

BETHEL

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

A People and a Place where God is made Known

The Church Mouse

September 2026 Volume 26, Issue 9



New Life In Christ

Remembering our baptism at the beginning of worship is a liturgical act that is important to me. I have shared with you, more than once or twice, the gift I received when I made a definitive claim on my baptismal identity. I was serving with the Marines at Camp Pendleton in a battalion with a reputation for 'not being the Marine Corps.' Now, don't quote me as making that remark, but the person who said it to me (more than once in a whisper) was a Master Gunnery Sergeant. Life in Maintenance Battalion was a slog- even for the chaplain and remembering my identity as a child of God liberating. I want you to experience the gift of new life that comes when we remember our baptism in a deeply meaningful way. We will continue beginning our worship with a thanksgiving for baptism as it helps us internalize this gift of our loving God.

I have been busy today preparing for a trip to Monterey where Gregg and I will meet our newest family member, a not so little Hans Soren born on August 12 and weighing in at 8 lbs 12 oz. I cannot wait to get my hands on this little one- I won't kiss him because that's not safe for an infant nor will I take him up in my arms before changing the clothes I wore to the airport and have a shower. I really am worried about all the germs I will be exposed to on the flight.

We get exposed to so much that is less than helpful or life-giving. I remember one day when a colleague, Gary Halva, commented that he didn't watch tv shows where people were struggling. I was preparing to teach a young writer's conference session using the theme of a show you might remember, 'Rescue 911.' I often reflect on Gary's comment and have practiced his approach when I find I have surrounded myself with too much tragedy, the kind captured on shows like Dateline and Law and Order and so many others.

I wonder what you surround yourself with on a somewhat regular basis that nurtures your soul. Are you nurturing your spirit with walks in nature, gardening, farming, or reading? Do you spend time with friends or enjoy sitting in quiet solitude? Is there a devotional that you read each day or have a habit of reading scripture? Maybe it's going to the theater that provides an escape; I'll catch my daughter-in-law's next show on the 24th and know taking in the talent on the stage will bring a smile to my face.

I want to encourage you to practice good self-care as you take time just for yourself. I want to request that you remember your baptism each day. Give thanks to God for claiming you as God's beloved, take a few slow deep breaths and smile as you utter a few simple words, "I am baptized."

I pray September gets off to a wonderful start for you and that the changing of the season reminds you of God's presence- always with us- always bringing new life in ways that are simply miraculous.

Peace, Grandma Kleppe
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Do justice. Love kindness. Walk humbly.



A recent news article will be discussed as we ground ourselves in prayer and scripture. Bring a friend! You'll be on your way by 1:00 p.m. Oh, and bring your lunch, too. Lori will provide Greek yogurt and beverage.

These materials are developed with mainline Christian thought. Senior Editor is a PC(USA) Teaching Elder. Material is 'The Wired.' Check it out on line for more information.

Session took the following action at their meeting on 09 August 2026:

- Opened with devotion and prayer led by Stephen Bartenhagen;
- Shared with each other our Joys and Concerns;
- Approved minutes from Session's meeting on 14 June 2026;
- Received Treasurer's Report for June and July 2026;
- Heard Pastor Lori 's report on Synod School held 26 to 31 July 2026;
- Elected Stephen as Bethel's commissioner for regular meeting of John Knox Presbytery on 15 August 2026;
- Approved purchase of approximately twenty \$10 gift cards and will give them to North Fayette Valley bus drivers;
- Heard that the summer meal program is going well and Mission team will be giving \$10 gift cards to the volunteers in recognition of their help this summer;
- Approved receiving a special offering on September 6th for people affected by the recent fire at AgriStar in Postville;
- Heard John Knox Presbytery's Council approved a \$10,000 donation also for the people affected by AgriStar's fire;
- Approved Pastor Lori plans to offer a weekly study group which will apply Faith to what is happening in the world;
- Discussed the report from ISG, Inc. regarding their evaluation and recommendations on the bell tower, but tabled action to the September meeting;
- The meeting was closed with prayer led by Rev. Kleppe.



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: Gluten free foods, paper towels, kleenex, shaving cream, shampoo, mandarin oranges and any garden items you might have. The pantry doesn't have access to fresh produce while Waterloo is reconstructing their program.
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!

CELEBRATIONS

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

SEPT 4- Christina Bodensteiner
SEPT 9- Mike Schroyer
SEPT 15- Marshall Brandt
Galen & Cindy Ira-Smith (A)
SEPT 21 - Mary Ruroden
SEPT 25 Bill Thom





Diaconate will meet
September 14th at 9:30.
Nancy Dunt will be hosting.



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

Sewing Circle will meet on
Thursday September 10th and September 24th 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) and Ken Popenhagen.

Stoney Brook – Kate Ewing (On hospice)

The Highlands - Kathy Meyer

Good Samaritan Center – Peggi Pape

Eastern Star Decorah – Doyle Gorden

Maple Crest – Tex Heyer

Copper Creek – Sandy Schnor

LAY-LEADERS

06 Stephen Bartenhagen
13 LeAnn Popenhagen
20 Greg Kleppe
27 Robin Bostrom

POWER POINT

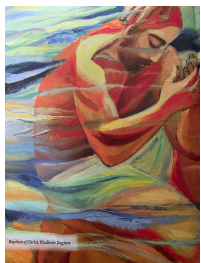
06 Robin Bostrom
13 Dave Aanes
20 Carrie Lee
27 Julie Aanes

FELLOWSHIP TREATS

06 Martha Bartenhagen
13 LeAnn Popenhagen
20 Ann Semeck
27 Deb Gambrell & Nancy Dunt

COMMUNION

Communion will be served on Sunday, September 6th . Julie Aanes and Carrie Lee will be servers.



Women's Bible Study
Remembering Jesus' Baptism
Thursday, September 17 10:00 AM

Main Idea: In baptism we are identified as God's own children charge to serve faithfully, justly, and lovingly.

Scripture: Luke 13:1-22, Matthew 3:1-17, Mark 1:1-11, John 1:19-34

Think About: Reflect on a time when you were at one with yourself and with God, when you had certain clarity about who you were and your place in the world. Where did your sense of identity and your sureness in it come from?

Noisy Bucket offering for August was \$29.50. It will be collected again September 27th.
Thank you for your contributions to this ministry.





JOHN KNOX PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN FALL WORKSHOP

Saturday, September 19, 2026 at Grace Presbyterian Church, 222 E Broadway St., Winona, MN

Our speaker will be Sharon Falck from First Presbyterian Church, Grinnell, Iowa, about their program that provides sewing machines, materials and training to native American reservations in South Dakota Presbytery. Sharon currently serves as moderator of Presbyterian Women in Des Moines Presbytery. We will be collecting fabric and notions (and sewing machines?) to donate. An official invitation with more information will be sent out in August but please mark your calendars now! We'll look forward to seeing you in September.



Thank you to everyone for supporting the livestream of John O. Falb's Celebration of life on August 21st. The service was recorded and will be posted on Bethel's social media accounts.

Looking Ahead - Sarah Uppdegraf Murray will be our speaker on October 4th. She is a wonderful speaker and so uplifting. Please mark your calendar so you don't miss the opportunity.



Hello friends!

The West Union Church and Society Team will be hosting another book study on Wednesdays at 9am, September 16-October 7. The book is "Subversive Witness" by Dominique Dubois Gilliard. It was recommended by the umcijustice.org "Sacred Votes" guide as a way for congregations to discuss ways in which a church can be a subversive witness in today's society, particularly in addressing issues of privilege, power, justice and liberation, as modeled in biblical stories and characters.

Participants should procure their own books. (FYI-I found mine on Thriftbooks, used, for \$7. I also see some new on the Cokesbury website.) Also, read the Introduction and Chap.1 prior to first meeting.

Thank you much!

Karen E. Keele Kober

Dear Bethel Presbyterian Family,

The 2026 TigerHawk Meal Site has come to a close. The 5,410 daily meals and 1,187 weekend meals (Back Pac) we handed out met the needs of many area children.

We had a terrific group of volunteers putting in 779 hours of dedicated labor. This year we again had 13 individuals who worked diligently to provide this wonderful program for the area children. Socializing along with our work provided great satisfaction to all involved. We added four new volunteers and lose a few to declining health.

The children of the area and I would like to say thank you for your generosity in sponsoring this wonderful program.

Donna Blue



Removing Medical Debt in 2026

Once again this year, Bethel Presbyterian Church, will raise money to support a Presbytery-wide ministry to cancel medical debt. John Knox Presbytery's mission partner, Undue Medical Debt, is able to buy large bundles of medical debt from collection agencies and hospitals for pennies on the dollar. This allows every dollar we contribute to do the work of at least \$100 and greatly increases the impact of our ministry!

It's called The Starfish Campaign because, even though we cannot help every family carrying medical debt, we can still help thousands. In only four years, this ministry has cancelled close to \$16 million of medical debt for 14,530 families. To those we are able to help, our ministry means the world. They receive a letter in the mail from Undue Medical Debt announcing the good news. A recent letter received by Undue Medical Debt tells the story. Cheryl, a nurse from South Dakota shared, "I've spent my life taking care of the people I love. Having this debt erased felt like someone finally taking care of me."

Families struggle under the weight of medical debt for years. It's a constant source of anxiety and stress as they try unsuccessfully to balance providing basic needs and paying their debt. When that debt is removed, everything changes. Lives are turned around. Hope is restored where no hope previously existed. Tears of joy flow freely. This is what our participation in the Starfish Campaign accomplishes.

Please give generously. Even a small gift will have a huge impact. A \$10 contribution will cancel \$1,000. This year's fundraising efforts will culminate on Sunday, October 18 but donations can be made at any time. Simply mark your gift "The Starfish Campaign"



KID KITS

previously know as School Kits

Again this year the Sewing Circle and the Mission Team will be making and filling Kids Kits for Church World Service.

Items are needed by September 6.

Items needed for one Kit:

Box of 12 colored pencils
Two pocket folder
Glue stick
1 pair of Blunt-tipped scissors
ONE - 70 page wide ruled spiral bound notebook
30 cm/12" ruler
Hand held pencil sharper
Large pink eraser
6 new, unsharpened pencils
Box of 24 crayons
Optional: pencil pouch

Please only buy the items that have been listed. Make no add-ons or substitutions as they cannot be used.



**PRESBYTERIAN
DISASTER
ASSISTANCE**

OUT OF CHAOS, HOPE

2025 At A Glance



Evicting The American Dream* premiere by Alex Simon



Rich Copley



Clean water project in Haiti



Ukrainian refugee support

HEKS

QUICK FIGURES

- **\$6.3 million** granted in **36 countries** and **28 U.S. states and Puerto Rico.**
- **147 National Response Team members** deployed to **42 presbyteries.**
- Hosted more than **2,000 volunteers**, donating volunteer hours valued at over **\$1.6 million.** There are currently **13 host sites.**
- **\$1.7 million** in Migration Accompaniment Ministry grants.
- With CWS, assisted in the collection and distribution of more than **141,000 Gift of the Heart Kits and blankets.**
- PDA's **6th documentary**, *Evicting the American Dream*, premiered in Dayton, OH and screened with community partners in **19 cities.** A resource guide is online and the film is available to stream on Amazon Prime.
- Reached more than **800 individuals** engaged in disaster response and recovery through Emotional and Spiritual Care programs.



Learn more:
PCUSA.ORG/PDA



@PDACares



@PDACares



@CounterStoriesProductions

@PDAVolunteers

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2 Lunch with Lori 12:00 - 1:00 Blood Drive 12:30-5:30	3	4	5
6 10 Worship w/the Lord's Supper Fellowship Session Meets	7	8	9 Lunch with Lori 12:00 - 1:00	10 9:30 Sewing Circle	11	12
13 10 Worship Fellowship	14 9:30 Diaconate	15 Mission Meeting 5:30	16 Lunch with Lori 12:00 - 1:00	17 10:00 Bible Study at Stoney Brook	18	19

20 10 Worship Fellowship	21	22	23 Lunch with Lori 12:00 - 1:00	24 9:30 Sewing Circle	25	26
27 10 Worship Fellowship	28	29	30 Lunch with Lori 12:00 - 1:00			

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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