

The Open Door

Bethel Presbyterian Church, PCUSA
Kingston, TN

Volume 23, Issue 1

January 2026

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HOME Focus Items

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Interesting People

**“WHEN WE STUDY TOGETHER,
WE LEARN TOGETHER, WE
WORK TOGETHER, AND WE
PROSPER TOGETHER.”**

Annual Congregational Meeting Called

**Hands of Mercy Focus
Foods for January
Canned Pasta
(Spaghetti-O's, Chef
Boyardee, etc.)**

*HOME collection basket in
the Gathering Area.*

*Cash or check donations can
be placed in the offering.*

*Thank you for supporting
local food pantry efforts.*

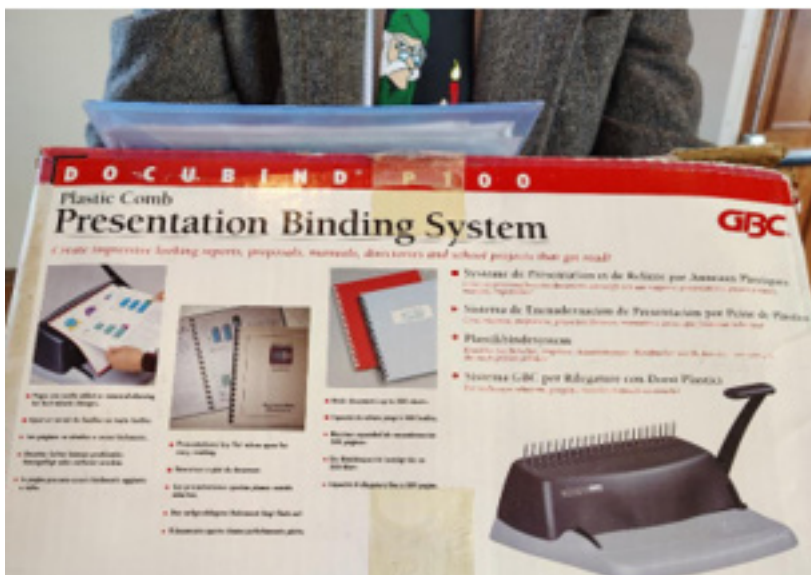
The Session has called the Annual Congregational /Corporation Meeting for Sunday, February 8, 2026 in the Fellowship Hall immediately following Worship. Lunch will be provided. Please attend if you can. We will hear the Corporation report and vote on three members for the Nominating Committee. Rebecca Pierce for the 2025 Nominating Committee will present three nominees as 'members at large' for the 2026 Nominating Committee. Nominations can also be made from the floor with prior approval from the nominee. The Session has already elected two elders to serve on the 2026 Nominating Committee: Rebecca Pierce and Julie Barber. The Pastor's Terms of Call will be presented to the congregation for approval. Instead of the Annual Report Booklet; there will be brief oral reports.

Griffith Book Comb Repair

Do you need the plastic book binding comb of an existing cookbook repaired?

Gary Griffith can help!

Linda Brown says if you want your contributions to count in 2025, you must have it in the Bethel office by December 31, or if you are mailing it, it must be postmarked December 31, 2025





January Birthdays

- 1 Mike Wakefield
- 2 Thomas McGill
- 9 Matt Hines
- 11 Jake Horton
- 16 Tollie Banker
- 19 Ryan Preston
- 21 Henry Coen
River Phillips
- 22 Laura Walker
- 25 Katie Dungan
Pat Hale
- 26 Jolie King
Declan Rourke
- 28 Ken Dungan
- 29 Jacob Simpson
Kirk Steele



Session Highlights from December 14, 2025

Elaine Steele did the Session devotion.

The four incoming Elders (Joe Coen, Suzanne Lukat, Joni Morgan, and Fred Swindler) spoke with the Session about their Faith Journey. They will be installed on January 18.

The Session has called the Annual Congregational /Corporation Meeting for Sunday, February 8, 2026 in the Fellowship Hall immediately following Worship. Lunch will be provided.

Worship Attendance: the November 2025 average in-person Sanctuary attendance was 68 (actual head count).

Christian Education - The youth signed Christmas cards for Advent - the cards were mailed to "shut-ins." The youth colored ornaments for the Gathering Area Christmas tree and decorated the Fellowship Hall tree.

Finance - Bethel's Budget for 2026 was discussed. The Session approved the Budget. The Pastor's Terms of Call will be presented to the congregation for approval at the February 8 Annual Meeting.

Parish Life - January 11 - pot luck,
February 8 - Annual meeting with salad and baked potato,
February 17 - Shrove Tuesday,
March 8 - pot luck.

Personnel & Staff Support

this is a new name for this Team. The Team feels that the new name more accurately reflects what they do. The former name was Administration & Worship.

Property - A plaque Session Highlights from December 14, 2025 was made for Jim and Karen Shawl to honor their work for the arts and a plaque was made to honor Sam Davis, who made the bookshelves in Bethel's Library. Another plaque will be made to honor Andy Avel, who made the beautiful table in Bethel's kitchen. The table has been refurbished by Ted Dailey.

Service - On December 13, about 30 Christmas Baskets were distributed at Bethel's Fellowship Hall. There will be Kingston Recital Events on March 1, April 19, and May 22, 2026.

Dianne Griffith was the Commissioner to the November 18, 2025 Presbytery meeting.

Cathy McDowell,
Clerk of Session

Senior Church Members (at least 70 ½ years old) can reduce their tax burden by donating to the church and favorite charitable organizations through their IRA accounts.

If you are 70 ½ years old or older the Internal Revenue Service requires you to receive REQUIRED MINIMUM DISTRIBUTIONS (RMD) each year from your IRA accounts. These distributions are taxable when withdrawn by the taxpayer. You can make these distributions nontaxable by having your financial institution pay your charitable contributions (including donations to your church) directly to qualified charitable organizations. Non-profits that are eligible to receive tax-deductible contributions are considered qualified. Bethel is









an organization qualified to receive such contributions and is happy to receive your qualified charitable distribution (QCD) from your IRA.

Bethel will provide you with an acknowledgement of the contribution and your financial institution will report the non-taxable QCD to the IRS on Form 1099-R.

Making your contribution to our church through a QCD can benefit you, the taxpayer, by reducing your taxable income while you support our church and other charitable organizations. A QCD reduces taxable income

without requiring you to itemize deductions. Please consult with your financial advisor to see if this could benefit you. Any 2025 contribution must be post-marked no later than 12/31/25 or received by Bethel by December 31, 2025, to be included in the Bethel contributions for 2025.

Bethel Finance Team

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	Clerk of Session Cathy McDowell sessionclerk@bethelpcusa.org

**Seeking Sextons
for January, February,
March
Signup sheet in
Gathering Area.**



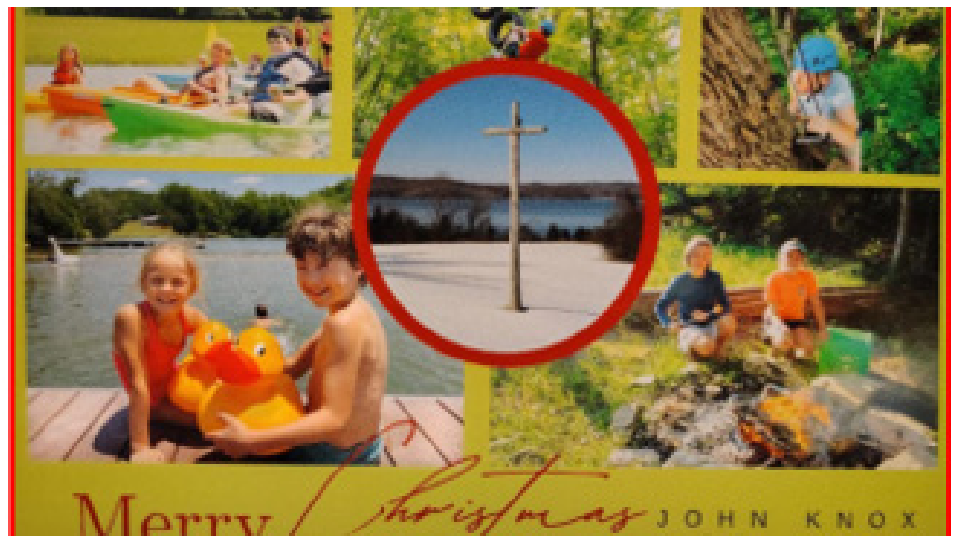
On a trip to Canada in 1992, Jeanette McElhinney sat in the passenger seat sewing together pieces of a soon-to-be splendid tree skirt. The strips of patterns and colorful Christmas solids were coming together nicely. Unexpectedly, the trip was cut short and husband Mike drove the family back. The unfinished project landed in a closet for decades.

Recently, Jeanette took the pieces to the Roane Fabric Exchange in hopes someone could use it, finish it, love it. Enthusiastically, Jan Rybka and Susan Holton finished the last stitches in time for adorning Bethel's tree outside the sanctuary. Wrapping this handmade tree skirt around a twinkly tree with handmade ornaments is a blessing, a friendship connection among us, a heartfelt gift.

Thanks to all who rang!



Summer Camp -> <https://www.johnknoxcenter.org/>



Bethel's Calendar Radar

- Sunday, December 28, "The Christmas Story" intergenerational music during worship
- Sunday, January 18, Installation of elders for Session class of 2028
- Sunday, January 18, Hands of Mercy collection, canned pasta & non-perishable food items
- Sunday, February 8, Annual Congregation Meeting; 2026 budget, pastor terms of call, committee reports
-

Tuesday, February 17,
Shrove Tuesday Pancake
supper

· Wednesday, February 18,
Ash Wednesday worship

· Sunday, April 5, Easter



Bethel Always and Bethel Forever are available in the church office along with sturdy gift bags. One book is \$20 and two are \$35 to cover the cost of printing. Get yours today.

From Amber Jacks, Senior Services Director at Mid-East Community Action Agency

, “This year, as in many years past, the Mid-East Community Action Agency Senior Nutrition program is joining forces with Meals on Wheels America and Subaru for the Subaru Share the Love Campaign! We are pleased to work alongside Sutherlin Subaru, 531 Gallaher Rd, Kingston, to combat senior

isolation and food insecurity.

If you are in the market for a new vehicle this year, with every new Subaru purchased or leased, Subaru and its retailers are donating a minimum of \$300 to charities, like Meals on Wheels, from November 20, 2025 through January 2,

2026. Over the last 17 years, Subaru and its retailers have donated nearly 5 million meals and friendly visits to seniors served by local Meals on Wheels programs nationwide.” For more information on the campaign please visit www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/sharethelove



Reminder: Copies of each month's *Open Door* are accessible from Bethel's website: bethelpcusa.org Also, copies of each week's bulletin announcements and a link to Bethel's online directory.

Print copies of *Open Door* are available in the Gathering Area.
These Days devotional booklets are available in the Gathering Area



Shout out to a few Joyful Season helpers around Bethel operating behind the scenes.

Thank you, Marilyn Harris, for baking and frosting the Jesus birthday cupcakes.

Thank you, Jan and Alfred Rybka, for printing and pressing the elementary class green shirts and for designing and producing the purple stained-glass paper ornaments.

Thank you, Kirk Steele, for orchestrating Bethel's caroling outing. Thank you, Rebecca and Joe Pierce, for hosting the caroling party.

The Recital Series Spring Concerts are coming: SAVE THE DATES!

SUNDAY, MARCH 1 at 3pm...
Authentic, old time east Tennessee shaped note singing from the New Columbia Sacred Harp by the Roane Choral Society Ambassadors, Living history of Appalachian east Tennessee! Brenda Luggie, director

SUNDAY, APRIL 19 at 3pm...
Celtic harp and bagpipes by musical artist Kelly Shipe, an east Tennessee native, a former Miss Knoxville, and an alum of Cincinnati Conservatory of Music. Music of Scotland and beyond for Tartan Day, complete with kilts!

FRIDAY, MAY 22 at 7pm...
Trio Appassionata: Christine Lau, violin; Amanda Parker, cello; Slade Trammell, piano. Romantic music, the likes of which, I dare say, has never been heard live in Kingston. An utterly extraordinary aural experience of unforgettable beauty!

All concerts are in the Sanctuary at Bethel Presbyterian Church, followed by a themed sweet reception in the Gathering Area. No ticket is needed, only your smiling face. Please join us, and bring your friends and neighbors. We look forward to seeing you there!



Giving Report 2025 Bethel and Nationally 9/30/25

Through the generosity of many, it adds up to a lot!

So what was accomplished through our gifts. \$2, 334, 289 was award to presbyteries and Presbyterian Disaster Assistance partners. Emphasis was placed on helping congregations and mid-councils protecting migrants. International grants supported work with Internally Displaced Persons in South Sudan and refugees from Ukraine.

National Response: Teams helped in 25 presbyteries. 75 grants were dispersed totaling \$879, 016. These gifts addressed immediate unmet needs as well as long-term recovery.

International Response: \$1,176,302 as disbursed to 18 countries, including Haiti, Malawi, Israel/Palestine, Ukraine, South Sudan, Pakistan, Nepal, Dominican Republic, and Democratic Republic of Congo. There are so many needs around the world.

Counter Stories Productions: Support for documentaries such as Evicting the American Dream, Trouble the Water, and additional work on documentaries on gun violence, industrial pollution and environmental racism.

Bethel 2025

Christmas Joy Offering \$1,402
One Great Hour of Sharing \$2,288
Pentecost \$715.40

Nationally 2024

\$2,636,860
\$6,521,210
\$786,246

Nationally 2025

\$1,958,177
\$4,842,682
\$501,901

Taco ~ Cupcakes ~ Games ~ Movie Nite



Way to go, Brad for bringing that ax throwing game. Happy Birthday Alex. Yes, you can mix peanut butter and sour cream on your taco. New favorite game is Pickles to Penguins! Loved the happy ending to the movie. Thank you, Bethel for providing a space to hang out.

The Book Club Meets Monthly at Bethel Library

Do you love a good story? Do you enjoy lively conversations, purposeful debate, and low-stress listening to diverse perspectives? Come to Bethel's Barber Library on the first Thursday of each month at 10:00 to join in an hour of fun.

Discussions are led by rotating volunteers each month. This is a great way to discover acclaimed books, new genres, unfamiliar places that you might not otherwise read or appreciate. These friends build a sense of community based on a shared love of reading about

strong fictional characters with vivid storylines whether you are enthusiastically chatty or quietly reflective. You will get to talk about the complex personalities and winding narratives you love, loathe, find bewildering, or crave for more.

Each December, the Book Club typically selects eleven books for the upcoming year. You are invited to brunch on Thursday, December 4 in the Fellowship Hall to be part of that process. Send your email to the church office to be added to the distribution list of almost three dozen that leaders Maggie Dieter

and Peggy Griffin maintain. An optional \$5 annual donation is pooled together to focus on literacy such as their one-time purchase of a few textbooks for eighth graders at Grace School in Limuru, Kenya.

There is plenty of room for newcomers and plenty of familiar faces. Your next great read awaits.

BethelPresbyterianChurch
203 South Kentucky Street
Kingston, TN 37763



January 2026

