



St. Stephens Bethlehem

United Church of Christ

May & June Newsletter

Hello Church Family & Friends,

Why do we call ourselves a church family? Where did that saying come from? God calls His Church the family of God. The early church met together in the temple courts, but also met together in homes where they were devoted to deep abiding relationships. They became a spiritual family. In Acts 2:42 and following we see them exhibiting many of the characteristics of a family. They ate together, shared their possessions, and even sold their possessions if needed to take care of each other. They focussed on the Word of God and the teachings of the apostles. These actions not only depict the attitudes and actions of a family, but this is also the kind of bond and relationships that develop in a church family. A church family is a community of believers who share a deep, supportive bond rooted in faith, acting as a spiritual family rather than just a gathering. It emphasizes mutual care, accountability, shared worship, and shared lives, often providing support during crises and celebrating milestones together.

Key Aspects and Usage Examples

- **Support System:** Providing meals, transportation, child care, or emotional support during illnesses or losses.
- **Deep Relationships:** Moving beyond Sunday-only interactions to building close, familial-style bonds through home meetings or small groups. (WINGS, Craft Club, Bible Study, Hooks & Needles)
- **Shared Identity:** Embracing roles as "brothers and sisters in Christ," emphasizing that believers are part of one household.
- **Accountability:** Helping members grow spiritually and overcome sinful behaviors through community support.
- **Multi-generational Care:** Offering a community where children and adults are supported by the broader group.



With joining SSBUC & KUCC together we can refer to our family, like the "BRADY Bunch". Within a family comes many tasks, commitments, and

obligations. Bills need to be paid. Money needs to be raised. Budgets need to be made and followed. Cleaning & maintenance projects need to be done. (We have no maid called Alice, HAHA). We might not see everything eye to eye, but remember God has a reason and purpose for everything. Why did he bring us together? To help him to help his people, and to spread the GREAT news of his son. So please join us in all the events that our church family is doing. Step up and take part in hosting a coffee hour, doing a reading in church, helping on a church work day, or donating a theme basket to our fundraiser. Every small thing you do makes a HUGE difference in the lives of our church family.

Hope to see you at church and at these events.

Joy In Christ,

Bill Chapman, John Frenning, Joy Tedeschi, Phil Starr, Joe Tricoli, Kim Wilson, Mary Martino, Elisa Faling, Teddy Haase & Robert Christmann

Your SSBUCC & KUCC Leadership Team Members:

Continuing the Merger Work



Many thanks to everyone who took part in the Grace History Events and the Individual Congregation Meetings. These gatherings provided opportunities to deepen your understanding of your own congregation as well as the other church involved in this process. Through the Graced History sessions, it became clear that while KUCC and SSB have distinct histories in certain areas, they also share many common experiences. If you have not yet seen the timelines, take a look. Both congregations have engaged in significant ministry over many years, making an enduring impact on countless lives by sharing the good news of God's love. Whatever the future holds, these achievements are lasting and meaningful. God has worked through both churches for over a century. To all who have served, both past and present, well done, good and faithful servants!

Listening to Each Other

During the individual congregation sessions, a range of thoughts and feelings were expressed. It was evident that even within the same congregation, people do not always agree on every issue. While it is easy to assume that others share

our perspectives, these sessions reminded us of the value of listening sincerely to different viewpoints.

Survey Results and Feedback

Thank you to everyone who completed the surveys created by the Joint Leadership Team—an impressive 52 responses were received. The survey consisted of three questions:

1. **What are your feelings on the name of our church?** Thirty respondents supported changing the name, twenty preferred to keep St. Stephens Bethlehem, and two expressed that the name was not important.
2. **Currently we have multiple preachers; what are your thoughts about having one pastor?** Thirty-six favored retaining multiple pastors, while fifteen preferred having just one.
3. **Other Concerns: please share any other ideas or concerns that you would like the Leadership Team & Transition Team to consider.** Twenty-seven participants left this question blank, and twenty-one shared a range of comments.

The survey responses, including all comments, have been compiled and provided to both the Joint Leadership and Transition Teams for review and action.

Transition Team's Ongoing Work

The Transition Team meets regularly to address key aspects of the merger, such as constitution and by-laws, the church name, finances, leadership, pastoral needs, the church calendar, staffing, and property requirements. Some matters may be resolved quickly, while others will require more time and discussion. As progress is made, meeting minutes from the Transition Team and Joint Leadership Team will be posted on the bulletin board in the narthex, along with the names of team members. Everyone is encouraged to ask questions and share their thoughts at any time.

Looking Ahead: "Listening to God: Visioning for a Future."

Having explored the histories of each congregation, our next focus is on envisioning the future. This will happen through a two-part experience called "Listening to God: Visioning for a Future." In the first session, participants will join small groups that include members from both congregations. Together, you will engage in Bible study and begin reflecting on the question: "What is God calling

our merged church to become and what is God calling us to do?" There will be time for both individual and group reflection.

Next, each group will use various craft supplies to create a model representing their vision of the model church. One example from another group was titled "God is Calling Us to Be Open Doors," featuring a model with several open doors symbolizing entry, welcome, and inclusion. This activity will begin during the first session and conclude during the second. This will be time for creativity, teamwork, and discovery. Even if you do not consider yourself creative, your participation will reveal unexpected gifts in yourself and others. Most importantly, this is a time for fun and connection!

Upcoming Sessions

Here is the schedule for the "Listening to God: Visioning for a Future" events:

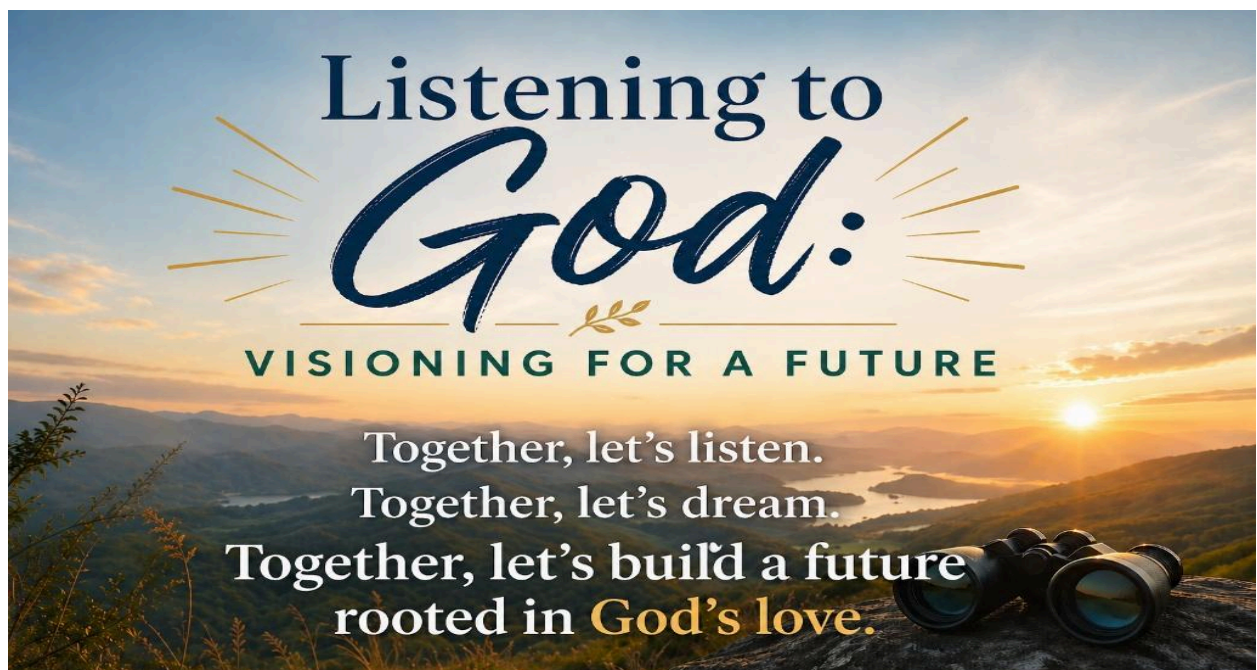
- **Session 1: Sunday, May 17, 11:30 AM – 1:30 PM**
- **Session 2: Sunday, May 31, 11:30 AM – 1:30 PM**

Please mark your calendars and plan to join us for these two important events.

It is a privilege to accompany you on this journey towards merger. I am grateful for your faithful participation and am confident the Spirit is guiding the process, even when it's difficult.

If you need pastoral assistance or simply wish to talk, please feel free to reach out by email: RuthESnyder01@gmail.com or text/call (716) 984-0848.

Abundant Blessings,
Pastor Ruth





May & June Worship & Event Schedule



Friday, May 1: Church workday: 9 - 12pm, or 12 - 3pm.

Saturday, May 2: Church workday. 9 - 12pm or 12 - 3pm.

Sunday, May 3: Communion & Worship.

Guest Minister Rev. Dr. Ruth Snyder.

Saturday, May 9: Food Pantry Bingo Night Fundraiser 4pm.

Sunday, May 10: Mother's Day, Special Music & Picture SlideShow/Guest
Minister Rev. Dr. Ruth Snyder

Monday, May 11: Joint Leadership Team meeting at 6:30pm

Sunday, May 17: Congregation Appreciation Sunday & Luncheon

Guest Minister Rev. Bob Fleming.

"Listening to God: Visioning for a Future" workshop 11:30 - 1:30pm.

Sunday, May 24: Memorial Sunday, Start of Pentecost (Wear your **Red**)

Guest Minister Rev. Dr. Buddy Hubbard

Friday, May 29th: Jurkowski - Logan Wedding 1pm.

Sunday, May 31: Trinity Sunday. **Listening to God: Visioning for a Future"**
workshop 11:30 - 130pm. Guest Minister Jan Hubbard

Sunday, June 7: **Worship at 9:30am. Communion/ Basket & Gift Certificate Raffle/
Strawberry Luncheon (11 - 3pm)** Guest Minister Rev. Dr. Ruth Snyder

Monday, June 8: Joint Leadership Team Meeting at 6:30pm.

Saturday, June 13: Terry Memorial Service (Sue Fleming's mother) 11am.

Sunday, June 14: Guest Minister Rev. Dr. Buddy Hubbard

Friday, June 19: Summer Musical Concert to benefit our music program 3pm.

Sunday, June 21: Father's Day/ Picture SlideShow/ Donuts with Dad Coffee
Hour. Guest Minister Rev. Bob Fleming

Tuesday, June 23: Election Day 6am - 9pm.

Wednesday, June 24: Wacky Wednesday 6 - 8:30pm.

Saturday, June 27: Margaret Tricoli Memorial Service 11am.

Sunday, June 28: Guest Minister Rev. Dr. Ruth Snyder

Fundraiser Report:

Our fundraisers are off to a great start this year. Continue to spread the word to all your family and friends of all the events we have coming up. There are posters on the table by the elevator when you enter the church. Please take some and post them in the community and on your social media sites. All your help with our fundraisers are GREATLY appreciated. Remember we count on \$12,000 from fundraisers to help pay for our bills this year.

Profits so far from fundraisers:

Souper Bowl Luncheon: \$1000

Shrove Tuesday Potato Pancake:\$1221

Ash Wednesday Candles: \$373

Flea Market: \$2142.25

Good Friday Fish Fry: \$1,558 sold 131 dinners

Grand Total: \$6,294.25

Upcoming Fundraisers; Mark your Calendar: Look for more information in our July and August Newsletter and announcements and bulletins in church.

Saturday, July 18: Christmas in July Vendor & Craft Show. 9 - 3pm. See Becky for info.

Polka Party: Saturday, August ??? See Joy for more info

Church Yard Sale: Thursday & Friday August 27 & 28. 9am - 5pm.



Our next scheduled church work days will be **Friday, & Saturday, May 1 & 2 from 9am - 12pm & 12 - 3pm.** Projects include cleaning out all the flower beds, taking off the AC covers, cleaning up the playground area, washing windows, cutting the grass, cleaning the parlor, sprucing up the volleyball court, etc... Donuts and coffee will be served. Many hands make light work.



On **Sunday, May 17th** after worship at 11:30am, please join us downstairs in the fellowship hall for a special luncheon (assorted sandwiches and salads)to honor and to thank you as a congregation for all you have done and have given to us throughout the year. All your time, money, hard work and dedication has really paid off. It shows we are a strong church family again. We really appreciate you for all you do. So we want to thank you with this special luncheon. We will also take a church family picture this day. So PLEASE make every attempt to make it to church on this date. Thanks so much.



Sunday, May 10, is Mother's Day.

On Mother's Day we are creating a picture slide show of all the special women in our lives (Past or Present). You can email the pictures to

ststephensbethlehemucc@gmail.com or text them to

716-989-9255. Deadline is **Sunday, May 3**

to submit pictures. This will be shown in worship on Mother's day. Each woman present in church will receive a special gift from the congregation.

Fathers Day is Sunday, June 21st

We can't forget about our special men in our lives either; so we are creating a picture slide show of all the special men in our lives (Past or Present). You can email the pictures to ststephensbethlehemucc@gmail.com or text them to at 716-989-9255. Deadline is **Sunday, June 14th** to submit pictures. This will be shown in worship on Father's day. We will be having a special Donuts with Dad coffee hour to honor all the men. Each man present in church will receive a special gift from the congregation.



On Sunday May 17th following worship we need volunteers to deliver some spring time fun to our church shut-ins. The craft & fellowship club made bird houses for them. The church will also purchase them a flowering plant. They will also receive a sandwich, chips and a beverage. If you can help out with these deliveries please sign up from across from the church office. Cards will be available to sign for our shut-ins on Sunday May 10th. Thanks so much.





Hooks 'n Needles: Sharing Comfort and Prayer Through Handmade Gifts

Our Mission

Did you know that Kenilworth UCC has a small group dedicated to creating Prayer Shawls and Lapghans since 2014? This group, called “**Hooks ‘n Needles**,” brings comfort and hope to those in need through their handmade gifts. Since its inception, the group has lovingly crafted 142 Prayer Shawls, 19 Lapghans, and 3 Pocket Prayer Shawls—an incredible accomplishment!

Impact in the Community

Each shawl and lapghan is given to individuals as a tangible reminder that someone is praying for them and wrapping them in God’s love. These gifts have touched many lives. For example, prayer shawls were gifted to an 11-year-old boy diagnosed with breast cancer and to a woman in her thirties who underwent a heart transplant.

The group’s compassion extends beyond individuals. In May 2022, following the mass shooting at Tops on Jefferson, 13 shawls were delivered to True Bethel Baptist Church in Buffalo. These were distributed to the three survivors and the ten families of those who lost their lives. In times of tragedy, these handmade gifts have helped unite people—crossing lines of race, geography, and background—in shared grief and comfort through God’s love.

Join Us

Hooks ‘n Needles will meet Thursday, May 14 at 2:30pm, take the summer off, and meet again on Thursday, September 10 at 2:30. If you are interested in more information about this remarkable group, please reach out to Donna and Linda Miller. There is always a need for prayer and opportunities to share God’s love with others through the work of your hands

Theme Basket & Gift Certificate Raffle

Sunday, June 7, 2026

11am - 3pm. Drawings at 3pm.



If you can donate a theme basket or gift certificate/ gift card please let Bill know. The Basket Raffles are our greatest profitable fundraisers. Last year we had 133 baskets/ gift certificates donated, and raised over \$3000.

A Strawberry Shortcake Luncheon will also take place on June 7th. We will have a baked good sale with a strawberry theme. We need your help with making baked goods for our sale.

Some of the prizes so far are: two \$25 gift cards to Wegman's, air blown Santa, \$20 to Mighty Taco, Fourth of July picnic basket, Bath Time Basket, Spaghetti time basket, baking basket, Icecream Sundae Basket, Soup Time, Bills signed cleat , \$15 (3) to Andersons, \$25 to La Bella Sicilla, 1 dozen donuts to Paula's, \$20 to Sweet Jenny's, \$25 to Salvatore's, Batavia Downs, 1 night at the hotel/ \$50 for dinner and tokens to play, Disney Tie, \$10 to Riva's Pizzeria, Electronic Picture Frame, \$25 to Target, \$20 to Arby's, \$20 to Walgreens, \$20 Amazon Gift Card, Amazon Sweat Pants, and Amazon "GOODIE Bag"

Please help us add to this list. Thanks.

*****Please Note***. Worship on June 7 will be at 9:30am, due to the Basket Raffle Fundraiser at 11am - 3pm. And the Pride Parade at 11am. We need everyone's help to make this fundraiser a HUGE success. Thanks so much!!!!**



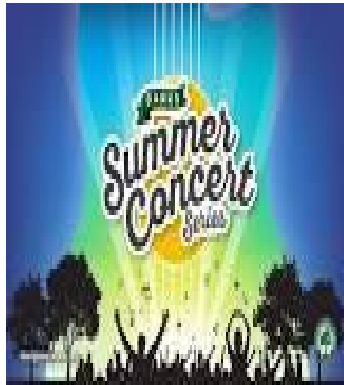
If you & your family are planning a party that is too BIG for your house, please consider renting the church. We rent out our sanctuary, parlor/cafe, social hall & kitchen. Members get a great discount. See any LT member if you are interested in renting out a room, or fill out the form on our website (www.SSBUCC.com) Thanks so much for considering us.



Coffee hours are a great time for the congregation to bond and to grow together. If you can help us out by volunteering to host a coffee hour, please sign up from across from the church office. The church provides the coffee, juice and paper products, we just need you to provide the goodies. Open slots are:

- Sunday, May 3: Christina & Gary
- Sunday, May 10: Mother's Day NO Coffee Hour
- Sunday, May 17th: Congregation Appreciation Luncheon
- Sunday, May 24: _____
- Sunday, May 31: Denise Graser, Gail Lukis & Tom Marchese
- Sunday, June 7: Theme Basket Raffle Strawberry Shortcake
- Sunday, June 14: _____
- Sunday, June 21: Donuts with Dad Coffee Hour
- Sunday, June 28: _____

Summer Concert June 19th, at 3pm!



Please help us celebrate the start of Summer by attending our bi-annual Benefit Music Concert! The event will start at 3pm on Friday, June 19th and will last about an hour. Enjoy performances by our KUCC/SSB Choir and Bell choirs, Kim and Harry, piano students, congregants and more! Proceeds will go towards the music program here at SSB and KUCC.



May Birthdays:

- Mark Vidaver (1)
- Karen Christmann (8)
- Gineen Frenning (9)
- Kathleen Pautler (9)
- Dave Zajdel (10)
- John Frenning (12)
- Bev Kemp (15)
- Gail Lukis (16)
- Patty Cookfair (17)
- Bob Fleming (18)

June Birthdays:

- Mary Lou Shanks (1)
- June Boyer (5)
- Jeanette Chapman (10)
- Marietta Lorenzo (12)
- Paul Faling (18)
- Etta Czaja (20)
- Shari Edgcomb (22)
- Lisa Naylor (22)
- Sydney Bird (24)
- Bill Chapman (27)
- Tiffany Fuzak (29)
- Donna Miller (30)

If your name is missing from this list, please contact the church office.



Please Keep the Following People In Your Prayers:

Chris Donner, Wendy (Marion Andrus daughter), Marianne Tedesco, Katie Mazurek, Milt Keim, John Witt, Pastor Arthur Davis, Izzy (Joe Tricli adopted daughter) , Sue Wade, Nancy Smith, Doug (Carolyn Bernhardt son).

Hope & Joy Food Pantry:

This year we've helped 4,017 people! Happy Spring! The bunnies are hopping around and so are we! By the Numbers: This year, our food pantry:

- Households Served: 1,594 ● Individuals Served: 4,017
- Meals Provided: 36,153 ● Pounds of Food Received: 28,346

We are preparing for our Drag Bingo Fundraiser! This will be held on Saturday, May 9th at 4pm in the basement of St. Stephens-Bethlehem UCC. It is open to all ages, and there will be food and prizes! If you buy your tickets ahead of time, a meal voucher is included! Please purchase tickets here and spread the word! We are also looking for any donations of prizes, if you are able to donate or know someone who would, please let us know. The Pet Pantry Coordinator from the Erie County SPCA reached out to us and offered to provide us with pet food for our pantry! We are now proud to offer dry dog food, dry cat food, and wet cat food for our clients. This is something a lot of our clients have asked for, so we are happy to be able to provide this new service! On Sunday, April 12th we had a garden cleanup day! We had about 35 volunteers from Alpha Kappa Delta Phi Sorority come in (pictured above), and boy did they work hard. They took apart all the garden beds, de-weeded, picked up all the branches, tilled the soil, reinstalled the beds, and spray painted our wood pallets. We are so incredibly GRATEFUL for all their help! We couldn't have done it without them! While we have made a ton of progress, we are always looking for regular garden help. If you are able to donate any extra tools, we are looking for: gloves, trowels, shovels, nails, tomato cages, gardening wire, paint brushes, shears, sprayers, stakes, fertilizer, and garden hoses. If you are a gardener or have an interest in learning, we would love to have more garden volunteers this summer! Please reach out! This month we would like to thank everyone who brought in paper bags this month after we had a shortage. These small items have a huge impact on our pantry! We had several grant wins this month! We were awarded \$1,000 in gift cards from Aldis, \$500 from the Creag Foundation, and \$400 from the Food Shuttle of WNY. We have applied to more grants, including our annual HPNAP Grant and FeedMore's Operational grant. We also applied to a program that helps provide hygiene products to food pantries, called Good360. If you know of any opportunities we can apply for, please let us know! We have welcomed 2 new UB interns this Spring to volunteer with us! We are so happy to have students learn about our program and see first-hand the impact of community service! We are considering teaching some classes this summer, such as: how to grow salads in a patio pot, how to save seeds, and companion planting: how to utilize your space. If these or similar subjects are of interest to you or people you know, please let us know! We are looking to gauge interest and get feedback on what classes could be useful to our community! Thank you for helping us bring hope and joy to every table. Together, we make our community stronger.

Wacky WEDNESDAYS!

JUNE
24

JULY
22

AUG
12

6-8PM



**St Stephens Bethlehem &
Kenilworth Churches**

750 Wehrle Dr. Cheektowaga



**HOTDOGS, HAMBURGERS,
NON-ALCOHOLIC DRINKS
PROVIDED**



BRING SOMETHING TO SHARE IF YOU CAN



VOLLEYBALL



PLAYGROUND



BOARD GAMES



GROUPS GAMES



**FUN FOR FAMILIES, SINGLES,
YOUNG AND OLD**



Come Play with Us!