



North Bethesda United Methodist Church

Epiphany/Lent 2026
Volume 54 Issue 1

“On Welcome”

As you'll see on page 10 of this newsletter, our 2026 NBUMC Board has been working to articulate ministry goals for our church for the coming year. These goals came out of many conversations, including the Deep Listening initiative the Board undertook in 2024, as well as multiple retreats. One goal in particular that is being carried over from last year is to “explore and live into our calling to be a welcoming place of refuge and sanctuary.” Striving to communicate and embody God's wide welcome is, as far as I can tell, part of North Bethesda UMC's DNA. Most churches think of themselves as “welcoming,” but rarely, if ever, have I encountered a congregation that takes it so seriously that newcomers and outsiders (not just people who are already “in”) regularly and without prompting remark on what a warm, friendly, and welcoming church this is. This in itself is a spiritual gift, to be honed, developed, and put to use for God's kingdom work in our community and beyond, and I am excited to see where the year will take us.

In the immediate future, as you likely know by now, I will be going on parental leave so that my spouse Matt and I can welcome—there it is, that word again—our new baby. This impending arrival has captured most of my attention in the last weeks, and I realized that there are a few principles of hospitality that apply, not just to welcoming a new family member, but to the kind of welcome we hope to offer as a church to all who are seeking a place of refuge and belonging. In both of these cases, we hope to communicate with words, yes, but mostly through our actions, that:

- **We have thought about you before your arrival.** Matt and I know that babies differ from adults in many fundamental, important ways, and so we have researched and asked other people; we have learned what we can, and we have put considerable thought into what babies might need, want, or be startled by. When it comes to our church, how are we thinking ahead about who might be coming through our doors (or joining us online), and how they aren't simply copies of us, but might have needs and fears and hungers that differ from ours? How do we communicate to a newcomer that *we have thought about you before you even got here*, while balancing that with this next one:
- **We will give you space to be an individual, and to fully express who you are.** While Matt and I have thought about babies in general, and imagined who might be coming to join us, we have no idea who this child will be. They may defy all our expectations! And so we hope to say to our child, yes, we have thought about you, but we know that all babies are unique, and you are free to be your own person and to teach us more about your particular needs, desires, and fears. In our church community, we may think ahead about what certain groups of people may need or want, but when an individual comes to us, we allow them space to teach us, as much as they want to, about their unique self.
- **We will do our best to keep you safe.** This has been a principle of hospitality for as long as humans have been traveling long distances and needing places to stay along the way. When we welcome a new family member or a guest of any age into our home, we take responsibility for their safety. We may baby-proof (or toddler-proof); we educate ourselves about dangers we might not have thought about because they don't really affect us; we turn up our awareness and commit to doing everything in our power to ensure that our guest or our new family member is safe. How do we live into this as a church? Are there ways we can better equip ourselves to uphold, to the best of our ability, the emotional, spiritual, and physical safety of those who come to us, especially those who are vulnerable?
- **We will adjust, adapt, and change our lives to re-form around you.** Matt and I don't expect our baby to jump into our family, get on our schedule, and be a quiet tag-along to everything we're already doing.

(continued on next page)

When this child arrives, we will become a new family. We will change and grow as individuals, and as a unit. The same goes, I hope, whenever new people come to be part of our church. We don't just tack them on and keep doing what we've always been doing. We re-form and become a new body every time, to fully incorporate those who have come to be part of us.

In this tender time in our nation, our world, and right here in our own community, many people are searching for this kind of full-bodied, radical welcome. I believe that NBUMC is uniquely called and equipped to step up and offer refuge. I will be praying for you as you welcome visiting pastors, newcomers to the church, and anyone else who may be knocking on the door of your own heart. And I cannot tell you how grateful I am that a church as welcoming as this one stands ready to receive our child when we return from leave.

With a full heart,
Rev. Kara

Recent Scenes of **Worship**



The Advent and Christmas seasons were filled with love and light. In the above photos, we remember how members of all ages shared their gifts in leading the Advent Wreath liturgies and participating in our fist-ever Epiphany Pageant.



Coming Up In Worship

Rev. T.C. Morrow, Visiting Pastor

Rev. T.C. Morrow will be planning and leading in worship from January 25 through April 19. (Our own Rev. Joye Jones is preaching and leading worship this Sunday.) Rev. T.C. is an ordained Deacon in the Baltimore-Washington Conference of the UMC. Her primary appointment is as the Director of Finance and Operations for the National Religious Campaign against Torture. In her volunteer clergy role at Foundry UMC in DC, she helps people get more involved in justice ministries, both in identifying what they are most passionate about and the specific ways they might engage.

Rev. T.C. earned a Masters in Divinity from Wesley Theological Seminary, and a BA in Physics from Vassar College. She and her wife serve as foster parents with the Prince George's County Department of Social Services. T.C. has a love of jigsaw puzzles, skiing, and science fiction. She and her wife love walking to nearby Lake Artemesia. You might find them walking with their cell phones in hand playing Pokémon Go, or find T.C. on Discord arranging play with others. You can reach her at revtc@northbethesdaumc.org.



Photo Credit: Baltimore-Washington Conference



Holy Week and Easter at NBUMC

Sunday, March 29: Palm Sunday worship, 10:00am

Thursday, April 2: Maundy Thursday Soup Supper at 6:30pm, followed by Communion and space for quiet prayer in the Sanctuary

Friday, April 3: Good Friday service (details TBD, will perhaps be at Faith UMC)

Sunday, April 5:

- Easter Sunrise service at 6:30am, followed by breakfast
- Easter Worship at 10:00am, followed by Easter Egg Hunt & Celebration

Ash Wednesday Service

Our Ash Wednesday service is tentatively scheduled for 7:00pm on Wednesday, February 18th, but stay tuned for updates and more details after Rev. T.C. arrives in late January. Ash Wednesday is an opportunity to set an intention for this holy season.

Easter Flower Orders

Be on the lookout for Easter flower order forms, which will become available in the Narthex and online in mid to late March. You may choose types of plants (tulips, lilies, hydrangeas, daffodils, etc.), dedicate them in honor or memory of loved ones, and either take them home after Easter or donate them. Prices will be listed on the order form; contact the Church Office with any questions.



Recent Scenes of **Nurture**



Above, assembling and writing notes for care packages that were shared with eight college students who are connected to our congregation.

Left, sharing cake during a Staff Appreciation Coffee Hour.

Right, a working Coffee Hour spent setting up Christmas decorations.

Below, our annual Blessing of the Pets service.



Upcoming Opportunities for Nurture

Lenten Small Groups

The season of Lent brings us an opportunity to deepen our relationship with God and with one another as a community of seekers, learners, and practitioners of the way of Jesus. These Lenten small groups will meet weekly for a guided study of scripture and a discussion of its relevance to our daily lives. We encourage everyone to find and commit to a five-week group that works for your schedule. The meeting times and locations will be shared as soon as they come available, and you can sign up online, on a clipboard in the Narthex, or by contacting the Church Office.

Women's Minsitry News

Our next **Kina Mama Breakfast** will be on Saturday, February 7th, at 9am in the Fellowship Hall. The name Kina Mama means 'Strong Women,' and we invite ALL women to join us--that means moms and not moms, people of all ages, trans and cis women, people who have been here for years, and people who are brand new. There is a place for you at the table. Look for a sign up sheet in the Narthex, or simply reach out to office@northbethesdaumc.org, and we will make note of your RSVP. If you're able to contribute something to the potluck, that's great, but no worries if all that you bring is yourself!

We also have a new **women's book group** that meets monthly after worship. Our next book will be *The Personal Librarian*, by Marie Benedict, with the book discussion scheduled for February 8th. Email the Church Office to get connected with Monica Dean and Linda Hall, who organize the group.

Youth Group News

Our youth group is back in action for the new year! We have a shared group with Faith UMC (just up the road in Rockville), and the group generally switches off meeting locations between NBUMC and FUMC every Sunday, from 5-7pm. Suzanne Smedberg is our youth coordinator and can be contacted at suzanne@faithworkshere.com.

Save the date for a **Youth Super Bowl Party** on Sunday, February 8th, hosted by Suzanne and her family at their home in Potomac. Join us from 6:30-8:30pm (or halftime) for snacks and to cheer on your favorite team (or favorite commercials)! Contact Suzanne for more details, including the address.

We are also excited to begin planning our **summer mission trip**, working with Appalachia Service Project (ASP). We are committed for the week of July 12th - 18th. There is room on the team for everyone who wants to serve, regardless of skill level or experience. Let Suzanne know if you're interested in learning more; information sessions are coming soon!

Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper & Talent Show!

Bring your appetites and your talents to this Shrove Tuesday (Feb. 17th) event! Pancakes, sausages, and baked apples will be served starting at 6pm. At 7pm, we will start our talent show! Share your talents in a supportive atmosphere!

Recite a poem, tell some jokes, dance, sing, do cartwheels, juggle, play an instrument, perform a skit - whatever talent you would like to share - you can sign up for a 4-minute time slot during coffee hour in the next several weeks, or contact the Church Office to be put in touch with Natalie McManus.

If you wish to share a craft-type talent like painting, quilting, woodwork, etc., bring it to display on our display tables!

If you'd like to help with set up, serving, cooking, or cleanup, please let Natalie know.

Recent Scenes of **Service**

In mid-November, we participated in a District-wide effort to pack hygiene kits that UMCOR (the United Methodist Committee on Relief) uses as part of their disaster response ministry in places around the world. Thanks to the financial donations that allowed us to purchase supplies, and to the active participation of dozens of our church members, we were able to pack 304 kits during a single Coffee Hour!



After the last Rummage Sale, we had many like-new toys and stuffed animals--as well as lots of holiday decorations--left over, and so we decided to save them and host a Free Store ahead of the Christmas season. Church and community members donated additional new and gift-condition toys, and we invited neighbors who were in a challenging financial season (due to layoffs, SNAP cuts, and/or immigration intimidation) to come shop for free. It was a festive and compassion-filled morning, as we gave away almost everything we had and offered gift-wrapping, cookies & cocoa, and fellowship. We are grateful to all who helped make the event a success!



Upcoming Opportunities for Service

MLK Day of Service

Our annual service event in which we pack 25,000 meals for places experiencing hunger crises is scheduled for Monday, January 19th. Volunteers of all ages and abilities are needed to help with the different steps of this assembly-line-style effort, which takes place at St. Mark Presbyterian Church (10701 Old Georgetown Rd). You may choose a time slot (set up, first packing shift, second packing shift, and/or clean up) and register via the QR Code to the right. We are also grateful for donations to help us make our \$4000 fundraising goal to purchase the meal components. You may donate via check, online donation to NBUMC, or as part of your registration. See you there!



Rise Against
Hunger Sign-Up



Rummage Sale

On behalf of the Service and Outreach Committee (SOC), we are excited to bring the Rummage Sale back to NBUMC on June 6, 2026. Especially in a time when prices are high, people in the DC area are losing their jobs, and we are increasingly aware of the damaging environmental effects of buying all-new things, it is meaningful to offer our community the opportunity to buy high-quality used items at very low prices. We've also connected with new people (who even joined our church!) through this outreach event.

In the past, the Rummage Sale has been the largest source of funds that supports NBUMC's mission activities and partner organizations (such as Bethesda Help, Interfaith Works, Bread for the World, and AHEAD, Inc.)

Pulling off the Rummage Sale is a heavy lift, but with many hands helping, we can share the load. There are lots of jobs that need to be done, and we have no doubt that your skills will be useful. Here are some possibilities:

- Help sort donations during the week of May 31st - June 5th.
- Help set up before the sale, and/or help clean up afterward.
- Assist (or take the lead!) in one of the following "departments":
 - a. Clothing
 - b. Furniture
 - c. Small Electronics
 - d. Jewelry
 - e. Books
 - f. Toys
 - g. Art
 - h. Housewares
 - i. Linens

We hope to have a snack bar team, too, with cookies, chips, and other small snacks.

Please contact office@northbethesda.org, or myself, to let us know where and how you would like to serve.

We look forward to working with you on this amazing and rewarding event!

Sara Barakat, Chair of SOC

Looking Back

Our Church Overflowed With Activities in the 1970s

Paul Hurlburt, Church Historian

Our church reached its peak membership of 850 in 1974. Reading through issues of the “Opportunity Sheet,” as the newsletter was then called, for 1978, gives a kaleidoscopic view of activities for every age group.

For the youth, there was a ski trip in January, volleyball and basketball in different church leagues, and a “a mixer for y’all” at Chevy Chase Presbyterian Church, with a band featuring “both dance and concert music.” BLAST (Big Laughs And Small Talk) met on Friday nights and YSTL (Youth Seeking The Lord), a Bible study, was offered on Tuesdays.

In June, 31 high school seniors from our church graduated and “human sexuality and values within the context of the Christian Faith” were discussed at a senior high retreat, according to plans announced in the newsletter. Meanwhile, junior high youth “learned that water skiing is rather tricky” on an outing hosted by Marvin and Joy Burt at their cottage in Lake of the Woods. MYF continued through the summer for both junior and senior high.

For adults, there was a bridge club in members’ homes and disco lessons in Fellowship Hall (now Johnson Hall). Lillieanna Beck taught a CPR course, with Sue Enders as one of the instructors, and five bushels of potatoes were raised on church property to give to the needy.

The children had movie events and games. On Halloween, the Junior High MYF took children trick or treating for UNICEF and then invited them back to a Haunted House at church they had created.

For the whole family, there was a picnic, followed by a musical drama by the Love & Stuff Theatre Company. The United Methodist Men and United Methodist Women sponsored an Old Clothes Crab Pick and church members gathered to make crafts for a Harvest Bazaar and Sale.

With services at 9:30 and 11 a.m., 269 attended worship on September 10. Linda and Mel Thompson hosted “Friendship Time” between services, and 64 attended Church School.

The names of quite a few of the members active in our church during the 1970s will be recognized by members today. Besides Linda and Mel, greeters included Joy and Marvin Burt, Sue and John Enders, Mary and Robert Blane, Viola and Clyde Daniels, Nancy and David Duane, Loyse and Warren Hardin, Shirley and Frank Hollis, Bobbi and Carl Malmi, Jackie and Marvin Thorpe and Kathryn and Harry Wynkoop.



Junior High students entertained the children of our church at Halloween in 1978 with a Haunted House they designed and created.



Despite all the activities geared to everyone in the church, there were signs of potential trouble. On his first Sunday as pastor of our church, January 8, 1978, Rev. Joe Sergent preached on “Living in Shaky Times,” followed by “I Believe in the Church” on January 15. The newsletter announced on January 21 that the church’s Council on Ministries was meeting in a daylong event to “analyze and react constructively to the underlying causes for the apparent crisis in membership involvement.” Whatever solutions the council attempted to implement, the church steadily fell behind in meeting its budget as the year progressed. By December 3, the Opportunity Sheet was reporting a shortfall in stewardship income of \$17,508, based on “budget needs to date” of \$136,800 and “offerings received to date” of only \$118,292. Attendance dropped slowly as well.

Like the nation in the post-Watergate, post-Vietnam War era, churches including ours were struggling to find the way forward. While there is much to celebrate about our church in the 1970s, the Spirit was taking us in new directions. Those who stayed for the ride would experience a church that was losing members and activities, but also gaining in a ministry relevant to changing times.

Church News: From the Board

We have a new NBUMC Board for 2026, and give thanks for the faithful service of those who have retired at the end of their terms:

Dennis Boiter, Nathaniel Clarke, Janet Replogle (chair), and Hilda Smith

We welcome our 2026 Board and offer our prayers and support as they lead us. *Rich McManus* is the new Board Chair; his email address in that capacity is boardchair@northbethesdaumc.org. The other members of the 2026 Board are:

Michael Butkiewicz, Bob Dean, Zach Elkin, Linda Hall, Jesse Jennings, Jenna Love, Pamela Major, Scott Roby, and Hannah Williams

The Board as a whole may be contacted via an email to board@northbethesdaumc.org.

At our first meeting of the year, we discussed ministry goals for the upcoming year. Space doesn’t permit a detailed printing (we’ll save that for a future newsletter), but, broadly speaking they are:

- Focus on helping people become familiar with and comfortable using their gifts for ministry in, through, and beyond our church.
- Explore and live into our calling to be a welcoming place of refuge and sanctuary.
- Continue to refine our congregation’s sense of calling and mission for this time and place.
- Nurture the faith and discipleship of people of all ages, with an emphasis on Christian education

Our Committees and Ministry Teams all have a hand in helping to carry out the mission of our church, with special attention to these goals. The leaders of committees and ministries will meet together quarterly for a roundtable discussion about progress toward our goals, and ways we can support one another.

Calendar: Looking Ahead

February 2026

- 7: Kina Mama Women's Breakfast at 9am in the Fellowship Hall
- 8: Women's Book Group Meeting at 11:30am in the Parlor
- 8: Youth Super Bowl Party at 6:30pm at the Smedberg House
- 10: Board Meeting at 7pm on Zoom
- 17: Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper and Talent Show at 6pm in the Fellowship Hall (Pancakes at 6, Talent Show at 7)
- 18: Ash Wednesday Service at 7pm in the Sanctuary
- 22: Lent Groups Begin Meeting (various locations)

March 2026

- 15: Board Meeting after Worship in the Parlor
- 22: Weekly Lenten Small Groups End
- 29: Palm Sunday Worship at 10am in the Sanctuary

April 2026

- 2: Maundy Thursday Soup Supper & Service at 6:30pm in the Fellowship Hall
- 3: Good Friday Service (time and location TBD)
- 5: Easter Sunrise Service at 6:30am (outside) followed by Breakfast (Fellowship Hall)
- 5: Easter Worship at 10am! Invite a friend!
- 21: Board Meeting at 7pm on Zoom

Save the Date

- June 6: Rummage Sale!
- July 12 - 18: Youth Mission Trip with Appalachia Service Project

North Bethesda United Methodist Church

10100 Old Georgetown Road
Bethesda, MD 20814

Time/Value Dated Material

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Epiphany/Lent 2026

Photos of children and youth are printed only with permission of their parents/guardians, and/or we blur the faces of people under 18. We have not identified anyone by name in the photographs from this month. If you have questions or concerns, please contact the Church Office.

Photo Credits: Kara Scroggins, Tsitsi Sithole, and JoAnne Wong

North Bethesda United Methodist Church

10100 Old Georgetown Road
Bethesda MD 20814

Phone: (301) 530-4342

Office Hours: Monday -Thursday
9:00AM– 3:00PM

E-mail: office at northbethesdaumc.org

Website: www.NorthBethesdaUMC.org

Pastor: Rev. Kara Scroggins

Office Manager: Gwendolyn Daniels

Director of Children's Ministries: Tsitsi Sithole

Minister of Visitation: Linda Thompson

Music Director: Simon Charette

Copyright: North Bethesda United Methodist Church

Sunday Worship

10:00 a.m.

and via [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCvXpYk1pYk1pYk1pYk1pYk1)

Visit us at:



northbethesdaumc.org



@lovingallneighbors



NBUMC Weekly Podcast