theologically based insights to issues that affect the public - maintaining a public policy ministry in the nation's capital since 1946. The Office of Public Witness staff members visit national policymakers and their staffs, write letters, make phone calls and occasionally testify before Congress or facilitate the testimony of church leaders. This involvement helps to clarify the moral and ethical issues at stake in public policy. The goal is to make clear to people in government what the General Assembly is concerned about, why, and what can be done to respond to those concerns. Ministry in Washington offers a chance to translate the church's deep convictions about justice, peace, and freedom from words into reality. The political process is where decisions are made

Find the OPW online by searching for Presbyterian Office of Public Witness. You may also join Lori at Bethel on the 4th Wednesdays of each month at 11:00 to participate.

James
Lena
Cheryl
Phil & Deb
Linda
Cyndi
Linda A
Zachary
Rich
Liz

Your continued support is never
taken for granted - Thank you so much
for your kindness -



Fatty
& Volunteers

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3	4
5 Worship in the Park	6	7	8	9 9:30 Sewing Circle	10	11
12 10 Worship w/ Diaconate offering Fellowship	13 9:30 Diaconate	14	15	16 10:00 Bible Study at Stoney Brooke	17	18
19 10 Worship Fellowship	20	21	22 11 online OPW presentation	23 9:30 Sewing Circle	24	25
26 10 Worship Fellowship Lori is attending Synod School this week.	27	28	29	30	31	

Our VISION—

Our Vision is for this Body of Christ to be a Community of Faith called...
Bethel—A people and a place where God is made known!

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