

FALL NEWSLETTER
St Stephens Bethlehem & Kenilworth
Congregations





Hello Church Family & Friends!

Message from Mary Martino, KUCC Moderator:

After finalization of a counted vote, we are going forward with St Stephens for the original name change and 50/50 merge. Welcome to Denny Tedesco and Kim Rauch who were voted onto our Leadership Team. We ask for everyone's patience and continued prayer during the process. **Please plan on attending our Town Hall Meeting after services on Sunday, September 20th.**

Message from John Frenning, SSBUCC Moderator:

As many of you are aware, our Leadership Team is currently experiencing a season of transition. I have stepped into the role of Moderator, with Phil Starr supporting as Vice-Moderator. We want to share that Joyelle Tedeschi and Bill Chapman have decided to conclude their service on the Team. While we are saddened to see them step down, we are filled with appreciation for their dedicated work. We are also pleased to announce that Cody Mejeur has stepped up to complete Joyelle's remaining term for the year.

Our hearts are full of gratitude for the countless ways Joyelle and Bill have nurtured our congregation. Bill, in particular, has worn many hats over the last four years—serving as Moderator and Secretary, while also helping as a cook, dishwasher, and maintenance hand. His tireless spirit is a blessing, yet it serves as a reminder that the work of the church is a shared calling. To ensure no one carries a heavy burden alone, your Leadership Team is focused on revitalizing our committees so everyone can share their unique talents. As the saying goes, "many hands make light work."

Following the finalization of the counted vote, we recognize that Kenilworth is

prepared to move forward with St. Stephens-Bethlehem on the original name change and 50/50 merger. At the same time, we also recognize that St. Stephens-Bethlehem has not yet reached the level of consensus needed to proceed, with much of the concern centered on the name-change requirement rather than on the spirit of partnership itself. This has been a sensitive and trying time for our family of faith, and we ask for patience, grace, and continued prayer as we continue discerning the best path forward together. Our hope is that, when we meet, we can speak with open hearts, practicing the compassion and love that Christ teaches us, while honoring both Kenilworth's readiness and St. Stephens-Bethlehem's need for further conversation and healing. **Please plan on attending our Town Hall Meeting on September 20th.**

I also want to share a beautiful blessing I experienced this past August. I traveled with my daughter and ten cousins from Porto, Portugal, into the heart of Galicia, Spain, to visit my grandfather's birthplace in Lamaiglesia. Meeting our Spanish relatives across the language barrier was a joy, but the most moving moment was meeting my grandfather's 92-year-old niece, Conchita. She told us that when she was a girl suffering from tuberculosis in Spain, my grandfather, Jose, sent money from America for her medicine. The family wasn't able to afford its cost. That quiet act of tithing saved her life, for which she was eternally grateful. It was a powerful, holy reminder that our generosity can reach through generations. It makes me wonder: what seeds of kindness are you planting today that might bloom into a miracle tomorrow?



[“We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.” — Winston Churchill](#)



Sunday, September 6th:
Communion with Pastor Donner

Sunday, September 13: Rally Day & Welcome Back Sunday with Pastor Ruth
Sunday, September 20th: Pastor Ebony Singletary will be preaching
TOWN HALL MEETING after service



Rally Day September 13th – Let the Adventure Begin!

As summer comes to a close, we are preparing to return to a more structured Sunday School curriculum. The adventure begins as we learn about the many heroes in the Bible!

We are grateful for all our dedicated volunteers, with a special spotlight on Ann. Each week, Ann brings not only her grandson but also neighborhood friends to Sunday School, ensuring they have the opportunity to learn, grow and experience God's work! Bless you Ann for your faithful commitment to our children!

We are always looking for new volunteers! Whether you can help once or twice a month, we would love for you to join us! If you are interested, please text Joy at 716-491-3533



We will continue to hold Wacky Wednesday on September 23rd and October 14th. If you could lend a hand as we play "Family Feud" and other games, please sign up to join Ann in planning these events.

The Garage Sale is happening Saturday & Sunday, September 26 and 27 from 9-2. Please sign up or see Mary Martino to help [setting up on Friday].

Anniversary Sunday, is Sunday, September 27

St. Stephens-Bethlehem will be celebrating 173 and Kenilworth will be celebrating 100 years!!

We are creating a picture slide show of all the special events that happened throughout the years together as congregations of SSBUCC and KUCA. If you have pictures of moments/ events that happened at church, please email them or text them to 716-632-4226 or ststephensbethlehemucc@gmail.com, Deadline is **Sunday, September 13th** to submit pictures.



Sunday October 4th: Pastor Jan Hubbard will be preaching
Sunday, October 11th: Pastor Ruth will be our preacher
October 14th: WACKY WEDS



Sunday, October 18th: ***Theme Basket Raffle/Trunk of Treat*** Lunch 11-3 TENTATIVE
WORSHIP WILL BE AT 10am with Pastor Bob Fleming

Sunday, October 25th: Pastor Ruth will be preaching



Sunday, November 1st: ALL SAINTS DAY, **Communion** with Pastor Buddy Tuesday,
November 3rd: Election Day BAKE SALE! **Yummies needed!**



Saturday, November 7th: **Spaghetti Dinner**
3-7pm

Sunday, November 8th: Pastor Ruth will be preaching
Sunday, November 15th: Pastor Bob will be preaching

Saturday, November 21: **Turkey Bake** at 3pm

Volunteers Needed

Sunday, November 22nd: Thanksgiving Community Lunch 11:30-1:30pm Pastor Ruth will be preaching

Sunday, November 29th: Pastor Jan Hubbard will be preaching

OCTOBER IS STEWARDSHIP MONTH



We would like to start this stewardship campaign by expressing our profound gratitude for your ongoing support and generosity to our church. Your contributions have made a significant impact on sustaining our church, our community, and helped us continue to spread the love of God.

As a church, our mission is to practice God's unconditional welcome, celebrating faith that is

discovered personally and shared generously through love and service. Specifically, we believe that God has called us to perform outreach and community service. We know that we cannot accomplish this without God's help.

We also know that we cannot accomplish this mission without your help. Your donations have already helped us to sustain our church and support the Hope & Joy Food Pantry and Community Garden. These achievements would not have been possible without your ongoing support, and we are deeply grateful for it.

We understand that giving is a personal decision, and we appreciate any amount that you can contribute. Whether big or small, every donation makes a difference in the work we do. It is our hope that you will continue to support us in any way you can, whether it's through financial contributions or volunteering your time and talents.

In 21st Century King James Version, it says in Proverbs 3:9-10

⁹ Honor the Lord with thy substance and with the first fruits of all thine increase:¹⁰ so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.

This verse reminds us that the more we give to others in honor of God, the more God rewards us with prosperity and abundance.

As we look forward to the future, we are excited about what God has in store for St Stephens-Bethlehem and Kenilworth UCC. We believe that with your continued support, we can make an even greater impact and reach even more people with the message of love, hope, and salvation.

Thank you again for your generosity, faithfulness, and commitment to our church's mission. May God bless you abundantly.
In Christ's love,

John Frenning, Phil Starr, Joe Tricoli, Kim Wilson, Cody Mejeur, your LT Team

Included in this newsletter[if you receive it by snail mail], you will find a pledge card. Please fill it out and mail it back to the church office or kindly place it in the offering plate on Sunday morning.

If you receive this newsletter digitally, pledge cards are available at our bulletin table. Our pledge campaign runs from September 1 - 30. In October, the Leadership Team will have our budget meeting to plan our finances for the 2027 year. Thanks for your help and cooperation as we plan for our future.

We at St. StephensBethlehem/Kenilworth UCC have a heart of gold. We



need to form a Congregational Care Team with many roles needing to be filled:

1. Visiting the shut-ins
2. Cooking Meals
3. Phone Calls to check -up
4. Driving members to appointments
5. Picking up members & bringing them to church

If you are interested in helping out on this team, please let Gineen Frenning know, reach out to the church office (Phone - 716-632-4226 or email - StStephensBethlehemUCC@gmail.com) **A big thank you to Marion Andrus for handling all our birthday cards!**

Treasurer's Report — 2026 Year-to-Date

The church continues to operate below the deficit anticipated in the 2026 budget, although our year-to-date expenses continue to exceed income.

Financial Summary

	Actual	Annual Budget
Total Revenue	\$90,958.05	\$93,370.00
Total Expenditures	\$104,744.61	\$158,725.00
Net Revenue	(\$13,786.56)	(\$65,355.00)

At this point, the church has spent **\$13,786.56 more than it has received**. While operating at a deficit remains a concern, the current deficit is substantially smaller than the **\$65,355 deficit included in the annual budget**.

Revenue Highlights

Overall revenue is **\$2,411.95 below the full-year budgeted amount**.

Pledges, offerings, and collections have generated **\$63,569.69**, compared with a budget of \$61,370. Building-use and rental income continues to be particularly strong at **\$27,621**, already exceeding the annual budget of \$20,370 by **\$7,251**.

Pledge income currently stands at **\$31,239.69** against an annual budget of \$35,300, while fundraising has generated **\$10,154.50** toward the \$12,000 annual goal.

Kenilworth UCC reimbursements currently total **\$10,807.06**, compared with the \$20,000 included in our annual budget.

Expense Highlights

Total expenditures are **\$104,744.61**, compared with the annual budget of \$158,725.

Facilities expenses total **\$29,665.46**, compared with a \$43,700 annual budget. Utilities remain below their annual budget, with **\$10,391.83 spent against \$16,200 budgeted**.

Payroll expenditures total **\$31,802.75**, compared with the annual budget of \$50,775.

The largest ministry expenditure continues to be the **Food Pantry Outreach**, with **\$32,203.94 spent against its \$41,000 budget**.

There are two individual expenses that have exceeded their budgeted amounts. Elevator maintenance is **\$2,452.51 against a \$1,000 budget** and Interim Pastor expenses are **\$7,918.10 against a \$7,200 budget**.

Treasurer's Summary

The church's financial position remains challenging because expenses continue to exceed revenue, producing a current operating deficit of \$13,786.56. However, our financial performance is presently considerably better than the deficit anticipated when the 2026 budget was adopted.

Strong building rental income and careful control of many operating expenses have helped offset lower-than-budgeted revenue in several categories. As we continue through the remainder of the year, we should remain attentive to pledge income, fundraising, Kenilworth reimbursements, and unexpected building and maintenance expenses.

Current year-to-date deficit: \$13,786.56.



HOPE & JOY PANTRY UPDATE

Hope & Joy Food Pantry continues to see a growing need in our community. So far this year, we have served **3,301 households and 8,184 individuals**, providing the equivalent of **73,656 meals** and receiving more than **55,000 pounds of food**. We are especially pleased that the number of people served has increased **20.8% over this time last year**, far exceeding our goal of 10%.

Our **Community Garden** is also flourishing! Volunteers from the United Way Day of Caring installed landscaping fabric and gravel pathways between the garden beds, making the garden more accessible and easier to maintain. Our first harvest produced **13.2 pounds of fresh lettuce and beans**, which were distributed at no cost to pantry families. The garden was also proudly featured as one of **45 gardens on the Amherst Garden Walk**.

We are grateful to announce that Hope & Joy received a **\$2,000 grant from Community Ministries**, based on Pastor Ruth's recommendation, as well as our annual **FeedMore WNY funding for 2026–2027**. We continue to pursue additional grant opportunities to strengthen both the pantry and community garden.

Volunteers Needed

We would love additional help at the pantry on **Mondays from 4:00–7:00 p.m.** Volunteers help pack and distribute food orders, and **no advance sign-up is necessary**. We are also looking for volunteers interested in helping in the garden throughout the summer.

Thank you to our sponsoring church, congregation, volunteers, donors, and community partners. **Your continued support makes it possible for Hope & Joy to provide nutritious food, fresh garden produce, and a welcoming place for our neighbors in need.**



A big thank you to Jeanette & Bill Chapman for their funding of the driveway sealing and line painting! It looks great! Thank you for your generosity!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY to:

September birth dates: Erika Burgasser -9; Carolyn Bernhart - 10; Mindy Rankin - 11; Jan Wagner - 21.

October birth dates: Marcia Fogelsonger -1; Rob Seth -3; Linda Miller - 5; Gordon Green - 5; Kim Rauch - 9; Elisa Faling - 10; Mary Rauch - 18; Frank Calvarese - 20; Nick Tobiczky - 21.

PLEASE KEEP IN YOUR PRAYERS: Maureen Green, Dorothy Seth, Frank Calvarese, Jack Fogelsonger, Nancy Smith, Katie Mazurek, Jill Tobiczky and all our shut-ins.

WAYS YOU CAN HELP THROUGHOUT THE CHURCH

1. Join a committee to make new friends.
2. Participate in all the fun!
3. Share your talents!
4. Pray for our church, church members, and the world
5. Introduce yourself to someone unfamiliar
6. Share a "thank you" to those working around the church
7. Support our mission of the Hope & Joy Pantry

"For every act of kindness shown, a seed of grace is gently sown.

May God bless all you do and say, and walk beside you every day.

With thankful heart and thankful prayer, I praise the Lord for all your care."

Amen