

Heard through

The OPEN DOOR

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Bethel Begins a New Chapter Of Loving & Serving Jesus



Bethel Wildwood Church – a new name for our beloved Bethel church was approved at the April 11 Board Meeting as a step towards Bethel's independence from the United Methodist Church. Bethel is not turning away from Methodism, and remains committed to be a Bible based church as always. Pastor Jeff Fothergill has assured our church family that they do not need to expect changes at Bethel. We plan to continue to be the warm and welcoming Methodist church that we have always been. We will continue to gather for worship each Sunday, to sing praises to our Lord, and to share our joys and concerns with our friends in church. We will pray together and will support each other week after week.

Our Pastor and Board see it as a revitalization. We are the same Bethel that has served the people of West County for more than a century. Now, we can find new ways to serve our Wildwood neighbors. We can still assist the Circle of Concern and can connect with other churches and their projects. "More outreach to the community" is the vision for Bethel as seen by both Pastor Jeff and Board President Don Walsh. Pastor Jeff says we need to be "more outward focused." By not having the obligation of paying apportionments to the UMC, Bethel will have the resources to take on new projects. Dr. Walsh suggested the Mission Gate Prison Ministry and the New Life Evangelistic Center as possible places where Bethel could serve. There is even a need to teach people to read. Also, Bethel could partner with the Wildwood Historical Society for special events as we have done in the past.

As we all know, Bethel has a special place in West County history. We were the only church on the Route 66 Scavenger Hunt sponsored by the City of Wildwood in April. We want to continue to spread the word about Bethel's history and hospitality, with an open invitation to join us for church service.

Bethel Begins a New Chapter Of Loving & Serving Jesus (continued)

So, How and Why Did We Get to this Point?

The Methodist Church is at a crossroads in America and every Methodist church in the country is dealing with changes. In an unprecedented move, our own Bethel Methodist Church decided to disaffiliate with the United Methodist Church.

On Sunday, March 26, Bethel members voted 37-8 to disaffiliate after being presented with many changes that are expected to take place with the UMC. We were informed that over the past several years, more and more progressive proposals are being introduced at the Methodist general conference meeting. These would include changing the UMC Book of Discipline to allow same-sex individuals not only to be married in the Methodist church, but also to be ordained as ministers and even bishops for the church.



These proposals have brought about much controversy in the general conference assembly, but they are not the only matters of contention. Various other progressive proposals have been introduced that contradict traditional Methodist beliefs. Do we believe the scriptures to be the true Word of God, or does it simply contain some of God's words? Will we continue to hold on to the pillars of our faith or will we be subject to new interpretations of the Bible?

The Methodist General Conference has been wrestling with the conflicts between conservative and liberal views for several years. In 2016, there was an attempt to come to an agreement on the issue. When no agreement could be reached, they decided to put together a Task Force to address the situation.

The General Conference could not meet in 2020 because of the Covid pandemic, so the issue has been on the back burner and many churches seem to think they see the writing on the wall. They were ready to make the decision to leave the UMC and go out on their own. That is why a provision was made that gives churches the option to disaffiliate with the UMC. Individual churches must hold a vote of its members, requiring a 2/3 majority of the members to make the decision to disaffiliate. Then the members must decide if they want to become an independent church or if they want to join with another Methodist congregation that identifies itself as "orthodox Methodist."

Currently, there have been more than 2,600 Methodist churches in the United States that have voted to disaffiliate.

Bethel Begins a New Chapter Of Loving & Serving Jesus (continued)

Bethel Has More Decisions to Make

Now that Bethel has voted to disaffiliate from the UMC, the next step was to decide what the name of our church would be going forward. This is a requirement because Bethel will be working with the UMC to receive the deed for our building and property, and we must have a legal corporation name. The Bethel Board of Directors considered several suggestions for the name change, and by a unanimous vote, the members present at the board meeting agreed upon **Bethel Wildwood Church**.

Another requirement is that Bethel must pay a certain amount of money to the UMC to cover basically two years of future apportionments and a determined allotment to cover pensions for retired pastors who served Bethel in the past. This payment must be made soon so that Bethel can take possession of the property deed. The Bethel Board of Directors says the church is financially able to meet these requirements. Ownership of our church building is important to Bethel members, and there is some question that if the congregation delayed a decision to disaffiliate with the UMC now, the opportunity to have the deed turned over might expire. Bethel will maintain ownership of the cemetery.

Any decision to join another “orthodox Methodist” conference does not have to be made right away. The Global Methodist Church is one of those currently being organized to give Methodist churches an alternative to the UMC. The GMC would actually be a new denomination of “traditional Methodists.”

When the question of staying with or leaving the UMC emerged, Bethel’s Board made every effort to inform our congregation of the dilemma. They invited two speakers to Bethel on Sunday, March 12, to present different sides of the issue. Jon Thompson, UMC Conference Superintendent, spoke about staying with the UMC. He emphasized the advantages of being connected with the conference for appointment of pastors, and being part of a bigger picture globally. He said that when a church goes out on its own, you will be responsible for finding your pastor and for all your church expenditures. The second speaker was Cindy Evans, secretary of the Missouri Chapter of the Wesleyan Covenant Association. The goal of this association is to inform Methodist churches of the decisions they need to reach and then to assist them if they decide to split from the UMC. Ms. Evans said the split in the Methodist Church has been coming to a boiling point for several years. Both Jon Thompson and Ms. Evans asked Bethel members to “do their homework” on the issue, and to pray about their decisions.

One important historical fact about the history of the Methodist church in America is that this is not the first time that Methodists have had their differences. In the 1840’s, Methodists were clearly split on the issue of slavery in America. This caused a split between churches in the north and south. The Methodist Church became the United Methodist Church in 1968 when the Methodist Church merged with the United Brethren Church. Bethel was founded in 1858. It is more than 165 years old and has withstood the Civil War, and a century of wars and times of trouble. Bethel looks forward with renewed faith to find new ways to share our hospitality and invite our community to worship with us.

Easter Egg Hunt Brings Youngsters Together For Colorful Eggs & Lots of Smiles

The Easter Bunny was busy on the day before Easter, scattering colorful candy-filled eggs all over the church grounds of Bethel. Easter baskets were filled to overflowing as the children delighted in the hunt.

Bethel's Annual Easter Egg Hunt is a favorite activity for the kids. They gather in Fellowship Hall where they are greeted by Katie, Bethel's "Easter Dog." They can select a special balloon animal from Steve Queen of Circus Kaput Entertainment, and participate in fun craft projects. Then, they sit in a circle to hear the Easter Story as told by Pastor Jeff Fothergill, before going outside to join in the egg hunt. Many people helped to make the day special, including the Bethel Crafters who stuffed the eggs, and worked with the kids on craft projects and all Bethel members who donated the candy.



Thanks also to Barb Jacobs for bringing Katie to the celebration, and to Steve for the creative balloon art that is so loved by the kids. The day is a wonderful way to introduce the children to the story of Jesus and to make new friends while hunting Easter eggs.



More Easter Pictures To Enjoy!

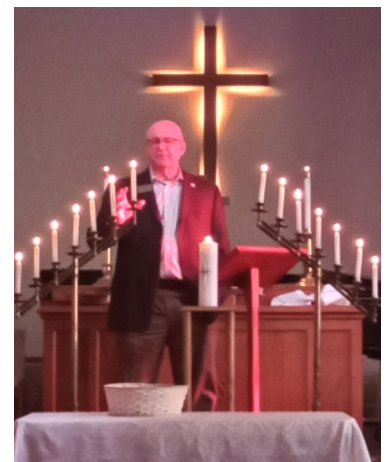


Palm Sunday, Tenebrae Service, Easter Sunday Awakens New Understanding of Jesus for Us

Palm Sunday. The calendar had just turned as we gathered April 2 of 2023 for Palm Sunday and the beginning of Easter Week. A palm branch was handed to everyone entering our beloved Sanctuary to mark Jesus' entry into Jerusalem midst cheering and welcoming crowds. Chylene D. (who for many years has provided the palm branches) retold the story and led the singing of the hymn of praise as the congregation stood to sing and wave the palm branches. There was enthusiasm in the waving and a sense of joy and worship. Yet on this day we knew, as Jesus knew then, what awaited Him. The Scripture reading from the Old Testament, Isaiah 53:1-10 outlined with accuracy what was to come to pass. The congregation went forward to partake of communion, perhaps with a collective sense of Christ's suffering.



Tenebrae—Good Friday. It was a small in number but large in faith gathering in an unlighted Bethel sanctuary; at 6p.m., April 7, 2023. While we call this day in the Easter week "Good Friday"—that day's events of Jesus' crucifixion and burial are hard to reconcile with this adjective. The Tenebrae service, new to Bethel this year, is more than 1,000 years old and given in Christian services around the world. The only music was two old and favorite hymns: *Old Rugged Cross* and *Amazing Grace*. Candelabras—with 12 candles representing the 12 apostles and a center stand-alone Christ candle. Pastor Jeff took the Scripture from Luke, chapters 22 and 23, and Isaiah 53. As he retold the story of each Disciple denying Christ that candle was extinguished. Only the center Christ candle remained. The sun going down outside Bethel's West windows infused the altar with light—an eerie blood red. The final candle was extinguished—a representation of the world thrown into darkness and chaos with Jesus' death from our world. Communion cups were available and each person went forward as they were moved to do so. No further words were spoken and people left the Sanctuary in silence.



Palm Sunday, Tenebrae Service, Easter Sunday Awakens New Understanding of Jesus for Us (continued)



Easter Sunday! Easter Sunday and a beautiful warm spring day brought out a larger than usual number joining together in our Sanctuary for the service. There was great enthusiasm as Pastor Jeff proclaimed "*Christ is Risen*" and the congregation responded with "*Christ is risen, indeed.*"-- fulfilling the promise of the forgiveness of sins, the life everlasting.

The Scriptures: Luke 24:1-12, 1 Corinthians 15:14 and Mathew 28:11-15 told the Easter story of the discovery of the empty tomb and the risen Christ. Easter lilies, in remembrance of departed loved ones, lined the Communion rail. The risen Christ was symbolized by a white cloth on a Cross.

The passing of the peace seemed extra joyous. Carla brought back memories of Easter's past with her Easter bonnet and finery. Pastor Jeff at one point in his sermon brought a laugh when he produced a candy bar from his pocket from the Saturday Easter Egg hunt that brought out lots of children. As we departed it was well-wishing and Happy Easter on the air. There is recognition, also, that we have an obligation to take the Easter message out into our world to fulfill our mission.





Bethel Takes Up the Wildwood Challenge!



Bethel members showed off their vehicles used on Route 66 at the Wildwood drive-in movie on Friday, April 14. Many attendees had their pictures taken by the vehicles and a few children even climbed in and pretended they were driving! Wildwood truly appreciated our attendance there and is hoping to have the event again in the future. The animated movie shown was "Cars" and there were over 60 cars in attendance. Don and Diana Walsh brought their 60's MG and Karl and Diane brought their S2000 Sports car. Tony and Suzi Hladky were great supporters!



Bethel is a sponsor of Wildwood's focus on Route 66 in the month of April. This includes the Scavenger hunt that occurs the entire month. Kim Hotze Smith donated some great props for the scavenger hunt selfies! One Bethel prayer shawl will be placed in each of the five baskets for the winners of the hunt.

Thank you to all who hand made the prayer shawls!

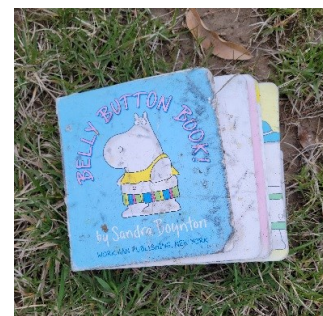
Submitted by Diane Schoenfeld

Kim Hotze Smith, her daughter Sarah & her sister-in-law Carolyn
← participating in the Route 66 scavenger hunt at Bethel.

In(nie)s and Out(ie)s of Bethel's Highway Cleanup

A hardy group of six Bethel congregants braved strong winds on April 1 to clean our adopted stretch of Highway 100. Karl Schoenfeld, Mike Severns, Greg and Jan Allerdissen, and Mark and Alison Verbeck gathered eight bags of trash, a boogie board, a car bumper, a tire, and a Belly Button Book.

Submitted by Alison Verbeck



Bethel Plant Sale Reminder

Upcoming Plant Sale May 13—Reminders and Requests

To everything there is a time, the Good Book tells us. Mid-May is generally accepted in our climate as the time safe from the threat of late frosts and the time to plant the flower beds and vegetable garden plants. Bethel is again holding its popular plant sale. The sale is from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m. Barb Jacobs sends out these reminders and requests:

- 1) Donations of plants—As soon as possible, Friday, May 12 at the latest and must be potted, identified and ready for sale. The sooner the better in Barb's words!
- 2) Cardboard boxes and trays needed. Hint: Check Dierbergs produce department at a store near you. Don't forget those boxes of varying size cluttering your basement.
- 3) Potting soil.
- 4) All things for the plant sale may be dropped off at Bethel on Monday, Wednesday and Friday when Ginger is in the office.
- 5) Volunteer helpers needed: after exercise class Thursday May 11, all day Friday May 12, and before, during and after sale hours of 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, May 13.



In addition to the beautiful plants, the Crafters will have a wonderful variety of crafts for sale for Mother's Day gifts.



Ruth A & Diane D,

Thanks for your donation of stamps. — Bethel UMC



Bethel UMC,

I just received my weekly letter from you and a beautiful plastic butterfly fell out as I was opening it. I sure love the butterfly (it made my day). Thank you so much. — **Love, Jewel**

Ron,

Thanks for fixing the gates in the garden area. — **Ginger**

Volunteers,

Thanks to all those who pitched in to do the highway cleanup.— **Bethel UMC**

OPEN Praise Team

Anyone with singing or instrumental musical talents interested in helping the praise team please get in contact with Shirley Martka ASAP.

Giving

In an effort to make you aware of our ongoing income and expenses Bert, our treasurer, has calculated our monthly expenses and we have provided a total of our offerings for the given month as follows:

Total estimated monthly expenses:	\$12,600
Total offerings received as of 4/24/23:	\$11,518

Circle of Concern

They are currently in need of the following items:
pasta, potato/rice mixes, cereal, snacks,
canned chicken, beans, oatmeal, soup, condiments,
baking items, body wash, shampoo, conditioner,
cleaning products, pads, tampons, cold/flu medicine

Please leave non-perishable food donations in the shopping cart next to the elevator. Thanks for your donations!

On The Calendar @ Bethel

Christian Perspectives Class—Sundays @ 9am

Bethel Fitness—Mondays & Thursdays @ 9am

Music Ministry Practice—Tuesdays @ 10am

Crafters & Prayer Shawl Warriors—Thursdays @ 9:30am

Board Meeting—Tuesday, May 2 @ 7pm

Communion—Sunday, May 7 @ 10am

Juliets' Luncheon—Tuesday, May 9 - Big Chiefs @ 11:30

Listening For God's Voice (cemetery walk)—Saturday, May 13

Plant Sale—Saturday, May 13 @ 9-1pm

Memorial Day (observed)—Monday, May 29 (office closed)

Fellowship Time

Join us for coffee in fellowship hall after worship every Sunday. All are welcome.

Nursery

Childcare provided during Sunday service.

We are blessed to have a good number of gifted lay leaders willing to help make our Zoom service a success.

Our schedule for May is as follows...

Date	Devotion	Music	Lead	Prayer	ZOOM	PPT
5/7	PJeff	Shirley	Louella	PJeff	TBD	TBD
5/14	PJeff	Shirley	Diana	PJeff	TBD	TBD
5/21	PJeff	Shirley	Carolyn	PJeff	TBD	TBD
5/28	PJeff	Shirley	Don	PJeff	TBD	TBD

The ZOOM & PPT Teams arrange their own schedules.

Contribution Recordkeeping Schedule

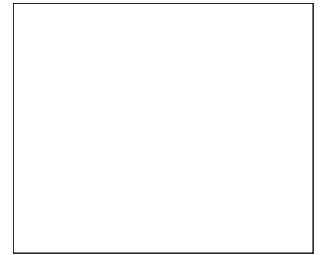
	Sheila	RuthAnne/Bert	Bert	Bert	Bert
May	7	14	21	28	n/a

Counters Schedule

	Dale/Sheila	RuthAnne/Bert	RuthAnne/Suzi	Bert/Debbie	RuthAnne/Barb
May	7	14	21	28	n/a



Bethel United Methodist Church
17500 Manchester Road
Wildwood, MO 63038-1907



May 2023
News!



Bethel United Methodist Church
***Love God,
Love Others,
Serve All!***

Please Join Us Sunday For Service

Service will be **LIVE** in the sanctuary
@ **10 a.m.** or you can use one of the following:

Church webpage: www.bethelunitedmethodist.org

Facebook Live: <https://www.facebook.com/BethelUMCWildwood> **"Like Us" on Facebook.**

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/BethelUMCWildwood>

Zoom: Please contact the church office at 636-458-2255 to receive the link.