



AGAPE Grapevine



Dear Beloved in Christ,

As December's chill wraps around us and homes glitter with lights, we are drawn into the heart of the Christmas season — a time of reflection, joy, and profound gratitude. In this season, we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, the Light of the World, whose coming illuminates our lives and guides us towards the path of love and salvation.

In a world that often feels shrouded in darkness, the message of Christmas shines as a beacon of hope. Jesus, the Light of the World, comes to dispel fear, to offer peace, and to bring redemption. As we celebrate His birth, we are reminded that no darkness, be it personal, communal, or global, is too deep for His light to penetrate.

The true spirit of Christmas goes beyond the festivities. It's found in the ways we embody Christ's love:

Loving Our Neighbors: Let us extend our hands in service and kindness to those around us, particularly the marginalized and forgotten.

Fostering Peace: In our interactions, may we be agents of peace, echoing the angelic proclamation, "on earth peace, goodwill toward men."

Sharing the Good News: Just as the shepherds spread the word of Christ's birth, let us be bold in sharing the joy and hope we find in Him.

Despite the challenges we may face, the message of Christmas calls us to joy. It's a joy that transcends circumstances, rooted in the unshakeable truth of God's love for us. Let this joy be our strength and our song this holiday season.

As we gather with loved ones, exchange gifts, and partake in festive traditions, let us keep our hearts centered on the wondrous gift of Jesus Christ. May His light shine brightly in our hearts, homes, and communities, not just in December, but throughout the coming year.

Wishing you all a blessed and merry Christmas,

Rev. Zac Wheeler

Grace Extended

SHOWING GOD'S LOVE
THROUGH AN EXTENDED HAND TO ALL

Grace Extended

The response for Grace Extended has been amazing. Bethesda volunteers are generous with time and spirit. The visitation teams and the card senders are working diligently to contact people who are hospitalized, homebound, in nursing homes, grieving, recovering, celebrating or in need of encouragement. Please, brighten someone's day with a visit! Contact me if you know someone in need of a visit or a card.

"Threads of Grace" is a part of Grace Extended that is making lap blankets. I am hopeful we will be starting knitting and crochet classes in January. We shared fleece lap blankets that were donated by several folks. Contact me if you wish to participate! Christmas is upon us! During December we enjoy familiar songs and can be busy with thoughts of baking, decorating, shopping, lights and wish lists. Consider reprioritizing! Enjoy December as a season of renewed anticipation. Jesus! God's most glorious blessing upon us. Search for ways to Extend Grace.

Kathy Blackburn

On November 1, 2023, Bethesda United Methodist church changed our email to:

bethesdasalisbury@gmail.com

(The old email address will also be checked for about one year before that account is closed.)

Thank you to everyone who has starting using our new google email.

LIVE Worship Services—Sunday 9:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m.

Save the Dates: Soup Luncheons

Thursday, January 18, 2024
 Thursday, February 15, 2024
 11 am — 12:30 pm

Take-Out/Pick-Up

Delivery Available for orders of \$100 or more

Menu:

- Vegetable Beef Soup
- Chili
- Chicken Salad
- Baked Ham on Roll
- Baking Powder Biscuits
- Iced Fudge Brownies
- Homemade Custard Bread Pudding

Fax orders to 410-742-8856
Call 410-742-8855 to place orders by phone

We could really use your help!
 Call 410-742-8855 to find out how to volunteer



Santa's Angels

\$\$--TEXAS ROADHOUSE GIFT CARDS FOR SALE!\$\$

We are continuing to sell Texas Roadhouse Gift Cards (Denominations of \$25 or \$50). Additionally, we will offer you a free appetizer with each \$50 purchase while supplies last. This would be a fabulous gift for a loved one on their birthday or anniversary! You may place an order by calling Lora Adkins 410-726-2977 or email me at kadkins30@comcast.net or call Lois Moorhead at 410-430-3086.

Save the Date for Santa's Angels Inaugural Golf Tournament on May 17, 2024!

Come join us for a day of fun and fellowship!

- If you have a business please consider contacting us for a large (\$400) or small (\$150) sign on your Favorite hole!
- You have plenty of time to get a team of four together to play that day. (\$400).

Also, if you would like to make a monetary donation, we would appreciate any and all donations as this will help us to offset the expenses for our prizes, gifts for players, and other incidentals to make the day perfect for all participants.

Senior Singles, Thursday, December 14, 2023
 Meet at Church at noon to carpool to Suicide Bridge
 Our reservations are for 1 pm

RSVP Sandy Mills, 410-422-7305, or
 Dr. Dan 443-735-3292

Instead of a Christmas Gift please bring pet food to be donated to the Wicomico County Humane Society



Santa's Angels Needs Your HELP!

It is that time of the year when Santa's Angels are busy planning for another year. Now is the time for all of Santa's Angels to prepare for our 34th year of serving God throughout our community. We plan to deliver on December 23rd. During this time, we shop, wrap, collect, and set up. Now is the time for our hearts to be open for the endless grace God sheds on our lives each day. Rest assured His plan will reveal miracles to us again this year. If you would like to volunteer to help or would like to know more about our project, please call Lora Adkins (410-726-2977) or e-mail at kadkins30@comcast.net. And please choose to serve Him by helping with Santa's Angels this Christmas as a ministry with our community. We would love to have your help. God's Blessings to you and your family, Keith and Lora Adkins

Inaugural Santa's Angels Charity Golf Tournament



Date: May 17, 2024 at 1pm

Location: Nutter's Crossing Golf Course

4-person Scramble Format

Santa's Angels is a local charity that has helped provide Christmas for families in need on the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland & Delaware for over 30 years!!! We are 100% volunteer and rely solely on donations and fundraising to support our efforts. Play some golf and help us, help the kids have a memorable Christmas!!

You DO NOT want to miss this tournament: Mulligans, Move Up on a Hole, Hole-in-One Contests, Longest Drive (Men & Women), Closest to the Pin, 50/50, Silent Auction, Chinese Auction, Putting Contest, and Food!!

Levels	What You Get for Money	Cost
Tier 1 (Eagle)	Team (4 ppl) + Large Sign on a Tee Box + Clubhouse Sign + Donor Ad	\$1,000
Tier 2 (Birdie)	Team (4 ppl) + Small Sign on a Tee Box + Donor Ad	\$500
Tier 3 (Par)	Large Sign with Your Business or Organization Placed on a Tee Box	\$400
Tier 4 (Bogey)	Small Sign with Your Business or Organization Placed on a Tee Box	\$150
Tier 5	Team Only (4 ppl)	\$400

Prizes for 1st, 2nd, & 3rd Place Teams

Player #1 _____ Phone _____ Email _____
 Player #2 _____ Phone _____ Email _____
 Player #3 _____ Phone _____ Email _____
 Player #4 _____ Phone _____ Email _____

Business or Organization Name _____

Tier Selected _____ Total Cost _____

Payment Methods Accepted: Cash, Check (Payable to Santa's Angels), or use the Give Send Go App. Registration includes: Golf, Food After Your Round, Cart Usage, and a Goodie Bag.

There are many ways to participate!!! Sponsor a Hole, Enter a Team, or Donate Money Directly to Offset Our Costs!!

Thank you for your ongoing generous support of Santa's Angels!

DOING SOMETHING GOOD

There were quite a few angels in line at the Post Office during that Christmas season.
This woman was full of good works... —ACTS 9:36

I had dragged two boxes of mail into the post office and trudged back out for more. Now I was in the long line, struggling with the heavy boxes as it slowly moved forward. Finally, I wrestled my boxes to the counter. The clerk weighed them and then shook his head. "I'm sorry, but you have three different-sized packages here. I'm going to put them into three containers and then you're going to have to put the correct postage on each piece." I went over to a table and arranged the stamps into three groups to match the parcels.

"What are you doing, honey?" a pleasant voice asked. I looked up at a woman's smiling face and explained my chore. "Well, I'm just standing here in line doing nothing, I'll help," she said. I explained that the packages were going to people who had helped our AIDS orphans in Africa. "What a good cause," she said. "I'm so lucky to get to help."

She worked on and then stopped suddenly, looking back at the long line of mostly grumpy people. "Hey, come help us!" she called out. "It's Christmas, and we're doing something good." Soon others were pitching in, chatting together, and laughing. The clerk was grinning from ear to ear as he delivered the last of the parcels to my amazing assembly line.

My new friend stamped the last piece, and before I could thank her, she was headed out the door. "Oh," I called, "wait! I don't know your name or how to thank you." She laughed. "It's Christmas!" was all she said.

*Father, thank You for the amazing woman who turned my Christmas around.
As I have received, let me give.*

<https://guideposts.org/daily-devotions/holiday-devotions/doing-something-good/>

It has been my honor to serve as President of Bethesda's United Women in Faith (UWIF) the past 2 years. Thanks to all the ladies who have supported me during my term. UWIF is in need of someone to step up as Vice President for a two-year term (2024-25). This person traditionally takes over as president the following two years. UWIF is open to all women, so you don't have to be a current member to accept the call. If you feel led to help lead our organization, please reach out to Pat Oberholtzer at patober@comcast.net or 410-251-0935.

Wishing everyone a very Merry Christmas,
 Tammy Taylor-Evans
 UWIF President



United
 Women
 in Faith



The Nativity of Christ at Bethesda

It was incredibly exciting to celebrate the 100th anniversary of our church building several months ago. I still talk about the service, video, reception, and the displays that are in the Memorial Room. Before we end the year 2023, I wanted to continue that historical experience into our Christmas services. I found a cantata by Caleb Simper that was copyrighted (I am also assuming composed) in 1896, the same year that our church was named Bethesda. The mural downstairs states: "As the church flourished and continued to grow, at the suggestion of Mr. E. W. Windsor, the beautiful biblical name of 'Bethesda'-House of Mercy and Healing was adopted in 1896 as the official name of the church."

The cantata includes some carols that are new to me, and I am planning to include some of the solos, choruses, and carols in our services during Advent and on Christmas Eve at 11:00. I will include notations in the bulletin that the works are from the 1896 Cantata, "The Nativity of Christ."

Simper was a Victorian era English musician and composer who wrote music that was accessible to non-professional church choirs. While critics may have panned his works because of the intended performers and audience, I believe that someone who creates music accessible for the worship of a large, diverse group of faithful members is performing an important service to Christianity. If a song, anthem, poem, scripture, or other art form brings someone to a closer walk with God, that work is as effective as famous compositions, sculptures, and paintings.

As I noted in last month's newsletter, our **Chancel Choir Cantata will be presented at the 11:00 am service** on Sunday December 17. Sherri has created some staging that will provide a visual dimension to the cantata and there will be some narration and solos that will be moving and inspirational.

I am looking forward to you joining us for the Cantata on December 17 at 10:30 am and the Christmas Eve service at 11:00 pm on December 24. The Christmas Eve service will feature the Chancel Choir, brass, and our Handbell Choir. Merry Christmas from my family to yours! See you in church, Jeff

Christmas is coming soon! Please join us at the 9am service and celebrate the birth of Jesus! There will also be a Christmas Eve service at 7pm. And guess what? The hospitality table is back! You don't want to miss that! Merry Christmas!
 - Phil Perdue





We are looking for a few people to help us out by taking pictures of events at Bethesda U M Church or events involving BUMC members. The newsletter is so much better if we are able to include recent photographs of our members.

Do you like to take pictures? It doesn't have to be professional . Most of us have a camera on our cell phones. Phones these days take pretty good pictures! It's simple, just follow the two steps below.

- Take pictures of any event you attend. The best ones include our church members.
- Email them to bethesdasalsibury@gmail.com before the 20th of each month.

United Women In Faith Christmas Fudge Sale



Orders accepted until Sunday Dec 3rd

Please put order with payment in collection plate or bring to church office

Pick up orders Sunday Dec 10 (10-12) * Mon Dec 11th (10-2) Church Office

Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

	#	Cost
# pounds of Chocolate - Plain Box - \$10/box		
# pounds of Chocolate - Christmas Tin - \$13/box		
#pounds of Peanut Butter - Plain Box - \$10/box		
# pounds of Peanut Butter - Christmas Tin - \$13/box		
Total Cost		

Questions: Pat Oberholtzer 410-251-0935
Bethesda Church Office 410-742-8855

From the Kitchen--We hope everyone enjoyed our annual Thanksgiving dinner and the addition of entertainment. The leftover food went to Christian Shelter and the remainder (frozen) will go to the homeless men project. Luncheons will resume in January and February with Chili as our added soup. A special thank you to Lois and Walter Moorhead, Mark Donophan, Nevette Muir and many others that make the kitchen work smoothly. We currently take meals to about 30 of our members that are unable to come to church, and receive many notes and calls about how much this means to see someone from Bethesda. We always need volunteers and would love to have you join us in making luncheons happen. Have a Merry Christmas and see you in church.
Penny and the Kitchen Crew





United Women in Faith

Circle Meetings in December

- Circle Eve -** Tuesday, December 5, 11:30 am at Dayton's RSVP Peggy Hastings 410-726-3614
- Circle Martha -** Wednesday, December 13, 11:00 am with Ann Suthowski, 628 Pine Bluff Road
- Circle Mary -** Tuesday, December 12, 11:30 am at Long Horn Steakhouse
- Circle Rachael -** Friday, December 15, 1:00 pm at Goin' Nuts
- Circle Ruth -** Monday, December 4, 11:30 am at Atlantic Hotel
- Circle Sarah -** Wednesday, December 13, 12:00 pm at Goin' Nuts

Starting December 2023 (this month) the deadline for submitting articles or photos to be published in the Agape Newsletter is the 20th of each month.

This will enable us to get the newsletter edited, printing and distributed in a timely manner each month.



HOLIDAY POINSETTIAS



At Christmas we decorate our sanctuary with Poinsettias purchased by members and friends, "in honor of" or "in memory of" loved ones.

If you would like to take part in this longstanding tradition, please fill in the form below and enclose it with your donation in an envelope to Bethesda Altar Guild. Thank you!

*** PLEASE PRINT NAMES CLEARLY ***

Donor _____

In Memory of _____

In Honor of _____

Donation \$ _____ Phone _____

Deadline for requests is December 10, 2023
Questions – Pat Oberholtzer 410-251-0935

"Hanging of the Greens!"

Our Annual "Hanging of the Greens" Service will be held on December 3, 2023 at 10:30 am. Please mark your calendars and plan to attend this festive Service to begin Advent, the season of Hope and Expectation!



JoAnn Geer has been making lap robes/blankets for our shut ins and nursing home residents and has run out of Fleece material, which is the best.



Do you have any Fleece material you aren't going to use and could donate?

If you do please call JoAnn at 443-366-8908.

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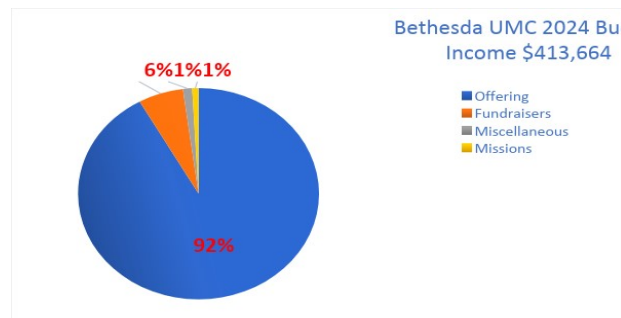
Hands and Hearts Ending Homelessness The local men's' homeless shelter opened on November 18th at the Park Seventh Day Adventist Church on Deer Pointe Drive, beside the Shorebirds Stadium. That evening, we were fortunate enough to have leftover chicken salad, soup, biscuits, lunch meats and cheeses and brownies that were taken to the shelter and it was so appreciated! Each evening 32 men are expected to be housed and fed from now through the end of March. Bethesda will be accepting donations and will be responsible for the meal on Saturday, **December 16th**. Please check the bulletin the week of December 10th for the specific items needed and bring them to the church that week. There are many needs. Besides the meals we have committed to, anyone may provide a dinner, breakfast food, clothing, cleaning supplies, cash donations or gift cards. Go to the website: handsandheartsshelter.org to get more information and to sign up. Thank you so much. In His Service, Debbie Day

Bethesda's Budget for 2024

The approved budget for Bethesda will be \$413,664 for the calendar year of 2024. Our overall budget continues to be reduced due to changes with income, and thus reducing expenses associated with staffing requirements, maintenance efficiencies and ministry programs. In 2023, the budget was \$441,387, and in 2022 the budget was \$455,157. The budget for 2024 is reflective of our actual income and expenses from 2022 and 2023.

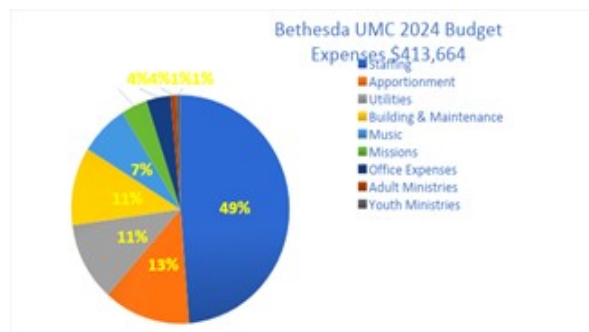
For this year, as of the end of October, our income from January through October was \$336,976, compared to a planned budget income of \$367,882. With planned expenses for November and December, we are tracking behind our income objective for 2023.

Please review the Income and the Expense Pie Charts for the 2024 budget below, detailing the categories of each. As you will see 92% of our income comes from the offerings that each of you provide to Bethesda. Without you, we would not have a church. The fundraiser category highlighted consists of the income from our monthly luncheons and annual Fall Festival.



Expenses for 2024 are detailed below. Staffing and Apportionment make up the two largest expense categories. Approximately 50% of the expenses are associated with Salaries and Wages for the Senior and Associate Pastors, Administrative Assistant, Bookkeeper, Custodian, Director of Traditional Music, and Director of Contemporary Music.

If you have questions associated with the budget plan, please contact the Church Office @ 410-742-8855 and someone will contact you. You can always reach out to Penny Bradford, Finance Chair, Nevette Muir, Finance, or Lois Moorhead, One Committee Chair. God's Blessings to all as we enter the new year. Happy New Year!



THANK YOU

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Many thanks to Joyce Roberts and Sonia Crandell for bringing me Thursday Soup Luncheon goodies! Their visit and the food was marvelous! Thanks also for the lovely blanket and tea cup! I use the blanket every night in my recliner when I watch TV. Many thanks to Pat & Joann Geer for the tasty sweet potato biscuits and pie for Thanksgiving! So delicious! - Sandy Mills

Many Thanks to our Bethesda Family for a wonderful lunch. Thanks to Sonia Crandell & Joyce Roberts for driving so far to deliver it. Love, John & Lynn Ryan

Last month my wife was out of commission with a broken shoulder and Grace Extended brought a care package from your church for my wife and me. The food and desserts were absolutely delicious. Alton Adkins

Bethesda UMW

Dear Friends, Thank you for the recent donation to Lazarus Food Pantry of Salisbury Urban Ministries. Your gift of \$100 will help us in our mission to provide programs that serve and minister to the needs of materially impoverished people in our community.

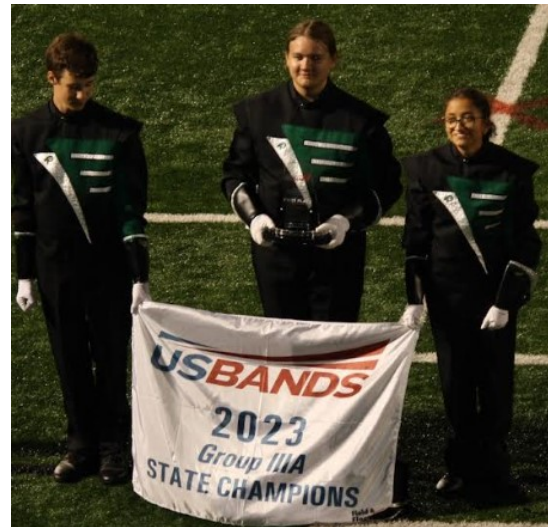
It is only through the kind support of individuals, the churches and our community that we can continue to service people in need. Thank you again for your generous support of this ministry!

Susan Massey, Office Manager, SUM



Parkside High School won the US Bands Group 111A STATE championship and was the US Bands Group 111A NATIONAL championship. Pretty awesome for Parkside Marching Band!!!!

Todd and Justin Riddleberger (pictured), taken at the national championship.



It's our turn to Volunteer for God's Kitchen on Saturday, December 16. At least 8 Volunteers are needed. They have been feeding more than 200 people - by preparing take out lunches.

Those that can help, please arrive by 10 am to Grace Church. We will probably finish by noon.

Contact Pat Weeast at 410-713-2014 or Vanessa Kelley at 410-251-1989
If you are able to help.

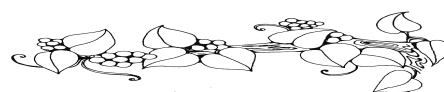


Bethesda United Methodist Church
406 N. Division Street
Salisbury, MD 21801



**From: The Office Staff, Music Staff, and
Ministerial Staff of Bethesda United
Methodist Church**

Agape



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Editor: Brenda Sawyer

Sunday Schedule

9:00 AM—Contemporary Worship
—Memorial Room
10:30 AM—Traditional Worship
—Sanctuary

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