



HAPPENINGS IN SEPTEMBER



Sunday was a special day of celebration! From the first note on the piano to the last strum on the cello, worship was meaningful, and the music was beautiful! Birthday decor greeted us in the fellowship center, and the food was plentiful and delicious! It was a great time of fellowship as stories were shared, hymns were sung, and last but not least, there was birthday cake and ice cream! Many thanks to all who helped make Belton's bash a success!



BETHANY LOOKS OUT FOR OUR COMMUNITY AS WELL AS OUR OWN BETHANY FAMILY



Naloxone saves lives and Bethany is helping to make this available. A Naloxone distribution box has been placed on the church campus next to the little free pantry. The box contains individual doses of Naloxone, a nasal spray, that can rapidly reverse the effects of opioid overdose. You can't miss it ! It's purple in color which is symbolic for International Overdose Awareness.

Once again, Bethany has proven itself to be full of generous, caring, welcoming, talented, and mission-driven people. Wow! Thank you for the Birthday Bash. So many delightful memories! Thank you for being Bethany and thank you for letting me travel the journey with you. I am already looking forward to the Birthday Bash for my 100th birthday!

Belton



We want to thank all of our Bethany family for the prayers, cards, and especially the shared food scraps. We are so grateful for the love you have shown. We covet your continued prayers and support during Pat's continuing recovery and Gary's knee surgery in November. (Yes, it just keeps getting better and better.)

Love to Y'all.

Pat and Gary Crispell





MONEY MATTERS—SEPTEMBER

Received for the General Fund \$13,209

Expenses for September exceeded receipts to the General Fund.

Designated gifts to other funds

Building Fund	\$2000.00
Little Free Pantry	300.16
Organ repair	797.00
Pastor's Disc	27.00
Urban Ministries	50.00

Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! Your contributions have fully funded the recent organ repair! It's an expensive musical instrument that needs to be taken care of. Thanks to Jeff Hood for recognizing the problems and for taking on this task. Now we get to continue to enjoy the beautiful music!

In the next couple of weeks, Connie will be sending out quarterly contribution statements. As we are in the final quarter of 2025, it's an opportunity to review your statement of giving. Have you met your monthly giving? Are you able to do a bit more before the end of the year? As always, Bethany is so grateful for all contributions!

Don't forget the Fellowship Dinner, 10/7, with donations to the building fund. With a \$1000.00 match, we can maximize gifts to the fellowship center mortgage.

Forward Together Reconciling Sunday School Class

On Thursday September 18th, Forward Together Reconciling Sunday School Class asked the Church Council permission to conduct a straw poll of the congregation, to determine support for Bethany UMC, Durham to affiliate with the Reconciling Ministries Network and make a commitment to work toward achieving LGBTQIA+ justice and full inclusion in the life and leadership of Bethany UMC, both in policy and in practice.

Below is the proposal presented to the council:

Forward Together Reconciling Sunday School Class

Reconciliation Proposal / Motion

Bethany United Methodist Church

In January 2018, Bethany UMC's pastor, Julia Webb-Bowden, presented an eight-week study - The 2016 "Study of the Council of Bishops Commission on a Way Forward". Approximately 23 Bethany members participated.

After the completion of the eight-week study, a smaller spin-off group decided to continue working toward Bethany being a more inclusive church. After several meetings the group went through the 5 step process and unanimously voted to affiliate with The Reconciling Ministries Network, and Forward Together Reconciling Group was born.

Forward Together Reconciling Group participated in the 2018 and 2019 Durham Pride Parades, then COVID struck, and the group went dormant. After COVID and Bethany opened up for regular churches services again, a handful of the original Forward Together Reconciling Group decided to become more active within Bethany to be a more affirming, accepting and inclusive church, and with permission from the Bethany Church Council, on June 2023, the Forward Together Reconciling Sunday Class was born. Since then, they have completed book studies, video series, and became involved in outside mission opportunities, demonstrating the dignity, love, acceptance and affirmation afforded to any beloved child of God.

After hosting a joint video series with the Lizzie Grey Sunday School Class "Faithful and Inclusive — The Bible,

Sexuality and the United Methodist Church" by Rev Rob Fuquay, Forward Together Reconciling Sunday School Class discussed their desire to petition the Bethany UMC Church Council to provide a Bethany church wide vote to affiliate with The Reconciling Ministries Network and become a Reconciling Church and expand the simple sense of welcome and belonging of ALL people into the Bethany United Methodist family.

The Reconciling Ministries Network saw success at last year's General Conference of the United Methodist Church after decades of passionate advocacy for LGBTQIA+ United Methodists. After decades of heartbreaking votes, supporters of LGBTQIA+ inclusion in the United Methodist Church family, finally achieved their goals at the 2020/2024 General Conference of the United Methodist Church. With the advocates' persistent organizing and prayers, the international lawmaking assembly voted, in most cases overwhelmingly, to remove all language condemning homosexuality from the United Methodist Church's Book of Discipline. Actions included eliminating denomination wide ban on gay clergy and same sex marriage as well as erasing an anti-gay stance that dated back more than 50 years. General Conference's decisions serve as validation of the hard advocacy work Reconciling Ministries Network has done in the United Methodist Church.

Forward Together Reconciling Sunday School Class along with the Reconciling Ministries Network believe; as the spiritual children of John Wesley, that our relationship with God is ever growing and changing with the passage of time, informed by scripture, grounded in tradition, confirmed by reason, and validated through experiences. We are all called by God to work with evangelistic zeal through the power of the Holy Spirit to encourage every local congregation to embrace and affirm the presence, participation, gifts, service and witness of the LGBTQIA+ persons within their community and that God works through folks, that churches have tried to tell us God doesn't want. When you see that work in action, we think that's really affirming and gives and renews a sense of belonging and purpose. As people of faith, United Methodists have a responsibility to lead in ways that foster healthy interaction and build communities where ALL people feel safe.

Our goal is not to be welcomed, as long as we conform, but to create a loving, affirming, reconciling community that makes a safe space for a wide array of diversity, expressions and beliefs centered around only one common goal - following Jesus' example of radical love and radical inclusion. To follow Jesus is to refuse to be conformed to this world, as the apostle Paul wrote, "but to be transformed by the renewing of your mind." (Romans 12:2) For us, this is the most faithful path that reflects Jesus' own example.

Jesus broke many legalistic traditions, to love. Forward Together Reconciling Sunday School Class along with the Reconciling Ministries Network believe that every person is called to use all their spiritual gifts and grace in the community of faith called the Church.

So, Jesus, be our voice. Be the only words we should ever speak. May our words and actions and reactions be a sanctuary for ALL.

Today, Forward Together Reconciling Sunday School Class urges the Bethany UMC Church Council to reclaim the way of Jesus — with love and compassion to welcome ALL with the light of the Holy Spirit, the care of community and the affirmation made flesh in Jesus and his kingdom, by approving this motion, to approve a straw poll be presented to the Bethany congregation to measure interest in affiliation. Based on the results from that straw poll, approve a congregational vote to affiliate with the Reconciling Ministries Network and become a beacon of love, hope, acceptance, affirmation and celebration, of ALL religious and nonreligious in our area.

Thank you for your consideration, Forward Together Reconciling Sunday School Class

Nancy Kneppens	Marian Willis
Patricia Caspell	Hot - pen
Gary T. Crispice	Kate Hanks
Paul M. Stone Mills	Cathy Breit
Janice Stone Mills	Michael DeBary
Sharon S. Stone	John D.
Gary Corsi-O'Connor	Michael Corsi-O'Connor
Jimmy Tucker	
Elaine Tucker	
Marian D. Batten	

Be on the look out for more information on what it means to be a Reconciling Ministries Network affiliate in the upcoming Bethany UMC weekly updates. Or, contact Michael Corsi-O'Connor for answers to any questions you may have.

Michael Corsi-O'Connor (He, Him, His)

Facilitator

Forward Together Reconciling Sunday School Class

Bethany UMC

Showers of Blessing

The Forward Together Reconciling Sunday School class sponsored "Showers of Blessings" shower ministry at the Sept 20th Free Community Pancake Breakfast. With the help of a few Bethany family volunteers, unsheltered individuals were given the opportunity to "shop" in the clothes racks, take a quick shower and a hygiene kit to take with them, before or after they ate the delicious pancakes and sausage breakfast provided by the Bethany Free Breakfast crew. It is the expectation that "Showers of Blessings" will be offered at every Free Community Pancake breakfast held at Bethany.

"What you do to the least of these, you do to me". [Matthew 25:40](#)

Michael Corsi-O'Connor (He, Him, His)

Facilitator

Forward Together Reconciling Sunday School Class



Dear Bethany Church Family,

It is that time of the year where things are beginning to cool off and the school year is finally getting into full swing. The leaves are beginning to change in color. The breeze is feeling more crisp. New rhythms are falling into place and we are beginning a new season. Just as all these things are happening there is something special happening in the Bethany Church community. It is time for THE Brunswick Stew cook.

I remember arriving at Bethany last year and the time was coming close for the Stew cook and people kept mentioning that Stew was coming up. Stew was an event that everyone knew and was brought up often so I had to ask, "Is this a big thing at Bethany?" And there was a resounding, "yes," every time I asked. There was and is an energy, a camaraderie, a unity, a community, a tradition, a memory making, a fellowship that surrounded and

surrounds the Bethany Brunswick Stew.

Honestly, I felt a little on the outside when asking about this famous Stew. Everyone knew about it and had a claim on it. It was something I couldn't fully understand as I had never been a part of such a large process in the church or any community. My previous churches had never endeavored to cook such a large amount of food with everyone for a fundraiser. We had fundraisers but nothing that required volunteers rotating to help with over 24 hours of consecutive work. It is amazing to think how everyone comes together to create this delicious meal that will feed hundreds and hundreds of people.

It sounds like that story where Jesus has compassion on a crowd following him and he tells his 12 disciples that they need to feed 5,000 people with 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish. Yes, multiplying fishes and loaves is a miracle but so is 12 people serving meals to 5,000 people. The Bethany Stew feels a lot like taking a small amount of people and feeding a large number of people. The task seems impossible when you talk about the process of creating over 1,000 quarts of brunswick stew for the community. The amount of ingredients, spices, meats, and vegetables required for such a cook is immense but also what is required to process all these things are dozens of people to clean, prepare, chop, cook, process, store and deliver this brunswick stew. It is a miracle that such a thing could take place at a church that averages around 50 or so people on a Sunday morning. That is amazing and something that I know we are proud of.

Last year I got to help with cleaning and chopping up vegetables. I also got to help stir the stew for a while before leaving to see some family. It was special. Like I said above, I had never experienced anything like it in my life. This wasn't like working in a restaurant to prepare for a dinner service. That's a job, this was community. This was a bunch of normal, everyday church people coming together in love to make food that would help support the church & its ministries and also fill the bellies of families. This stew is the provision of manna for people in their own wilderness of life. This stew is for the parent who needs an easy dinner to heat up for their family. This stew is for the sick person who can just throw it on the stove when they need it. This stew is for bringing people around the table. This stew is not just food, it represents tradition, gathering together, working hard, conversation with others, stepping outside of ourselves, becoming a part of something bigger than ourselves, humility, service, remembering those who have gone before us, and sharing life with one another.

I kind of get it after doing it once and I hope that we continue to invite others into that process in a humble and inclusive way because we do have something special that is worth sharing with others. I'll see you on October 3rd as we "stew" together.

Thank you all for letting me be a part of the Bethany Family,

Pastor Cole

Durham Pilgrimage of Pain and Hope

Bethany UMC has been given a great opportunity to participate in the Durham Pilgrimage of Pain and Hope at no cost. Through the Durham Pilgrimage of Pain and Hope, participants discover how Durham's story, their own stories, and God's story are woven together. Over a weekend of visiting important sites, hearing the stories of leaders who have shaped the city, and engaging in discussion with a cohort of fellow pilgrims over meals and fellowship time. Participants reckon with the challenges Durham has faced and witness the hope in our community. As part of Journey to Thriving, Bethany will be offering a pilgrimage on November 7-9, 2025. The registration deadline is Friday, October 24th. To register, and for more information, visit www.durhamcares.org/pilgrimage. If you have questions, contact LisaNoelleNcaca at lnacaca@durhamcares.org.

THE DURHAM PILGRIMAGE OF PAIN AND HOPE



The Durham Pilgrimage of Pain and Hope is an opportunity to discover how your spiritual journey is connected to the place you live - Durham, NC. Through the pilgrimage you will immerse yourself in the story of the city and the Biblical story as you reflect with others on what it means for how you live your life in Durham. Join us for this transformative experience connecting Durham's story, your story and God's story.

REGISTER AT WWW.DURHAMCARES.ORG/PILGRIMAGE FOR
THE PILGRIMAGE WITH
BETHANY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
NOVEMBER 7-9, 2025

*"For the first time in my journey – my faith, pain and
hope can join a river of movement for a purpose that
is greater than my life...I am deeply grateful."*

-Pilgrimage participant





The Hospitality Committee invites you to our October Fellowship Dinner and program, on October 7th at 6:00 PM in the Fellowship Center.

The menu includes a baked potato bar with salad with all the fixins and desserts.

After dinner, Durham County's Harm Reduction Coordinator, Morgan Culver, MSc (she/her), will present information about opioid use, overdose and safety. She will cover the following topics:

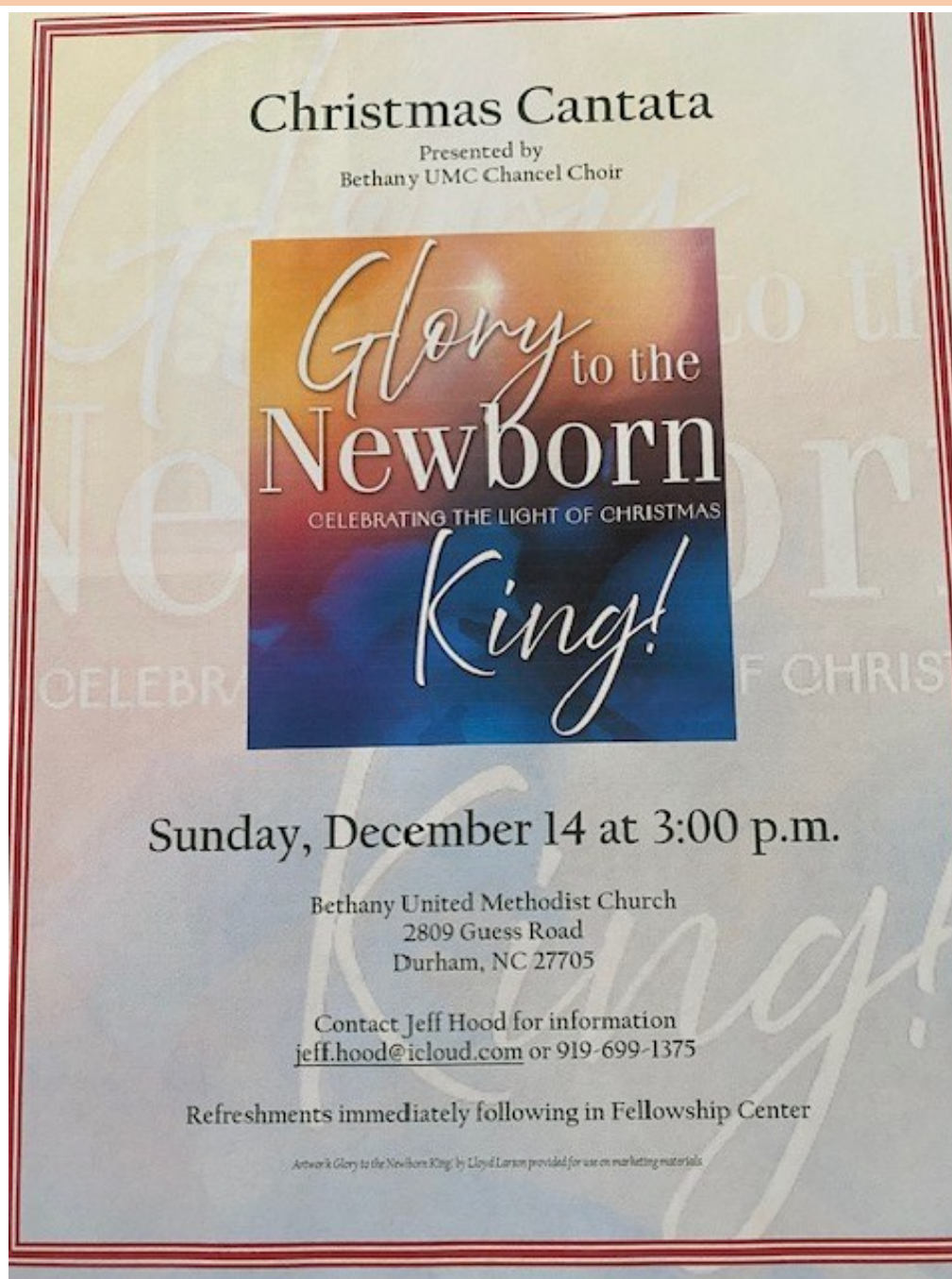
Harm Reduction Philosophy & Practice

Overdose Response with Naloxone

Join us for a delicious meal, outstanding fellowship and a very informative program! See y'all Tues Oct 7th at 6

Hospitality Committee





Chancel Choir – We Need Singers!

We have a tremendous repertoire of music, which includes a broad range of styles and would like to share these musical offerings in worship with the congregation! The Chancel Choir works diligently and patiently every week to “think outside the box” as we search for new ways to uplift the worship experience with a limited number of singers.

We need more singers for every part, and I would like to extend an invitation to those who may be interested in sharing their musical gifts. Though most choir members read music, it is not a requirement as we will teach you! I do ask that you have some prior vocal experience in making a joyful sound in order to complement the structure and skillset of the existing group.

The Chancel Choir rehearses on Wednesday from 6:30-7:45 pm. If you are interested, please contact Jeff Hood (jeff.hood@icloud.com or 919-699-1375) to setup a time to discuss.



**United
Women
in Faith**

Tuesday Morning Circle

**The Tuesday Morning Circle will meet on
Tuesday morning, October 14, at 10:30 a.m.**

Tuesday Evening Circle

**The Tuesday Evening Circle will meet on
October 14 at 7 pm in the Fellowship Center.**



**United Methodist Men
will meet October 14 at 7 pm
In the Fellowship Center.**



Worship Team

For September & October

Communion Helpers for October are Gary & Lisa Kearns

Acolyte

Oct 5	Michael Corsi-OConnor
Oct 12	Sharon Stone
Oct 19	April Stone-Mills
Oct 26	Heather Fisher

Liturgist

Oct 5	Dan Portaro
Oct 12	Connie Kirby
Oct 19	Elaine Truckner
Oct 26	Sharon Stone

If you are unable to do your assignment on your Sunday please let Gary Corsi-OConnor know 919-308-9290, so substitutions may be made.

Open & Close Church

Oct 5	Donald & Becky House
Oct. 12	Gary Crispell
Oct 19	Kim Wiles
Oct 26	Sharon Stone

Ushers

Oct 5	Earl Kirby & Marcia Painter
Oct 12	Earl Kirby & Pam Hall
Oct 19	Gary & Lisa Kearns
Oct 26	Earl Kirby & John Long

Bethany UMC Council Meeting

September 18, 2025

Present: Pastor Cole Breit, April Stone-Mills, Connie Kirby, Jeff Hood, Cathy Portaro, Dan Portaro, Kate Hankins, Becky House, Donald House, Tommy Wells, Sharon Stone, Gary Corsi-O'Connor, Lynne Sprague, James Sprague, Kim Wiles, Gary Crispell, Joshua Stone, Gerhard Mels, Jimmy Truckner

Absent: Cheryl Klein, Pat Crispell, Maureen Bateman

Visitors: Janice Stone-Mills, Michael Corsi-O'Connor, John Roberts, John Long

Minutes Taker: Kate Hankins

Opening Prayer

Pastor Cole opened the meeting with a word of prayer.

Minutes

June's council meeting minutes were approved via email.

August 13 zoom meeting:

The meeting was held to discuss what could and should be done regarding unhoused persons using the stew hut shelter. Pastor Cole had contacted nearby churches and organizations that have experience with similar situations. No trespassing signs were already up at the stew hut and a document had been signed allowing police to ask people to leave, but neither had helped.

Cole made a motion for 2-3 people to speak with the unhoused persons staying in the stew hut to let them know that our leadership met and decided that we cannot allow them to stay on the property. The tent and people need to vacate within a certain amount of time (by August 21) or we'll need to call the police. Seconded (**didn't catch by who**). The vote passed with no one opposed. Cole, Dan (and Bailey), and Lynne planned to do this on Friday (8/15) at 9:30am. Cole also updated the congregation the following Sunday.

Spiritual and Leadership Formation- led by Pastor Cole

We reviewed our Mission Statement, Vision, Core Values, and Meeting Norms.

Moving forward, we will better follow Robert's Rules and use a microphone during council meetings. Everyone will be able to ask a question, give a speech for, or give a speech against a motion. We will also include content warnings before discussions about potentially triggering subjects.

Galatians 5:13-26

In this space of leadership we are in danger of acts of the flesh (desires to do harm), like fits of rage, selfish ambition, factions, discord, and dissensions.

In this space of leadership we can embody fruits of the spirit through love, self-control, kindness (responding not reacting), gentleness, faithfulness, respect, joy, and peace.

People recognize us by how we love one another.

Pastor Cole concluded this reflection period with prayer.

Review of New People- led by April

Hannah (a divinity student) has been back several times, including at Led by Love!

Goal and Visioning Work

What have we done or worked on already:

We revisited the Table at Bethany grant for an emerging ministry by using it for Led by Love/ The Group.

We created a new small group ministry (Led by Love).

We began dialogue about the Fellowship Center.

We started getting to know our neighbors better through the Pancake Breakfast and its added offerings of showers and the clothing closet, also facilitated by Forward Together on additional days (Showers of Blessings). We've also continued working with the nearby preschool, which held their graduation in the Fellowship Center, by sharing start of school bags.

We partnered with Durham Cares by participating in Journey to Thriving and have a Pilgrimage scheduled Nov 7-9 to continue learning about our community and go out into it.

Our website has been kept up with and the communications team is investigating streaming on YouTube.

Led by Love held an event in a neutral space by feeding community members near Jubilee House.

We are planning our yearly Trunk or Treat, which provides a connection with local families to Bethany.

Things to work on for the rest of the year:

We want to plan a second event to connect with local families, likely after Halloween. Ideas include inviting families to the Cantata, a storytime or movie night (The Chosen), and going caroling with cocoa.

Leadership Council Packet Items (reports not discussed during the meeting are included at the end)

Questions from emailed reports

Is there still no trash can at bus stop and do we know why it was removed?

We've received no answer as to why it was removed and we are seeing an increase in litter. Gerhard will reach out again to follow up (and request a trash can, if possible).

In the Trustees report for September there was a recommendation to revise the usage agreement for Roca Eterna.

This recommendation needs more work and will be tabled until the October meeting.

Hector from Roca Eterna needs contact info for someone at Bethany, as Gary CO has been approached several times when he has concerns.

A Finance clarification from Lynne: The salary increases in the SPRC report were used to create the budget, but are not approved by Finance. The Leadership Council will vote on whether to approve them when we vote on the budget.

Reconciliation Proposal / Motion – presented by Michael CO on behalf of the Forward Together Reconciling Sunday School Class

(See Michael Corsi-O'Connor's article from Forwarding Together Sunday School Class on Page 4 above)

Michael CO made a **motion** to allow Forward Together Reconciling Sunday School Class to take a congregational straw poll to see if the congregation is interesting in moving towards becoming a reconciling ministries congregation. Gary CO seconded the motion.

Discussion/ questions:

How does that change what we're doing now?

It makes what we are already doing official outwardly, increasing visibility and making a public statement.

What other Durham churches are reconciling congregations?

Elizabeth St UMC (first in NC), Epworth UMC, Citywell, Parkwood UMC

How is a straw poll done?

It is a ballot vote with the choices to approve or need more info. It is anonymous and includes a place to write questions. It is done with those present and will be advertised beforehand. We can have a series of information in mid-week emails and a presentation at the service where the vote takes place to provide information.

What does becoming a reconciling church mean to Bethany?

It will increase advertising to LGBTQ+ individuals that we accept and support them and are a safe place. It also provides a public statement of that acceptance and support.

How is it different from Lighthouse?

A Lighthouse congregation is advertised as a place for people to go whose church disaffiliated if they did not want to disaffiliate.

What do we have to do differently as a reconciling church?

The reconciling statement has to be on everything (i.e. website, bulletin, newsletter).

Vote- passed, none opposed

Naloxone (Narcan) Container recommendation- report provided by Gary Crispell

On October 17, 2024, the Leadership Council met and approved that, "a Naloxone vending machine be allowed to be placed on BUMC" with the understanding that we approve of an appropriate location for the machine.

This Naloxone machine is provided by the Durham County Department of Public Health, specifically their Harm Reduction Team. They will make sure the Naloxone machines are kept stocked for those who might need it.

On August 28, 2025, Pastor Cole, Gary Crispell, Pete Crispell and Gary Corsi-O'Connor met with Morgan Culver who is the head of the Harm Reduction team. We walked around campus and she saw a few spots that might be good spots for a Naloxone box to be set up. Here were her suggestions on best places for the box:

Next to the Little Free Pantry.

Next to the Bus Stop bench (as long the box is not prone to fall over and can be stabilized).

At the front of the Fellowship Center building against the building.

We are asking for feedback from the Leadership Council on which location to place the Naloxone box. Thank you for your help in this matter.

The same people who use the Little Free Pantry would likely use the naloxone (it saves lives). Peter would pour a concrete pad to secure both, and it could face a different direction from the pantry.

Gary C made a **motion** to locate the naloxone dispenser next to the Little Free Pantry. Gary CO seconded.

Discussion:

The Narcan that we've had goes very quickly, and is taken away, not used there. People are looking for it in that area, and this is an opportunity to supply greater amounts.

What size is the box?

It is newspaper dispenser size (same as the pantry). We don't know yet what it looks like.

Who stocks it?

Durham Health Department will stock it

Vote- Passed with none opposed

Trail Camera Usage- presented by John Roberts

John Roberts made a **motion** to install trail cameras (4) around the rear of the education building and the stew hut shelter to see if there are fires or other unwanted activity occurring there overnight. Sharon seconded.

Discussion

Will we disclose to the congregation that there are cameras?

Yes, we will announce it on Sunday.

Have they been used elsewhere on campus before?

No. Lisa bought them but they haven't been used.

All info is after the fact- can we monitor in real time?

No, there's no wifi capability.

One future possibility is getting a Ring camera for \$30/ year if we see a need with these.

They can be helpful for other things too, like seeing what's going on when nearby robberies happen.

Vote- Passed, none opposed

FINANCE – 2026 Budget report provided by Lynne Sprague

On July 8, 2025, a team under the direction of Finance conducted a review of Bethany's Finances for the year 2024. This review used the guidelines from the Book of Discipline as well as the Internal Controls and Procedures for Bethany UMC. The report was emailed to Leadership Council members on July 28, 2025, to be approved via email. Following approval the report was submitted to NCCUMC.

A copy of this report is provided (below, with additional reports).

On August 21, 2025, Finance Committee met. Lynne opened the meeting with scripture and prayer. Pastor Cole and Cathy shared the on line data system Cathy is using for financial records. The next item on the agenda was to set a budget for 2026. The committee took into account requests submitted by those in charge of line items in the budget. We also had to consider the information received from NCCUMC regarding apportionments and pastor's compensation. Adjustments were made to salaries to align with recommendations from SPRC.

In some cases line items were reduced as other income was available through a designated fund. Finally some line items were increased because of rising costs. The committee is aware that many of our folks are also facing rising costs, and we wanted to send a message that we struggled with this budget, and that we really tried to keep increases to a minimum.

Along with our budget discussion, we also had a tough discussion regarding our building fund. Monies are sufficient to make 2 maybe 3 loan payments and then what? We already know that the October fellowship dinner is designated for the building Fund, and we also know that a portion of the stew proceeds will help. We need more ideas!

A [copy of the proposed budget](#) is attached.

Important points and discussion:

We know money is tight for everyone, so it's hard to keep asking for more

There was a 1.6% total increase in the budget from last year, including 3% pay increases for the pastor and handbell director and a 2% increase for the minister of music.

One reason for pay increases is that finding subs for the pastor and musicians at the previous pricing is difficult.

There is a designated fund (\$1,614) for music maintenance that we can use, if needed.

The large increase in apportionments was discussed. This is the first full year out of affiliation so they lost churches paying into it. To be fair they did a 2.5% adjustment to apportionments (would have been more without adjustment). It also re-

mained higher as they didn't want to cut funds for the Methodist Home for Children. It was figured based on individual churches.

Building Fund- there is not enough in it for the next two months. We predict that we'll get enough from stew, football games, etc. for now, but we need to dispose of the Omaha St property to give us money to work with (our debt takes about 19% of our income for the year). We need additional means of income. The Oct Fellowship dinner will go towards building fund with a \$1000 match.

Note: Trustees approved a letter to the conference to seek approval to sell Omaha St. property

Budget is presented to the Leadership Council by the Finance committee, so need for a second.

Audit report included for sake of Minutes inclusion

Vote to approve budget for 2026- **approved**, none opposed

Nominations – presented by Pastor Cole Breit

Bethany United Methodist Church Committee on Nominations & Leadership Development 2025 Charge Conference Report

This year (2025) the NC Conference of the United Methodist Church is requiring churches using an alternate leadership structure to report this model and how it functions. In 2019, Bethany UMC switched to a One Board Model. This was adopted into practice but due to the 2020 COVID-19 Pandemic a hybrid of this model was held moving forward. Today we continue to live into a hybrid of the traditional Book of Discipline model and the One Board Model. With this upcoming Charge Conference and the new requirement of reporting Alternate Leadership Structure by the NC Conference, we, the Committee on Nominations & Leadership Development, propose that we move forward with fully living into a Simplified-Accountable Leadership Structure (formerly called a One Board Model). Below are the nominations for what that structure might look like for our context here at Bethany United Methodist Church.

The NC Conference offered three options for Alternate Leadership Structures to be lived out in local churches. Copies of this information with the different leadership structure options provided by the NC Conference were emailed out to the entire Leadership Council and the Committee on Nominations & Leadership Development on July 31, 2025 by Pastor Cole. We decided that Option 2 (A Leadership Council with More Than 9 Members) was most suitable for our congregation based on our current structure, church needs and congregation's size. Below is what our Leadership Structure might look like under this option.

Essentially what a Simplified, Accountable Leadership Structure would do is combine the duties of the UM administrative committees (SPRC, Finance, Trustees) into one Leadership Council. Instead of having several different committees meet throughout the month in silos, this structure would allow conversation on issues to happen with all the different church leaders at the same time. In the traditional model, issues may have to be brought to several committees before being approved (or even disapproved) by the Church Council but this simplified structure allows for quicker communications, critiques and approvals of certain ideas because all of your different administrative leaders are gathered around one table.

The proposed Leadership Council for 2026 will take on the responsibilities of the Trustees and Finance. The Book of Discipline limits the amount of Trustees to 9 people so we decided to name specific members of the Leadership Council as Trustees (only these 9 can vote on Trustees items but everyone can participate in the discussion of such matters). The 9 Trustees are: Leadership Council Chair, Lay Leader, SPRC Chair, Finance Chair, Finance Secretary, Church Treasurer, Trustee Chair, Recording Secretary and the Pastor.

In consultation with our Trustees Chair, Gerhard Mels, we put together a Building Maintenance Team to handle the day to day upkeep of the church property (see the nominations listed below). This team will handle small repairs, upkeep and care of the property so as to not bog down the Trustees who will focus on more big picture issues such as insurance, mortgages/banking, legal concerns, etc. This team will be under the Trustees Chair's responsibility and they will communicate closely with the Trustees Chair about concerns. Gerhard has scheduled a meeting with this team to iron out processes for how the relationship between the Trustees, Trustees Chair and Building Maintenance Team will look moving forward.

In our discussions we decided to keep the SPRC as a separate entity from the Leadership Council for a few reasons. First, keeping the SPRC separate from the Leadership Council will give less power to the Leadership Council as we transition into this new model. We do not want this transition to result in abuse of power and so this is a measure of good-faith to the congregation as we seek to gradually adopt a Simplified, Accountable Leadership Structure. Second, SPRC will become a great place to introduce new members to administrative duties without the pressures associated with the Leadership Council. It will be a great place to get different people involved in the administration of the church. Third, SPRC meetings deal with confidential matters that are to be discussed in private. Having a smaller SPRC would foster greater adherence to confidentiality. Fourth, the SPRC can only have a maximum of 9 members according to the Book of Discipline. Since we are proposing a Leadership Council with more than 9 members, we thought it would be best to keep the SPRC separate so that it doesn't disrupt Leadership Council meetings. If the SPRC combined with the Leadership Council and an SPRC matter came forward, it would be required for non-SPRC members of the Leadership

Council to leave during that portion of the meeting. This would disrupt the flow of meetings and would likely make individuals, both on and off the Leadership Council, feel excluded.

Please see below our nominations for 2026:

Leadership Council

Chairperson- Name: April Stone-Mills (2026)
Lay Leader- Name: Gary Corsi-O'Connor (2026)
SPRC Chairperson- Name: Gary Corsi-O'Connor (2026)
Finance Chairperson- Name: Lynne Sprague (2026)
Finance Secretary (cannot be the same as Treasurer)- Name: Connie Kirby
Acting Church Treasurer (cannot be the same as Finance Secretary)- Name: Cathy Portaro
Trustee Chairperson- Name: John Long (2028)
Recording Secretary- Name: Kate Hankins (2027)
Pastor- Name: Rev. Cole Breit
Missions Chair- Name: Sharon Stone (2026)
United Women in Faith Chair- Name: Becky House (2026)
United Methodist Men Chair- Name: John Long (2026)

Trustees (All Trustees must be Church Members) (Roll Off Class)

Leadership Council Chair April Stone-Mills (2026)
Lay Leader Gary Corsi-O'Connor (2026)
SPRC Chair Gary Corsi-O'Connor (2026)
Finance Chair Lynne Sprague (2026)
Finance Secretary Connie Kirby (N/A)
Church Treasurer Cathy Portaro (N/A)
Trustee Chair John Long (2028)
Recording Secretary Kate Hankins (2027)
Pastor Rev. Cole Breit (N/A)

Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) (Roll Off Class)

Chair & Lay Leader - Gary Corsi-O'Connor (2026)
Tommy Wells (2026)
Cheryl Klein (2026)
Becky House (2027)
Dan Portaro (2027)
Gerhard Mels (2028)

Nominations & Leadership Development (Roll off Class)

Chair (Pastor) - Rev. Cole Breit (N/A)
Lay Leader - Gary Corsi-O'Connor (2026)
Maureen Batemen (2026)
Pat Crispell (2027)
Connie Kirby (2027)
Lisa Kearns (2028)

Building Maintenance Team

John Roberts
John Long
James Sprague
Kim Wiles

One Year Extensions

*Instead of Rolling off in 2025, these individuals have agreed to stay on for one more year through 2026.

Lay Leader - Gary Corsi-O'Connor
SPRC Chair - Gary Corsi-O'Connor
Finance Chair - Lynne Sprague
Nominations & Leadership Development - Maureen Bateman

Rolling Off in 2025

SPRC - April Stone-Mills
Trustees - Donald House, Kim Wiles, Gerhard Mels

Finance - None
Nominations & Leadership Development - Kim Wiles

Coming off of Leadership Council due to Adopting a Simplified, Accountable Leadership Structure for 2026

Trustees - James Sprague
Finance - Joshua Stone, Jimmy Truckner, Maureen Bateman
SPRC - Tommy Wells, Cheryl Klein, Dan Portaro
Vice Council Chair - Gary Crispell

Discussion:

The One Board Model was adopted in 2019 but we haven't made it there yet due to pandemic. We are making a push to move to it now by combining the Trustees and Finance into the Leadership Council.
Some folks won't continue to be a part of council; however, they can still come and be a voice.
Some people have two roles but don't get two votes.

Vote to approve- passed with none opposed

Actions Items and Communications

Where do we put the big TV from Terry?
Mounted vs. cart (potential hazard)
Would it limit the use of space as venue (could be used by those renting space)
Tabled for next month (for planning)

We will communicate the use of cameras and the location of the narcan box to the congregation.

Forward Together will create information for the straw vote.

We will continue to mention stew/ BBQ (no spring stew).

Note for Trustees if/ when we move to sell Omah St property: we should move the property line so it doesn't include the creek (making sure the property is still is big enough for ordinance minimum).

April will communicate with the congregation about being added to a council email list so guests at meetings can also have the information being discussed.

Closing Prayer

Pastor Cole ended the meeting with prayer.

Scheduled Next Meeting: October 16, 2025 7 pm at FC

Leadership Council Packet (Additional Reports; Sent via email)

AUDIT REPORT 2024–BETHANY UMC

An independent committee of the church completed an audit of the financial reports and records and reviewed the internal controls of Bethany UMC. The church is following its adopted Financial Controls, Policies, and Procedures which were revised in 2021. The treasurer is approved to write routine checks on behalf of the church and that list was updated.

Financial reporting is reliable and records are safe. The above stated policies along with The Local Church Audit Guide provided by the UMC were used in performing this review. It is our opinion that the records and reporting for 2024 fairly represent the financial condition of Bethany UMC.

Receipts and Disbursements

Cash receipts for the year were reconciled with monthly bank statement and GL#0001, and this included \$193.73 in electronic donations. Twelve deposits were traced to the cash receipts journal for posting accuracy and then to the bank statements. Weekly count sheets for these same deposits were checked for proper signatures. The source of income received on the count sheets was traced to the cash receipts journal and to the General Ledger. No concerns were noted for accu-

racy, but it was suggested that there be a weekly count sheet accompanying the electronic donation.

Of the 312 checks written, a random sampling of 33 checks was selected to review. Invoices were checked for payment accuracy and approval by 2 members of the finance team. The checks were traced through the cash disbursement journal to the General Ledger. Then they were verified by the bank statement and no irregularities were noted.

Reporting and review

The Operational Account and the Money Market Account at Truist Bank were reviewed for reporting accuracy to the General Ledger.

Beginning cash balance for Operational Account – GL#0001 – for Jan. 1, 2024 (\$124,074.17) was verified to the bank.

Total receipts (\$299,152.22) and total disbursements (\$316,991.31) for the year were verified from bank to General Ledger.

Bank statement for Dec. 31, 2024 was reconciled to the General Ledger to ensure that cash balance (\$106,235.08) at year's end was accurate.

The end of year statement prepared by the treasurer and dated Dec. 31, 2024, was reviewed and all balances were traced to the General Ledger for accuracy and agreed with the end of year report.

Finally, the Church Council Minutes were reviewed to ensure that financial activity over and above the budget was being brought to council for approval. The minutes should accurately reflect financial impact for special projects and unexpected costs through motions, approvals, and acknowledgements that such funds were used as approved. On Nov. 21, Gary Crispell on behalf of the property committee asked that the Council approve \$1,500.00 from stew fund to pay Howard Stallings Law firm. The Leadership Council approved this request. The General Ledger Accounts show the transfer from stew fund to Legal fees and legal fees were paid; however, acknowledgement to the minutes was not found.

Tax Reporting Requirements Individual employee wage records, employer's quarterly tax returns (Form 941), NC withholding (if applicable) and employee W-2 records were reviewed. A checklist of the above reports was completed in order to show accuracy of the reports submitted on behalf of Bethany UMC. Wage information was traced to the General Ledger and reports were filed on time.

BUMC Building Fund

The beginning balance for the building fund for 2024 was \$20,612.29. Monthly contributions including offerings, memorial gifts, stew fund, and other special gifts, etc. totaling \$51,311.67 were compared to the general ledger for accuracy. The loan payments for the year totaled \$55,059.96. Balance brought forward plus yearly gifts minus the payments left a balance to GL#1001 of \$16,864.00. This agreed with year end report for 2024.

Holsclaw Endowment Distribution

The endowment for 2024 was \$2,310.88. The list of local missions agreed with the leadership council minutes and the distributions indicated were correct and traced to the treasurer's report.

Other – general comments

The committee reviewed the most recent property insurance documents and acknowledged that a list of church property for insurance purposes should be available, including item description, serial number, and value. Such description and value is on file for handbells.

Maureen Bateman

Lisa Kearns

John Roberts

Date: July 8, 2025

BUMC Trustees report for September 2025- provided by Gerhard Mels

The 2616 Omah St property

Gary Crispell has reached out to Durham Community Land Trustee but didn't receive any response whatsoever.

Gary Crispell discussed the property with a local builder who plans to see if he can devise a plan for the property.

Gerhard has reached out to Durham Housing Authority and left a voicemail but haven't received a call back yet.

We approved the letter to be sent to the North Carolina Conference Board of Trustees to request their approval for selling the property.

Landscaping

The United Methodist Men plan work on the remaining roots in front of the sanctuary on Friday September 26, 2025.

Sanctuary

Cole Roofing and Construction assessed the damage to the steeple, and claims that there are a lot of trim and siding missing.

John Roberts plans to finish the work on the handrails along the ramp as soon as the time and the weather permit.

We recommend that the usage agreement for Roca Eterna must be revised with respect to fees for additional uses of the sanctuary such as extra services, weddings, celebrations, etc.

Education building

The altar must be moved out of the Harvey Black Chapel to its new location downstairs.

Sabrina's storage items have been removed from Terry's shed.

James Sprague plans to consult Bryan Foye regarding the brickwork required for creating a downward gradient towards the parking lot to address the flooding.

James Sprague and Donald House plans to follow up with Kevin regarding the soil project required for creating a downward gradient towards the parking lot to address the flooding once the brickwork has been completed.

Fellowship Center

Gerhard plans to contact Cole Roofing and Construction regarding the leaks in the mechanical room and outside the big storage room.

Kim plans to contact Preston regarding his items in the shed.

We need to address the holes in the gutters.

We disapproved the request from Anthony Henderson of Housing Opportunities and Pathways Engagement of the City of Durham to use the fellowship center for the 100 Days of Warmth project.

Gerhard plans to contact Anthony regarding specific dates during the 100 Days of Warmth project.

Playground

We need to remove the small slide as it is damaged.

BUMC Trustees report for August 2025- provided by Gerhard Mels

The 2616 Omah St property

Gary Crispell has contacted the new CEO of Habitat for Humanity Durham via email who indicated that the new building acquisitions manager will contact him but received no response whatsoever.

Gary Crispell also reached out to Durham Community Land Trustee but didn't receive a response yet.

Gerhard plans to reach out to Durham Housing Authority.

James plans to consult Kurt West of West & Woodall Real Estate to put the property on the market.

Landscaping

As soon as the weather permits, a church workday must be scheduled to remove the remaining roots in front of the sanctuary.

Sanctuary

Gerhard has signed the maintenance estimate for \$850 from Premiere Mechanical for the current quarter for the 8 HVAC units on the campus.

Gerhard has contacted Cole Roofing and Construction to assess the damage to the steeple, and the assessment is scheduled for Thursday August 21, 2025.

The audio-visual cabinet has been installed, the memorial plaque in honor of Terry Skinner has been attached, and the consecration of the cabinet is scheduled for Sunday August 17, 2025.

John Roberts plans to finish the work on the handrails along the ramp as soon as the time and the weather permit.

Education building

One pew and the altar need to be moved out of the Harvey Black Chapel.

Kim has informed Sabrina that she must negotiate Terry's family regarding her storage items.

James Sprague plans to request Dan Portaro to consult Pastor Fredy regarding the brickwork required for creating a downward gradient towards the parking lot to address the flooding.

James Sprague and Donald House plans to follow up with Kevin regarding the soil project required for creating a downward gradient towards the parking lot to address the flooding.

Fellowship Center

Jason of Eastern Air recharged the coil of the Edesa refrigerator.

Gerhard plans to contact Cole Roofing and Construction regarding the leaks in the mechanical room and outside the big storage room.

Kim plans to contact Preston regarding his items in the shed.

We need to address the holes in the gutters.

Playground

We need to remove the small slide as it is damaged.

BUMC Trustees report for June 2025- provided by Gerhard Mels

The 2616 Omah St property

Gerhard has reached out to Habitat for Humanity Durham by means of an email message, an online request form, and two voicemail messages, but received no response whatsoever.

Kim plans to reach out to Cathy Carlson regarding Habitat for Humanity Durham.

Gerhard passed the plans for the property on to Dawn Hill-Alston of the City of Durham.

Mr. Lopez has delivered the signed lease agreement to the church office.

Landscaping

DJS Lawn and Landscaping, LLC has resprayed some of the plants on the campus with the appropriate chemicals.

Sanctuary

The long pew at the back of the sanctuary has been removed and replaced by the short pew at the sound station. The sound cabinet has been placed in position. The next step is to complete the installation of the sound cabinet.

CWJ Heating & Air Cond., Inc. worked on the HVAC unit for the sanctuary on Wednesday June 4, 2025 and claimed that the issue was addressed after replacing a worn transformer.

Gerhard plans to contact Cole Roofing and Construction to assess the damage to the steeple.

John Roberts plans to finish the work on the handrails along the ramp as soon as time and the weather permit.

We approved the request from Ideal Day Program to use the parking spaces on the west side of the sanctuary during business hours on weekdays provided that the vehicle owners park at their own risk and that the number of spaces used are limited.

Education building

The pews in the Harvey Black Chapel have been removed and were picked up by their new owners.

John Long has installed the new locks for the Harvey Black Chapel.

Kim has informed Sabrina to make a plan with her items that are stored in Terry's shed.

James Sprague plans to request Dan Portaro to consult Pastor Fredy regarding the brickwork required for creating a downward gradient towards the parking lot to address the flooding.

James Sprague plans to follow up with Kevin regarding the soil project required for creating a downward gradient towards the parking lot to address the flooding.

Fellowship Center

Kim plans to contact Preston regarding his items in the shed.

John Long plans to seal the remaining leaking vents in the mechanical room.

We need to address the holes in the gutters.

Litter

We need to determine why the garbage bin at the bus stop has been removed.

We need to keep an eye on the litter scattered across the campus.

United Methodist Men report for September 2025- provided by Gerhard Mels

Projects

The workday for removing the remaining roots in front of the sanctuary is scheduled for Friday September 26, 2025.

John Roberts plans to order the pork butts with the order for the Brunswick stew.

The Henry Garrett Memorial Breakfast is scheduled for Sunday November 23, 2025.

We plan to consider a special project for the 2025 Christmas season.

United Methodist Men report for August 2025- provided by Gerhard Mels

Projects

We decided to schedule a workday for removing the remaining roots in front of the sanctuary at our meeting on Tuesday September 9, 2025.

Dan Portaro and John Roberts mounted the gold plaque honoring the memory of Terry Skinner on the new audio-visual cabinet.

The consecration for the audio-visual cabinet is scheduled for Sunday August 17, 2025.

The barbeque fundraiser is scheduled for Friday September 26, 2025.

United Methodist Men report for June 2025- provided by Gerhard Mels

Projects

We decided to donate the remaining 20 pounds of barbeque to Lisa Kearns and her team for providing a meal to our brothers and sisters at Urban Ministry on Friday June 27, 2025.

Dan Portaro plans to acquire a gold plaque honoring the memory of Terry Skinner to be mounted on the new sound cabinet.

A church workday has been scheduled for 7 AM on Saturday July 12, 2025 to cut down the plants (excluding the Nandina plants) in front of the sanctuary sprayed by DJS Landscaping, LLC.

John Long plans to seal the remaining leaking vents in the mechanical room in the fellowship center.

We plan a fundraiser for the Jacob M. Bauer Memorial scholarship fund during the fall of 2025. The tentative date is Friday September 26, 2025.

We are averaging 47 at Worship on Sunday.

SPRC – report provided by Gary Corsi-O'Connor

The SPRC met on August 10 to gather committee members' input on the information that would go in the State of the Church report that is due by Charge Conference on Nov. 2 for NCCUMC. This has been compiled and has been downloaded to the NCCUMC website as of Sept 8, 2025. We also discussed salary increases for the paid staff at Bethany and the committee recommended salary increases. This was then sent to Finance for inclusion in calculations for the proposed budget.

UWF – report provided by Becky House

The UWF put together approximately 350 bags of school supplies. 224 bags went to grades 1-5 and 113 to pre-K at Hillandale. We also gave 4 bags to our neighbor school. Thanks to all that participated in this mission project.

Treasurer's Report – provided by Cathy Portaro

General Fund Balance \$5,316.08

Building Fund Balance \$8,934, enough to cover loan payment for September, \$116.10 short of having enough for October which we will probably receive. October Stew will probably generate enough to cover November, after that who knows if we will have enough to cover December. Please prayerfully consider giving more to the Building Fund.

Cash in checking \$89,841.34

Collected for Organ Repairs \$1,463. This covers all but \$672 of the cost to repair our organ which Jeff so beautifully plays.

Thank you for your special donations.

I have expanded the Financial Report to include a 5th column showing our budget balance to date. It shows that we still owe \$12,251 on our apportionments.

[PDF of Financial Report](#) as of September 10, 2025 is attached for further details or questions.

Missions Report – provided by Dan Portaro

October is Undies Sunday month.

BETHANY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Sanctuary Address: 2809 Guess Road
Mailing Address: 2903 Guess Road
Durham NC 27705

Phone: 919-477-6659
Email: bethanyumc1@gmail.com
Calendar (LINK): <https://tinyurl.com/54jvdxv4>
Website (LINK): <https://bethanyumcdurham.org/>



4 Hanna Whitfield	30 Mickey Roberts
17 Peter Crispell	31 Gary Crispell
27 Matt Fisher	



16 Ryan and Amy Walter

October