

Bethany News



MARCH 2026



A PEOPLE CALLED BETHANY



**A RECONCILING AND
LIGHTHOUSE
CONGREGATION**



MONEY MATTERS

News from Finance

MONEY MATTERS—MARCH

General Fund (as of 2/14)	\$5,334.35
Received for General Fund (as of 2/22)	\$18,893.67
Total Funds Available	\$24,228.02
Monthly Expenses From General Fund	\$18,974.56
Designated gifts to other funds	
Building Fund	\$1,125.00
Backpack Buddies	\$600.00
Hospitality/Bereavement	\$131.00
Human Relations	\$100.00
Little Free Pantry	\$1,500.00
Methodist Home For Children	\$230.00
Project Agape	\$200.00
Showers of Blessings	\$150.00
Urban Ministries	\$100.00

SNOWFLAKES AND COOKIES. Unable to gather for 2 weeks due to snow and ice brought concern to the Finance team.. Your generous gifts made it possible to pay all bills and salaries, except apportionments. Thanks to Kim's cookies, \$1,235.00 was donated to help with our benevolences. Thank you Bethany for your faithfulness !



Dear Bethany Church Family

Ash Wednesday begins the season of Lent which is a 40 day period leading up to Easter Sunday that focuses on stripping things back in our lives and committing to a disciplined life that seeks to connect with God and God's will in our own lives. You will often hear about someone giving up something for Lent whether it is chocolate, a certain snack, a habit, or something else. Often the focus is on giving up rather than receiving something new. Both are necessary in our lives as humans. Sometimes we need to give up things that no longer serve ourselves, God, or one another. Sometimes we need to start something new in our lives in order to create abundant life with God.



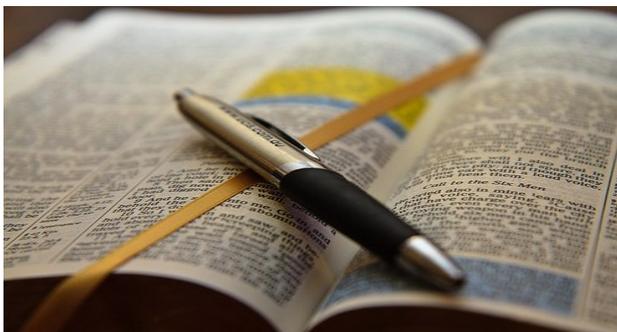
Lent is a time for us to intentionally take away and intentionally start something new. If you have talked to me about my time at Duke Divinity School, I will inevitably share about how Duke deprived me of my ability to enjoy reading. With four years of constantly being expected to "read" hundreds of pages a week for different classes, I became fatigued from looking at words strung together and comprehending meaning from them. Every essay, every article, every book, every journal, every word source material became laborious to engage. Everything I read was diversely packed with deep scholarship focusing on subjects like theology, ecclesiology, missiology, eschatology, pneumatology, christology, soteriology, mystagogy, theodicy, homiletics, hermeneutics, ethics, or history (yes, many of those are nerdy theology subjects). I didn't have time nor wanted to try to read anything else aside from what was on the syllabus and what was required for my pastoral responsibilities.

Once I graduated, I thought I needed to continue to read scholarly, ministry-related books because that's just what I'm supposed to do. I found quickly that my mind and body could not focus on what I was reading. I didn't want to read and so I stopped (except for what was required for my work as a pastor). I kept books on my bedside table but barely opened them. I let my mind rest for a season. I let the "chore" of reading that Duke had trained into me, wash away and stay in the past. Not continually reading helped to reset my mind in how I approached reading. I got to rebuild a new structure for how I would go about reading. Since kindergarten all my educators told me what I was required to read and now, no longer being in school, I have been given a new opportunity to discover what reading can be when I get to choose the books.

About nine months ago I decided to try to just read books that seemed fun to me. No ministry, no theology, no complex, difficult thinking. From biography to classics to love story to mystery to fantasy, I soaked up the stories and every word in them. Since then, I have found that the words come easier now, my eyes don't glaze over, my body does not shut down and this has carried over to those complex, theological readings that I thought were the problem. The problem wasn't the reading material, the problem was I needed to give up something in order to gain something new. I had to give up reading in order to find the goodness in it again. I had to abstain in order to come back to it with a new perspective. I do believe that is what Lent is about. Of letting go of things so that we might gain new insights and ways of being. God hopes that we might give up things that are dragging us down and might be detrimental to ourselves and others. And God hopes that we might create disciplines that draw us toward the flourishing of ourselves, God's will in the world, and our neighbors.

During this Lent, may you find those things that need to take a break and discover the new things that will bring life to you and others,

Pastor Cole



LENTEN BIBLE STUDY

Link to video recording :

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ixaeMpuc5QA>

The Book of Revelation

A Study on Challenging Political Lordship, Divinity & Allegiance

**FEB
22**

Historical Context

What was it like living in the Roman Empire?
What did 1st century Christians experience?

**MAR
1**

What is Revelation?

Is it a book, a letter, a fantasy?
Who is it written to & why is it being written?

**MAR
8**

Apocalyptic Imagery: Monsters & More

Why is Revelation filled with violence, monsters, and other strange things?
Why is 666 such a “scary” number?

**MAR
15**

Interpreting Revelation for Today

Is this text useful to us in the 21st century?
How might John’s message relate to us?



[This Photo](#) by Un-

Thank you to all who contributed to the Cookie Sale that raised over \$1,200.00 to help with our apportionments! Kim's cookies are delicious and this has become an important ministry that supports our apportionments.



UMM BARBECUE

The men will be cooking their famous BBQ on Friday, March 6, from 8 to 5. You may place your order anytime by calling Tommy Wells or the office. The barbecue will be ready for pick up on Saturday morning, March 7, between 8 & 10 a.m.. The cost is \$11.00 per pound. The proceeds from the sale help to support UMM projects and the Jacob Bauer Scholarship Fund.

Fellowship Dinner

March 3rd is the day and the time is 6:00 p.m. for our fellowship dinner. The hospitality team will be serving the same meal that is served at Urban Ministries . It will be sloppy joes, cheesy potatoes, applesauce and cookies.

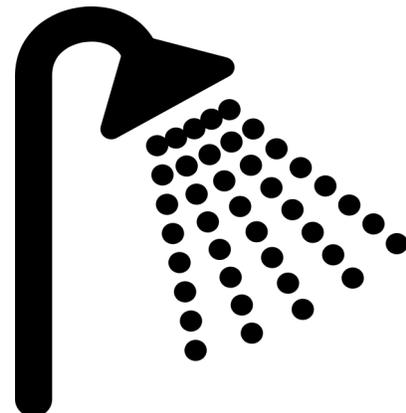
Interested in helping with hospitality, let Lisa Kearns, Maureen Bateman, or Becky House know.



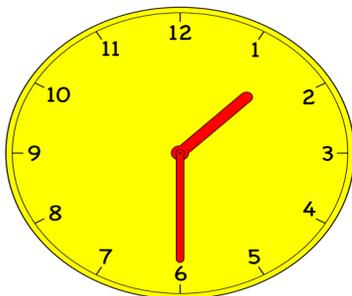
PANCAKES AND SHOWERS

On the 3rd Saturday of each month, Bethany's fellowship center is a hub of activity. The pancake gang is busy making pancakes and frying sausage for ALL!

In addition to the pancake breakfast, the Showers of Blessings team offers the opportunity for any of our unhoused neighbors to get a shower and clean clothes. Thanks to all for your help with these important ministries.



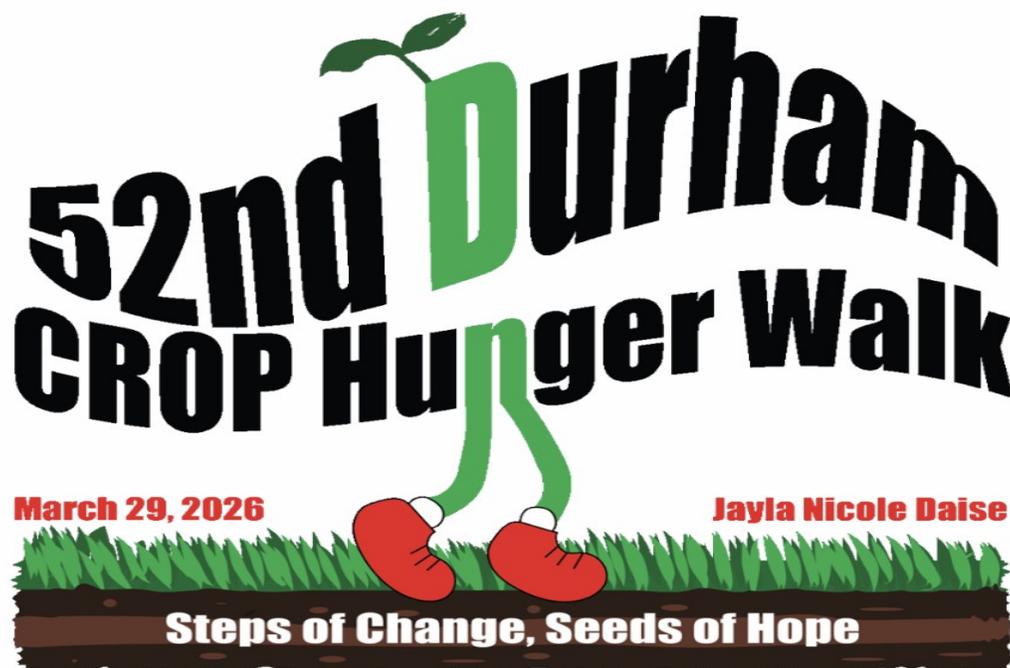
DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME



SPRING FORWARD

MARCH 8, 2026

The 2026 Durham CROP Hunger Walk is scheduled for Sunday March 29, 2026!



Join us for the 52nd Durham CROP Hunger Walk

Durham Agencies We Support
Antioch Builds Community
Durham Farmers Market
Families Moving Forward
Feed My Sheep
Food Bank of Central & Eastern NC
Housing for New Hope
Emmanuel Food Pantry
La Semilla Food Pantry
Meals on Wheels of Durham
Mt. Calvary UCC Food Pantry
Open Table Ministry
Society of St. Andrew
Threshold Clubhouse
Urban Ministries of Durham

Sharon Stone is the contact for information regarding CROP . Donations are welcome. Make your check out to Bethany and on the memo line indicate CROP.

**Additional information regarding CROP Hunger Walk can be found :
durhamcropwalk.org**

GOOD TO KNOW

Nancy Kneepkens is on the advisory committee for Aging Well Durham. Aging Well and the Durham County Library are offering open sessions for people to come and receive technology help. The first session was in February and continues every 3rd Tuesday. Next one is March 17.

Technology Help Drop-in Hours

Aging Well Durham
1209 N Elizabeth Street
Durham, NC 27701



Get individual help
with:

- Basic computer skills
- Connecting to online resources
- Using your smart phone or tablet
- Improving your online security
- More!

Every third Tuesday
2pm-3:30pm
(starting Feb 17)

For more information
and parking details
contact Sam:

sam@agingwelldurham.org
919-884-7741 x802





United
Women
in Faith



Tuesday Morning Circle

The Tuesday Morning Circle will meet March 10 at 10:30 am.. If you'd like to join a UWF group and don't like to drive at night, this one is for you. Contact Bobbi Wheeler for more information.

Tuesday Evening Circle

The Tuesday Evening circle will meet on March 10 at 7 pm in the Fellowship Center. All women are invited and Becky House is a contact for this group.

United Methodist Men

The UMM will meet on March 11 at 7:00 pm in the fellowship center conference room. All men of the church are invited to attend . See John Long for additional information.

Vital Conversations

Vital Conversations will meet twice during the month of March to complete their current study. The dates are Thursday, March 5, and Tuesday, March 17. Both Meetings are at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom Heather Fisher is the contact for this group.





Worship Team

For March

Communion Stewards: Maureen Bateman & Marian Williams

Acolyte

Mar 1	April Stone-Mills
Mar 8	Josh/James Stone
Mar 15	Sharon Stone
Mar 22	Janice Stone-Mills
Mar 29	Gerhard Mels

Liturgist

Mar 1	Gerhard Mels
Mar 8	Lynne Sprague
Mar 15	Heather Fisher
Mar 22	Kate Hankins
Mar 29	Casey Breit

Open & Close Church

Mar 1	Jimmy Truckner
Mar 8	Lynne Sprague
Mar 15	Sharon Stone
Mar 22	Dan/Cathy Portaro
Mar 29	Donald/Becky House

Ushers

Mar 1	Donald House/John Long
Mar 8	Gary & Lisa Kearns
Mar 15	Marcia Painter/Cheryl Klein
Mar 22	Gerhard Mels/Dan Portaro
Mar 29	Earl Kirby/Pam Hall

If you are unable to do assigned worship activity, please arrange to switch with someone or find a willing volunteer.

Please let the office know if it involves a liturgist or an acolyte, as those names are always listed in the bulletin.

Thank you for your willingness to serve on the Worship Team!

Bethany UMC Council Meeting

January 15, 2026

Present: April Stone-Mills, Pastor Cole Breit, Jimmy Truckner, John Long, Lynne Sprague, Dan Portaro, Cathy Portaro, Sharon Stone, Gerhard Mels, Kate Hankins

Absent: Connie Kirby, Becky House

Visitors: Janice Stone-Mills, Kim Wiles, John Roberts, Elaine Truckner

Minutes Taker: Kate Hankins

Opening Prayer

April opened the meeting with a word of prayer.

Minutes

November council meeting minutes were approved via email. There was no meeting in December.

Spiritual and Leadership Formation- led by Pastor Cole

2 Corinthians 12: 1-10

Stories told by others can help us with our faith.

Boasting for others rather than ourselves.

Staying humble: "when I'm weak, then I'm strong"

Review of new people

A new person sang in choir last week; they were visiting from another church.

A few visitors have been in FT Sunday school, some may return.

Goal and Visioning Work

We've completed our 2025 goals and will create new ones to work towards for 2026 at the Council Retreat on Feb 15 after worship!

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

Omah Street Property- presented by John Long

This is a follow-up of a conversation I had with Kurt West, January 12th, in regards to the activity at the Omah Street property. He advised me that they had had five or six calls on the property. After the people had gone by and walked around the outside of the house he only had response from three people that called back. All said that the house needed too much work for the price we were asking. He had not received any offers. He did say that the price for the property at \$155,000 offer was still on the table that we had received a couple of weeks ago. That individual was going to tear the house down. He thought given the conditions of the house that we might want to lower the price to around \$215,000 to see if that generates some offers. If I get more information I will advise.

Advice was given that we will potentially receive more offers on the property if we lower the price. We have received offers for \$120,000 and \$155,000. Our asking price is \$230,000 currently.

John made a motion to reduce the asking price to \$215,000; Dan seconded.

Vote- passed with none opposed

Property Damage- general discussion

The broken window in the door has been replaced (cost was \$926.54), the garbage was cleaned up, and the damaged free library was fixed.

There were no pictures of the incident (camera malfunctioned), but he was observed. We are unsure if he's been arrested.

A fire was built behind the FC by the same person.

Do we want to do anything differently?

Police gave us a form to allow them to trespass anyone after hours from our property (it lasts for 6 months). We will fill this out.

We have a no trespassing sign at the stew hut already but need to place one at the FC.

Trustees can create and put up no trespassing signs.

Could we add a Ring/ simply safe system that uploads photos?

We should look into this and can potentially add to our current security systems.

We can discuss cameras more during the February retreat.

Reconciling Ministries Network- presented by Elaine Truckner

The form, [Affiliating With RMN: New Reconciling Ministries Form](#), has been completed and is ready to be submitted. This is the official form confirming Bethany UMC's vote to become a Reconciling congregation. Maureen Bateman will submit the form online after approval at this meeting.

Maureen and April have agreed to be our two RMN contact people.

Forward Together Reconciling Sunday School Class proposes that Bethany UMC make an annual donation to Reconciling Ministries Network following the church vote to affiliate with RMN. The Leadership Council is to decide the amount and how it will be funded.

Kate seconded.

Discussion:

There is not a requirement or a minimum donation amount.

We donated as a class for 2025 but will donate as the church for 2026.

We could do a special Sunday collection so it is not a budget line item.

Cathy can create a fund to donate to for RMN.

Cathy motioned that we send a \$100 donation as we join RMN; April/ Dan seconded

This is not coming out of the general fund but will be funded through designated giving, so it will be no burden to the congregation.

Vote- passed with none opposed

Elaine proposed that the Leadership Council choose a date for a church-wide "family portrait" to be taken following worship, to then be submitted to RMN with the affiliation form.

It was decided that Feb 1 is photo day!

Board of Missions Loan Application- presented by Gerhard Mels

New Trustees need to sign the loan application, but a few folks can get it together so it can be ready to sign.

Gerhard will get the form together and contact John L/ office with any questions. Cathy/ Lynne will need to do the financial info.

This is for a \$350,000 loan for the Fellowship Center, to get a lower interest rate of 3% compared to the current mortgage.

We will pre-apply for the loan and accept once Omaha St sells (need to confirm how long preapproval is ok).

Missions- presented by Sharon Stone

Feb 15 is Methodist Home for Children Sunday.

The 52nd Crop Walk is March 29th.

Human relations day is this Sunday.

Planning Retreat

Feb. 15 (After worship)

Zoom will be an option

Lunch will be provided

Actions Items and Communications

April will notify the congregation that the church-wide family photo for RMN will be taken on February 1st.

She will also ask if anyone else wants to be added to the list to receive council emails.

We will be working on adding no trespassing signs (Trustees), filling out the police trespassing form (Pastor Cole), and filling

out the Board Loan application (Gerhard and Team).

Should we have a spring stew?

Though we need the money, we lack the help.

It was decided that we will not have a spring stew.

The UMM are planning a BBQ on March 6. We could maybe add a bake sale. By the lb. is the most cost-effective way for us (rather than plates).

Closing Prayer

Pastor Cole ended the meeting with prayer.

Scheduled Next Meeting: Planning Retreat, Feb. 15, 2026

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](https://tinyurl.com/54jvdxv4)
Website (LINK): <https://>



8 Cathy Sensing

9 Sharon Stone

10 Susan Greenhill

10 Sabrina Williams

14 Dan Portaro

24 Donald House

25 Haley Taylor

29 Jane Roberts

