

# The Open Door

## Bethel Presbyterian Church, PCUSA

### Kingston, TN

Volume 23, Issue 3

March 2026

*In this Issue:*

*HOME Focus Items*

*March Birthdays*

*Upcoming Events*

*Interesting People*

*Family Promise Update*

### *Hands of Mercy Focus Foods for March*

*Canned Fruit / Applesauce  
HOME collection basket in  
the Gathering Area.*

*Our in-worship collection will  
be Sunday, August 17. Cash or  
check donations can be placed  
in the offering plate.*

*Thank you for supporting our  
local food pantry efforts to*



### *Session Highlights from February 15, 2026*

Kathy Banker did the Session devotion.

**Worship Attendance:** the January 2026 average in-person Sanctuary attendance was 67 (actual head count).

**Registered Agent for our Corporation** - appreciation to Jill McMaster, who has been our Registered Agent for about 8 years. Jill has resigned this position due to health issues and she has moved to Knoxville.

Mike McElhinney volunteered to assume this role. The Session passed a motion to accept Jill's resignation and to elect Mike McElhinney as Bethel's new Registered Agent. The Registered Agent serves as a point of contact between Bethel and the State. Mike is already the President of our Corporation and on the Board of Directors. The State verified that Mike could hold all three positions simultaneously.

**Active Member, Robinette Garner** passed on February 6, 2026.

**Christian Education** - Bonnie Phillips is in charge of the Easter Egg Hunt this year. Kathy Banker would welcome thoughts about Summer Sunday School and Vacation Bible School.

**Finance** - this Team continually monitors Bethel's income and

expenses.

**Parish Life** - March 8 - pot luck; April 3rd and 4th - potential baking for Easter with youth; April 5 - Easter and resurrection rolls and bake benefit; and April 12 - pot luck.

**Property** - Name plaques for Karen & Jim Schall - Arts & Craft Room, Sam Davis - library shelves, and Andy Avel - large table in the kitchen. Adam Gallaher received the plaques but they were bent during shipment and have been reordered. There will be a Dedication at some point. A new dishwasher has been installed in Bethel's kitchen.

**Personnel & Staff Support** - the Team will be working on staff evaluations this year.

**Service** - The Session passed a motion to allow Tech 4 All to use Bethel as a site for their classes. Paul Jackson will determine whether there is adequate WiFi capability - at least 100 MB/sec is needed. Tech 4 All is a volunteer-powered 501(c)3 nonprofit advancing digital equity and environmental sustainability across East Tennessee.

**Joe Coen** was the Commissioner to the February 14th Presbytery meeting at First Presbyterian Church, Sweetwater. See report elsewhere in this Open Door.

**Cathy McDowell**  
**Clerk of Session**

Happy Birthday

March Birthdays

- 1 Elaine Steele  
Pat Vickers
- 2 Dianne Griffith  
Bina Kirby
- 3 Mae Gallaher
- 4 Mark Preston
- 5 Hailey Choate  
Vic King  
Dan McDowell
- 8 Charlie Coen
- 9 Kathy Banker
- 12 Janna Brown
- 13 Linda Choate  
Gary Griffith
- 14 Travis Brown  
Shawn Hart
- 15 Will Jackson
- 17 Hayden Jacks
- 19 Stacey Copeland  
Marge Hettrick
- 26 Justin Murr
- 27 Amy Gurtis  
Greg Murr
- 28 Peggy Sheppard
- 29 Nancy King
- 30 Viviana Vanegas

Happy Birthday

Puzzle!

Find and circle these words associated with the Lenten journey to the cross.

colt	denial	kiss	repent
confess	donkey	lots	silver
cross	forsaken	palms	sins
crown	Gethsemane	penance	suffer
crucifixion	Golgotha	Pilate	thorns
death	hosanna	prayer	vigil

E N A M E S H T E G R L W Y  
 C L E U X B M T H B U C W B  
 N R I K Y P A T E T I Y X Y  
 A V J G A L B R E Y A R P B  
 N G N L I S N L A I N E D X  
 E W M P R V R D H B N R D F  
 P S O G O L G O T H A B S C  
 D L N R O C O N F E S S I K  
 O T H T C P E K W U O U N D  
 M N S H N P W E D R H F S K  
 U N F O E T K Y C S G F O E  
 H E C R E V L I S W Q E C M  
 H V H N C X S O C C J R L O  
 F Q E S U D S H C A A Y M C  
 C R U C I F I X I O N S R V



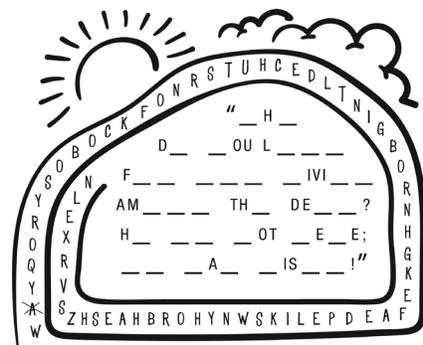
Easter morning on the Patio next to the lake, weather permitting Followed by Easter Breakfast in FH.



EASTER MORNING message

Early Sunday morning, some women who followed Jesus encountered a great surprise. Solve the puzzle to see what the angels told them.

Directions: Cross out every other letter in the maze. Write the remaining letters in order to complete Luke 24:5-6, NIV.



LUKE 24:5-6, NIV

Easter Egg Hunt planned for Easter Sunday, April 1





## Special Church News from the Personnel Team

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Mary Platt is no longer our Church administrative and accounting assistant. This was a short-term position for her. We are now looking for a replacement. Please feel free to share this job opportunity with anyone you know who might be interested. Applicants should send resumes to [betheljobs@bethelpcusa.org](mailto:betheljobs@bethelpcusa.org).

## Remote Area Medical (RAM)

provides free dental, vision and medical care through pop-up mobile clinics across the country.

Services are offered on a first come/ first served basis. No insurance, ID or appointment is needed.

**The Harriman campus of Roane State Community College will host a clinic on April 11-12, 2026.**

You may find more information or register to volunteer at [ramusa.org](http://ramusa.org)

## Tech4All Update

Paul Jackson reports that Tech4All is still currently working on evaluating and upgrading Bethel's wi-fi so they can use Bethel for classes. The main wi-fi won't change. We are donating a more capable device for the library for higher speeds. We will let you know. We will let you know the devices' SSID and Password will be when installed.

Tech4All is still looking for volunteers to take pictures of Tech 4 All equipment to put on Facebook Marketplace. Please email [info@tech4alltn.org](mailto:info@tech4alltn.org) or visit <https://tech4alltn.org/> to learn more. If you have recently upgraded your personal computing equipment, keep this group in mind for donating your old stuff.

## Call for Updating Member Contributions

As you all know, due to bad weather Bethel canceled worship services the last Sunday of January and the first Sunday of February. As a result, our offerings decreased. So if you missed these opportunities to contribute, please consider doing so in the next few weeks. Thank you.

--Finance Team and Trustees

**Seeking Sextons  
for March, April, May  
Signup sheet in  
Gathering Area.**



Linda Brown and Brenda Bunch are busy keeping all financial matters up to date while Bethel is searching for a new Administrative and Accounting Assistant. Linda Brown is Bethel's Treasurer.

	<b>How to Contact Bethel</b>
	203 S. Kentucky Street Kingston, TN 37763
	865-376-6340
	Reverend <b>Beth</b> McCrary <a href="mailto:revbeth@bethelpcusa.org">revbeth@bethelpcusa.org</a>
	Bethel Office Open Position <a href="mailto:betheloffice@bethelpcusa.org">betheloffice@bethelpcusa.org</a>
	Music Director <b>Judy</b> Yeaworth <a href="mailto:bethelmusic@bethelpcusa.org">bethelmusic@bethelpcusa.org</a>
	Bethel Treasurer <b>Linda</b> Brown <a href="mailto:betheltreasurer@bethelpcusa.org">betheltreasurer@bethelpcusa.org</a>
	Clerk of Session <b>Cathy</b> McDowell <a href="mailto:sessionclerk@bethelpcusa.org">sessionclerk@bethelpcusa.org</a>
	Administrative & Accounting Assistant <b>Open Position</b> <a href="mailto:betheljobs@bethelpcusa.org">betheljobs@bethelpcusa.org</a>

# A Sharing Calendar for Lent 2026

Each day at or after a meal time, gather around this map activity. Consider the reflection and questions, place a coin or a bill (a "gift") in your fish coin bank or a jar.

Feb. 22-28	<b>Sunday:</b> After a natural disaster, it may be hard to find places to cook or buy meals. Say a prayer of thanksgiving and give a gift for each meal you ate today.	<b>Monday:</b> Over 18 million Americans live in a food desert, far from a store where they can buy groceries. Give a gift for each grocery store nearby.	<b>Tuesday:</b> Electricity is usually the first utility that is lost in a storm. Give a gift for each electrical outlet in the room you are currently in.	<b>Wednesday:</b> Is water necessary for good health? Using the map, find Zambia and read what the PC(USA) is doing there. After learning more, give a gift for each drink you had today.	<b>Thursday:</b> Our fish coin boxes will hold many gifts of money this season, but what other kinds of gifts can we give? What gifts can you give or share?	<b>Friday:</b> Sunday is Blue T-Shirt Sunday. What does the PC(USA) do to show God's love during a disaster? Choose something blue to wear or bring to church to celebrate.
March 1-7	<b>Sunday:</b> Most people around the world don't have access to the many varieties of fruit and vegetables we have. Give one gift for each type of fruit in your house.	<b>Monday:</b> Climate change is forcing farmers worldwide to either adjust their farming methods or move away. Give a gift for each type of animal you saw today.	<b>Tuesday:</b> When families move, building a new community of friends and neighbors can be hard! Make a card or gift for someone new in your church or neighborhood.	<b>Wednesday:</b> Without the right nutrition in the first two years of life, a child's physical and mental development is compromised. Give a gift for each toddler you know.	<b>Thursday:</b> When roads are closed and electricity is off, going to see a doctor can be hard. Give a gift if you've been able to see a doctor in the past year.	<b>Friday:</b> It is estimated that 1 in 5 kids in the U.S. will experience hunger this year. Give at least one gift if you have not experienced hunger this year.
March 8-14	<b>Sunday:</b> Where does your water come from? Many people carry buckets of water long distances to their homes every day. Give a gift for every faucet in your home.	<b>Monday:</b> In Panama, the PC(USA) partnered in the construction of a 25,000-liter tank, helping families with clean water for drinking and cooking. Give a gift for each drink of water you had today.	<b>Tuesday:</b> Social barriers are like locked doors that hold people back and keep them from thriving. Give a gift for every door that can lock in your home.	<b>Wednesday:</b> If you could start a business of your own, what would it be? Give a gift for every good business idea you hear from those you are with.	<b>Thursday:</b> Rainwater is rare in some places, so special collection systems are built to catch the water. Give one gift for every day it rained (or snowed) in the past week.	<b>Friday:</b> Changing weather patterns mean old ways of farming don't work in some areas anymore, so farmers need to be taught new techniques. Give a gift for every farm you've visited.
March 15-21	<b>Sunday:</b> In some places, people walk for hours to go to church, where they find support and encouragement from friends and family. Give a gift for every time you went to church this month.	<b>Monday:</b> Hunger-related causes kill thousands of people every day around the world. Give a gift for meals you've had today.	<b>Tuesday:</b> Some people can't find jobs and care for themselves because they don't have access to a car or the right bus route. Give one gift for every wheel in your garage that helps you get places.	<b>Wednesday:</b> Poverty can make people feel like they are always falling two steps back with surprise expenses or problems. Give a gift for every set of steps in your home.	<b>Thursday:</b> The most vulnerable are often the most impacted in emergency situations. Say a prayer for children impacted by disasters, and give a gift for every flashlight in your home.	<b>Friday:</b> Sometimes people need help advocating for their rights — like lawyers fighting for those impacted by unfair employment practices. Say a prayer for those who advocate for the poor.
March 22-28	<b>Sunday:</b> In South Sudan, women have found hope as they learn to farm so they can grow food for their families. Give a gift per plant in your house.	<b>Monday:</b> In Ohio, refugee women are able to market their sweet and savory treats at the farmers market, helping to take care of their families. Give one gift for every sweet treat you had today.	<b>Tuesday:</b> Immunizations give us hope for when certain diseases will no longer cause sickness and pain. Give a gift for each immunization you have received.	<b>Wednesday:</b> In Haiti, hope is seen in the leaves of the morning tree, a superfood that can help many hungry people! Give one gift for every tree at home.	<b>Thursday:</b> Give a gift for every year you have been in school and find three books you can donate so another person can read and learn.	<b>Friday:</b> Learning new languages can be hard! Give five gifts for every language your family members speak.
March 29-April 4	<b>Passion/Palm Sunday:</b> Blankets are used internationally to comfort those impacted by disasters. Give a gift for each blanket in your home, or find some blankets you can donate.	<b>Monday:</b> Teaching healthy food choices and food safety can change the health of an entire community! Find some healthier foods you can donate to a food pantry or soup kitchen.	<b>Tuesday:</b> Find a location on the OGHs map you have not learned about yet. Spend some extended time learning about and praying for the ministry and people there.	<b>Wednesday:</b> Communication can be incredibly difficult after a disaster. Give a gift for every computer in your home, and call, email or text a loved one.	<b>Thursday:</b> God's love is shown in so many ways. Find three things you can do today or tomorrow to share God's love.	<b>Friday:</b> Clean water is a precious resource all over the world. Find some ways you can conserve or use less water every day and commit to doing at least 1 for a month or more.
April 5	<b>Sunday - Resurrection/Easter/One Great Hour of Sharing:</b> Present the gifts in your coin box to your congregation. Say a prayer for all those who will receive help from your generosity.					

For more locations and ministries, go to [pcusa.org/oghsmap](http://pcusa.org/oghsmap) or scan this code.



ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING

## Bethel's Calendar Radar

- Sunday, March 1, "Kingston Recital Event" in sanctuary at 3:00
- Sunday, March 8, Congregation Potluck Lunch after worship
- Saturday, March 14, Love Kitchen 25th Anniversary, Rockwood Presbyterian, 4:00
- Sunday, March 15, Hands of Mercy food pantry collection
- Sunday, March 15, Session meeting after worship
- Sunday, April 5, Easter
- Saturday, April 11, Love Kitchen, Rockwood Presbyterian Church, eat at 4:00

- Saturday, April 18, Kingston Lakeside Market, Day One, 8 to 11
- Saturday, April 18, Presbyterian Women of PET, Spring Gathering, Chattanooga, 10:00 to 2:00
- Sunday, April 19, "Kingston Recital Event" in sanctuary at 3:00
- Friday, May 22, "Kingston Recital Event" in sanctuary at 7:00
- Saturday, June 13, Love Kitchen, Rockwood Presbyterian Church, eat at 4:00
- Monday, June 22, the 227th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) will convene in Milwaukee, Wisconsin from June 22

## Fellowship Team Update

If you are interested in hosting a Bethel fellowship Lunch, please add your name to the sign up sheet in the gathering area. Fellowship lunches will be potluck style. If you have any questions, please email Rebecca Pierce at [rebeccadpierce@gmail.com](mailto:rebeccadpierce@gmail.com).



# Presbytery of East Tennessee Meets and Issues a Statement

The earliest known confession of the Church that binds all Christians is that “Jesus is Lord” (Romans 10:9-13, 1 Corinthians 15:3-7, Philipians 2:11). Throughout the centuries, Christians have had to discern how to navigate this understanding of the Lordship of Christ with the tension of civic duty and responsibility with faith that affirms the Lordship of Christ.

As Presbyterians, we are committed to active engagement in our shared civic life, and we are obligated to declare where we stand in the face of abuse of power and manipulation of the gospel of Jesus Christ in this country. Silence on such issues, while well-meaning and for the sake of maintaining a feeling of peacefulness, must also be avoided. In the Journal of Presbyterian History in 1964, John T. McNeill wrote that “Political indifference on the part of Christians is not a mark of superiority but of defective ethics.” Thus, we are committed to active engagement in our shared civic life, and we are obligated to declare where we stand in the face of abuse of power and manipulation of the gospel of Jesus Christ in this country. Therefore, the Presbytery of East TN of the Presbyterian Church (USA), meeting on this 14th day of February 2026, declares the following with faithfulness and boldness:

Our scripture and tradition make it clear where we stand: Each and every person is created in

the image of God and declared part of God’s good creation (Genesis 1).

- o We affirm each person as a child of God worthy of dignity and respect (Genesis 1).
- o Therefore, we reject de-humanizing language, policies, and actions that have infiltrated our communities and congregations.

Jesus teaches us that we are to champion the vulnerable among us and that to do so is to extend care and compassion to him (Matthew 25).

- o We affirm our biblical faith which calls us to welcome the stranger and give safe haven to the refugee (Leviticus 19:33–34). We affirm the basic human rights for immigrants and their families to have safety, due process, and protection from violence or separation.

- o Therefore, we reject the oppressive and violent tactics of our government’s Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers and demand transparency, accountability, and adherence to the rule of law. We affirm that the values of justice, compassion, mercy, and liberation are core to God’s vision for the world, embodied by Christ’s mission, and are central to our calling as the Church today (Micah 6:8, Luke 4:18).

Likewise, Our theological foundations declare that the Church is sent to be Christ’s evangelist: “participating in God’s mission to care for the needs of the sick, poor, and lonely; to free people from

sin, suffering, and oppression, and to establish Christ’s just, loving, and peaceable rule in the world.” (Book of Order, F-1.0302d).

- o We affirm that Jesus Christ is Lord and do not swear allegiance to any earthly ruler (Romans 10:9, Theological Declaration of Barmen, 8.15).

- o Therefore we reject the rise of Christian nationalism in this country and any attempt to align a corrupted version of the gospel of Jesus Christ with the quest for political power based on military domination, white supremacy, and oppression. As a presbytery, we refuse to give in to chaos, division, and fear. We will stand together as a witness to the power of God’s love which is stronger than hate. We will seek to be the body of Christ in the world today, being faithful to the gospel, following his teaching, and sharing his justice and love.

Approved at the 165th Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of East Tennessee, February 14, 2026 at First Presbyterian Church, Sweetwater, TN

# Singing Ambassadors Here for Our Delight

## You are warmly invited!

Please join us in the beautiful and historically significant Bethel Sanctuary for an important and riveting concert:

### Sunday, March 1, at 3:00pm

The Roane Choral Society's Singing Ambassadors in a wonderful, soul stirring presentation

### Home: America, Hymns and Songs of a Young Nation

Journey through a musical history of our nation with the Ambassadors beginning with the first American composer and father of American hymnody, William Billings, and his friends, the patriot Paul Revere and gal pal Betsy Ross, at the very beginning of our fight for independence, followed by the shaped note schools of singing with hymns of William Walker and others from the Sacred Harp and New Columbia Harp actively used in Appalachian East Tennessee still today! (Recall the music sung in the church scene from the movie "Cold Mountain"). This uniquely American music was created and sung when Bethel Presbyterian Church was first established in the aftermath of the Revolutionary War, and would have been

sung within the walls of our present sanctuary in it's earliest days. In fact, several of the old hymns will sound familiar to you because we still sing them, or a form of them, in our worship services even now! They are achingly beautiful. Can you guess what they are?

This magical musical history tour continues, but I won't go into further detail here. RCS director Brenda Luggie, who will conduct the Singing Ambassadors, will guide you through the rest of early America's musical story on Sunday, March 1 at 3:00pm.

**SPECIAL TREAT #1:** Our own lovely music director, Ms Judy Yeaworth, will be accompanying the Singing Ambassadors at the piano!!!

**SPECIAL TREAT #2:** An Americana reception featuring America's national dessert and displays of the Sacred Harp and other historical texts and art will be available for your perusal and enjoyment as you visit together immediately following the concert.

**SPECIAL TREAT #3:** ..YOU!.. It is a treat for us to have you with us! Gather your friends,

family and neighbors and come enjoy this wonderful concert in our historical sanctuary which was here when much of this music was originally composed! We will enjoy to have you with us!

### P.S. The concert is free!

There is no charge for the program or the reception. If you are so inclined, donations are welcome. The Recital Series of Kingston and Bethel Presbyterian Church welcome you and look forward to your presence with us!



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**Reminder:** Copies of each month's Open Door are accessible from Bethel's website: [bethelpcusa.org](http://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.

# Family Promise Update

## Kentucky Derby Fundraiser

Family Promise's annual Kentucky Derby Fundraiser is tentatively set for Friday, April 24, 2026 at the Gates Events Center in Harriman. Tickets are \$50.00. Our goal this year is to raise \$10,000. We are looking for a local restaurant who would be willing to donate the main course. Additional food and beverages will be provided by volunteers. There will be a silent auction. If anyone would like to donate items, contact Jan Rybka. There will also be a "Hat Contest". You might find a selection of items for decorating your hat at the Family Promise

Thrift Store. This year we will honor our "Thrifty Sisters", Julia, Kathy, Kim, and MJ), the volunteers who keep our Thrift Store going.

## Family Promise Thrift Store

Family Promise will be moving the thrift store from Rockwood to Harriman on April 1. This is an opportunity to operate more economically and provide an opportunity for program services expansion in the future.

## Shelter Family

Our shelter family is ready to take the next step into more permanent housing as soon as there is space in Rockwood Public Housing.

Bethel will provide meals the week of March 15 – 21. Please let Jan Rybka know if you can

provide a meal. The family is without transportation at this time. Tabby Lawson, case manager, is driving them back and forth from the Day House. At this time, it would help if we can provide homecooked meals, groceries to cook their own meals, or gift certificates to restaurants on Highway 70. Another great option is using the Feed My Sheep program offered at Kingston First Baptist on Wednesdays. The meals are prepared by Bettye Rose and can be picked up at the church at 5:30 PM. Meals are \$7.00. You must call the day before to reserve meals.

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## Report to Session of Bethel Presbyterian Church re: 165th Stated Meeting, Presbytery of East TN 14 Feb 2026, 1st Presbyterian Church, Sweetwater, TN

1. Rev. Bill Schenk's name was read aloud during the worship service as part of the Necrology listing.

2. The Presbyterian Women's ministry reported that their Spring gathering will be on 18 April at 9:30am at 2nd Presbyterian in Chattanooga. Contact is annbmyers7115@gmail.com.

3. Hunger committee chairperson Scott Brunger reported that demand at the food pantry at Sunset Gap had skyrocketed from 300 persons per week to 500 persons per week. The \$6000 that the committee has disbursed in the past months went to these destinations: Sunset Gap, Morgan-Scott, Lancing Presbyterian Church, and food pantry at the Oak Ridge campus of RoaneSt.

4. As requested earlier by the General Presbyter, Bethel shared a bit of our mission story, with focus

on both the Lakeside Market and Laundry Night.

5. Rebecca Shelby was one of the two Presbyterian Youth Council members installed. Youth summit is planned for 10-12 April at JKC.

6. The balanced \$655,000 budget for CY 2026 was approved. It includes these features:

a. 3% raise for staff  
b. Because PoET is participating in a pilot study, our required giving to General Assembly, which the PoET does not pass along to individual congregations, will be notably less. The budget shows these savings in a miscellaneous / contingency line, and the budget committee anticipates these funds will be expended by the Presbytery,

7. Thanks were announced for churches who had submitted both their annual statistical report and their for-review Session and Congregational Minutes, including Bethel.

8. Two motions regarding the 191 year old New Prospect Presbyterian Church in south Knoxville were approved. The congregation is located in a church-dense area that is not experiencing population growth, and their membership has declined notably in recent years due to death of aging members. At a congregational meeting back on 28 December, the members had voted to dissolve the church. These are the motions approved by the PoET today:

a. Approve the dissolution of New Prospect Presbyterian Church  
b. With the exception of the cemetery which will continue to be held by PoET, approve the transfer of the buildings and real property formerly utilized by the church to Ijams Nature Center.

9. The Presbytery approved a declaration that arose out of an initial meeting of parties interested in "Doing Justice, Together."

*Bethel Presbyterian Church*  
*203 South Kentucky Street*  
*Kingston, TN 37763*



*March 2026*

March 2026

