



Our puppy, Max, is an enthusiastic digger. We were not especially thrilled to learn that we had ended up with a dog with such passion and such skills for creating holes. Just weeks after we adopted him, “Max’s Masterpieces,” as the kids next door call them, started to appear and grow in the backyard. They are impressive holes for such a little guy; he really enjoys exploring what is under the surface. So far, he has found: a few small toys that must have belonged to children living in the house before we moved there; daffodil bulbs (which we luckily learned early enough are poisonous to dogs); mouse tunnels (yuck!); a Taco Bell hot sauce packet that looks like a relic of the ‘90s, and lots of stones, roots, bugs, and (of course) mud.

While we would prefer for what’s underground in our yard to stay underground, undisturbed by mud-loving puppies, Max’s mischief has brought a whole unseen world to our attention. We are now very familiar with the type and quality of our soil; we have keepsakes of some of the people who came before us; and we are aware (for better or for worse) that many creatures make their homes or travel through the space underneath our feet.

This Lent we at NBUMC will be taking a journey into the wilderness. Rather than a trail through a desert or other typical wilderness landscape, though, we are going to travel down, into the Earth, to explore what is happening just below the surface. Our Underground Lent is not necessarily inspired by exasperation at my dog’s backyard holes, but rather by a yearning to explore what it is that supports us; what holy forces are at work in our lives that we can’t yet see or know about; and where we might find unexpected life taking shape. In these challenging, sometimes heart-wrenching times, I am thinking of the sense of resistance and resilience that accompanies the word “underground,” remembering that resurrection-evoking quote from the poet Dinoh Christianopoulos (who was excluded from the Greek literary community in the 1970s because he was gay): “They tried to bury us, but they didn’t know we were seeds.”

Welcome to Lent Underground, where each week, we will explore a different aspect of life under the surface, and connect it back to the lessons and messages found in our lectionary Scripture readings. We strongly encourage you to find and join a Lenten Small Group (see page 8), as these groups will be using a curriculum that invites deeper engagement with each Sunday’s theme. The greatest gift of a wilderness journey is that we never go alone: God goes with us and has gifted us with one another as companions along the way. May we travel with grace, and with (at least a small dose of) Max’s enthusiasm for exploring new places!

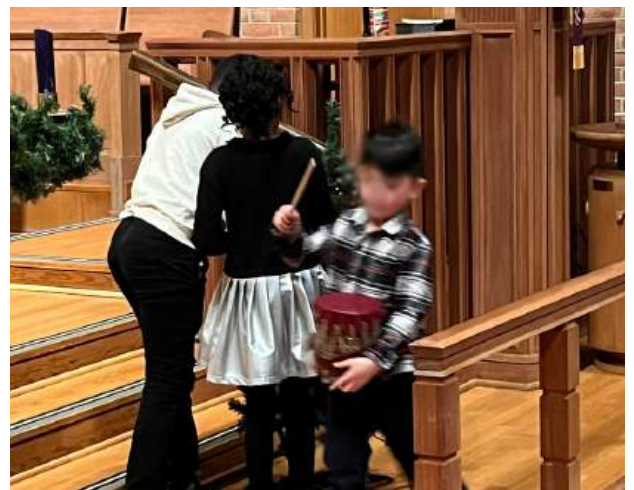
Peace,  
*Rev. Kara*



# *Recent Scenes of* **Worship**



Above and below, Advent Festival participants gather in the Sanctuary for kid-centered worship and to light the Advent Wreath. To the right, our young people lead us in worship for the 5:00pm Christmas Eve service.







We celebrated two baptisms in early 2025! We welcomed Aila and Elizabeth to the family of God and to our NBUMC family. We give thanks for the light of Christ that shines so brightly in these beloved children. To the left, our children help to bless the baptismal waters. Below left, Ms. Tsitsi leads the Word for All Ages.





# Coming Up In Worship



## Holy Week and Easter at NBUMC

**Sunday, April 13:** Palm Sunday worship, 10:00am

**Tuesday, April 15:** Taizé Tuesday service, 7:00pm

**Thursday, April 17:** Maundy Thursday Soup Supper at 6:30pm, followed by Communion and space for quiet prayer in the Sanctuary

**Friday, April 18:** Good Friday service at 7:00pm

**Sunday, April 20:**

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

## Taizé Tuesdays Return for Lent

In the midst of all that is happening in our world, nation, and personal lives, we offer a prayerful space each Tuesday from 7-7:30pm. These simple services consist of music and times of quiet, and are a chance to slow down, join our voices with others, and refill for the days ahead. Taizé Tuesdays will run from March 11 - April 15.

## Creation Service April 27

Our Lent worship series will invite us to explore what is beneath the soil, and then Easter Sunday, we will celebrate resurrection and the springing-up of new life. Easter Sunday also happens to be Earth Day, and so the Sunday after Easter, April 27th, we will join in a special a Creation Service, designed by our own Rev. Joye Jones. Through readings and music, this service celebrates and gives thanks for God's magnificent creation, and it calls us to action to protect, care for, and live in kinship with all that surrounds us.

## 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.

## Worship Themes/Scriptures

March 9: **Lent Underground - Dirt** Luke 4:1-13

March 16: **Lent Underground - Critters** Psalm 27 and Luke 13:31-35

March 23: **Lent Underground - Water** Isaiah 55:1-9

March 30: **Lent Underground - Worms** Psalm 32 and 1 Corinthians 5:16-21

April 6: **Lent Underground - Roots** Isaiah 43:16-21

April 13: **Lent Underground/Palm Sunday - Rocks** Luke 19:28-40

April 20: **Easter Sunday** John 20:1-18

April 27: **Creation Service** Genesis 1:1-2:2





# Recent Scenes of Nurture



We enjoyed special Lunar New Year treats at Coffee Hour; celebrated the children who were baptized; and took part in wonderful Advent Festival crafts and stories that made the season more meaningful for people of all ages.







Above, a gingerbread rendering of NBUMC by Bob Dean; to the right, our newest, tiniest NBUMC member is passed around during Coffee Hour; below and to the right, our children create, worship, and grow together at Sunday School; bottom left, many (but not all!) members of the *Surrendering to God* book study, which was led by Scott Roby.





Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper and Talent Show was a huge success! We had almost 70 people attending and 11 talented acts entertaining us. Joye Jones served as MC and Stage Manager and did a wonderful job. We raised more than \$500 for the Youth Service Trip and a good time was had by all. Many thanks to the many helpers who helped set up, cook, serve, and cleaned up.

*Natalie McManus, Arts Committee Chair*



# *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. Following the themes and scriptures used in Sunday worship, 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 six-week group that works for your schedule:

- Mondays at 1pm on Zoom, facilitated by Pamela Major and Carol Malmi
- Tuesdays at noon at Kathy Devadas' home (Kensington), facilitated by Diane Walsh-Barberisi
- Tuesdays at 2:30pm at the Craggs' home (Asbury Methodist Village), facilitated by Rev. Joye Jones
- Wednesdays at 7pm at the Replogles' home (North Bethesda), facilitated by Jenna Love
- Thursdays at 6pm at the McSpaddens' home (North Bethesda), facilitated by Bob Dean
- Young Adult (20s & 30s) group, facilitated by Rev. Kara, on Zoom, Sundays at 7pm.

## **Youth Group**

We have had an active winter season. We meet each week on Sunday evenings from 5-7pm, alternating locations between NBUMC and Faith UMC, for a meal and fellowship time. Over the last few months, we have had a toy drive; wrapped presents for the Angel tree; had a Christmas party; made personal fleece blankets, watched the Super Bowl; and gone ice skating - we have been busy! But this spring, we are just getting started!

Want to support our youth meetings with a meal or your presence? Want to help but don't know how? Contact our Youth Coordinator, Suzanne Smedberg at [ssmedberg@faithworkshere.com](mailto:ssmedberg@faithworkshere.com) for more information or to volunteer.

## **Older Adults Luncheon**

We are looking forward to hosting our Older Adults for a home-cooked lunch on Wednesday, March 12th, beginning at 11:30am. You are invited to come as you are (and bring a friend or neighbor if you wish!) for a time of fellowship around the table. Our NBUMC Staff will be cooking and hosting this event, and we hope it is an opportunity for our retirees to connect with one another and to know how much we value you and your participation in the life of our church.

## **Kina Mama Breakfast**

To our sisters of all ages:

In collaboration with the Membership & Evangelism Committee, we will be hosting a Kina Mama breakfast on March 22nd at 9:00 am in Johnson 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. Kina Mama has been a long-standing informal sisters' group that periodically meets for breakfast and fellowship.

Look for a sign up sheet in the Narthex, or simply reach out to [office@northbethesdaumc.org](mailto:office@northbethesdaumc.org), and we will make note of your RSVP. For those who are able we will be asking for contribution of breakfast food items as this will be a potluck breakfast.

If you have any questions or thoughts feel free to reach out!

*Rose Aehle and Diane Walsh-Barberisi*



# *Recent Scenes of* **Service & Advocacy**

We had a fantastic turnout for our MLK Day of Service on January 20th. Members of the community joined our church family to engage in four different service projects to help feed, advocate on behalf of, send encouraging notes to, and raise money for organizations that help neighbors in need.







On February 17, we partnered with St. Mark Presbyterian Church to pack more than 25,000 meals for people experiencing hunger crises, through the organization Rise Against Hunger.





# *Upcoming Opportunities for* **Service & Advocacy**

## **Rummage Sale**

On behalf of the Service and Outreach Committee, we are excited to bring the Rummage Sale back to NBUMC on May 3, 2025. We've had many people from our community ask us when the Rummage Sale will return, so we are thrilled to be able to let them know that it's coming back. 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.) Even though we have continued to provide support through Gifts of Caring, we have not been able to provide the level of financial support as when we had the Rummage Sale.

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 April 27th - May 2nd.
- 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](mailto:office@northbethesda.org), or anyone on the main organizing committee (Linda Hall, Linda Thompson, Diane Walsh-Barberisi, Jenna Love, Phyllis Carney, and Sara Barakat, 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*

## **Youth Service Trip**

This July, we will be heading south to participate in a mission week for Appalachia Service Project, a non-profit committed to eradicating the substandard housing of central Appalachia and to show Christian love and service through home repair and replacement. Teams of youth and adults come together to work on everything from roofing to foundations, all to support those most impacted by Hurricane Helene.

While we don't yet know where we are going, we will be on our trip from July 20th-26th. We will stay, work and eat with youth from all over the country committed to serving others.

Contact our Youth Coordinator, Suzanne Smedberg at [ssmedberg@faithworkshere.com](mailto:ssmedberg@faithworkshere.com) for more information or to volunteer as a youth or adult chaperone. In addition, please stay tuned for fundraising opportunities to support our teams.



# Looking Back

## Fond Memories of Our First Christmas as a Church

*by Paul Hurlburt, Church Historian*

Before she passed on in 2018 at the age of 103, charter member Patricia (Pat) DeSpain shared her memories of the first Christmas celebrated by our church, which took place in 1956 before any church facilities had been built. Here's what she said in an oral interview on Jan. 27, 1997:

“One of our first worship places was the chapel of the National Guard's Barracks located on Old Georgetown Road. There was a wooded area, near the Baptist Church, and the National Guard had several buildings there that they used for training sessions when the men were in residence at the camp for about two weeks or so in the summer. They had jeeps and a tank or two. They used to practice on the other side of Old Georgetown Road about where the Wildwood Shopping Center is now.

“The National Guard offered the use of the chapel to our very young church. It was a one story barracks building with a little porch before the door. There was a railing at the porch, a stove inside for heat, and chairs of the cathedral type with a rack in the back that would hold hymnals.

“Many of our members were young couples. Perhaps a third of the congregation had children not even in school or in the first grades of elementary school. So we met for our Christmas affair in the early evening because of all the young children.

“Boyd Adsit was our first chairman of the Official Board. Boyd, his wife and their three children I'm sure were there. Almost surely, the Bogley and Wynkoop children were there too, and a lot more. We gathered together close to the stove and listened to the Christmas story from the Bible. Dick Irvin (the pastor) spoke to us about the meaning of Christmas and asked people to lead in prayer.

“After the prayers, we sang ‘Silent Night’ and some of us moved to the baskets and paper bags that were set out to get ready for the refreshments. The children were watching because they expected some goodies to be coming next.

“Then there were some strange, loud noises overhead, scraping and stamping noises on the roof. Something or somebody was tramping around over our heads. The children were staring at the ceiling with their mouths open, and there were bell noises too—clang, clang, jingle, jingle. Some of the children began to shout. Slam! bang! the door swung open, and Santa Clause, all furred and booted, round and jolly, burst into the room. He surprised some of the adults too. And he was a very wise Santa. He did not frighten the little ones with loud ho-hos or make big gestures, but he spoke in a pleasant voice and began to give the children candy.



“Somehow he disappeared and the crowd enjoyed the homemade cookies, coffee and cocoa and lots of conversation. We were the talkingest church, always having more to talk about than we had time for talking. Each time we had another first like this one, it bound us closer together and made us more of a church. I’ll always remember our first Christmas and surely those children will.”

Pat also spoke fondly of the children she met as a teacher in a Japanese internment camp in Wyoming during World War II. In the current millennium she taught English as a second language to children in Montgomery County. And on the day our church celebrated her 100th birthday, she told the children’s story during worship. As we look ahead in the New Year, we can take heart from all the people like Pat who have gone before us.

—Paul Hurlburt, Church Historian



*A girl reacts to the photographer at the first Christmas “affair” held by our church, in barracks of the National Guard, in 1956.*



*Pat DeSpain with children of North Bethesda United Methodist Church in an undated photo.*



*Pat DeSpain*



# From the Board

## 2025 Goals

Our Board Members (plus other interested people from the congregation) met with Rev. Bill Brown, who serves on Baltimore-Washington Conference Staff, on Saturday, February 15th. We brought our findings from our Deep Listening initiative to the conversation, as well as results from the “Readiness 360” survey that all NBUMC members were invited to take in January and February of this year. Rev. Brown reported to us the heartening news that we are a vital congregation, with strong cultural openness, missional alignment, and dynamic relationships. After the Board engaged in discussion about where our energy, strengths, and areas for deeper exploration are, Rev. Kara took notes and offered the following church goals for the coming year. The Board will equip, support, and hold accountable the pastor, staff, and ministry teams in working toward these goals. Our committees and ministry teams are invited to help work toward these goals within their area and for the broader congregation. Email board at northbethesdaumc.org at any time if you have questions, concerns, or suggestions.

**Goal 1: Focus on helping people become familiar with and comfortable using their gifts for ministry in, through, and beyond our church.** This might include a worship series with corresponding small group on spiritual gifts; a more thorough buddy system program that helps new members integrate into the life of the church; and ministry fairs or other ways of communicating how people can use their gifts. We want to remember that we are helping people to connect with a sense of God’s holy calling on their lives—which is inherently refilling—not just looking for ways NBUMC can “put them to work.”

**Goal 2: Explore and live into our calling to be a welcoming place of refuge and sanctuary.** We want to help people to connect in personal and corporate ways with God’s life-giving, sustaining love for all people. This includes worship, prayer, small groups, advocacy, fellowship, maybe a support group for people experiencing hardship, and teach-ins/studies to address our areas of bias and places where we can learn and do better in our desire to offer refuge.

**Goal 3: Continue to discern our congregation’s sense of purpose/mission for this time and place.** From deep listening initiative responses (and in continuing conversation this year), we hope to develop a list of community needs/yearnings/hungers, and a corresponding list of current or potential new NBUMC ministries that help to address those needs, recognizing that we cannot be all things to all people, but praying for guidance on where to focus our resources.

## New Sanctuary Piano Donated to NBUMC

We were thrilled to receive, as an anonymous gift, a new Yamaha baby grand piano for the Sanctuary. The piano has been tuned (and a climate control system installed), and it has already enhanced the music of our Sunday morning worship services. The piano that was in the Sanctuary has been moved to the Fellowship Hall to support activities in that space that incorporate music. The piano that was in the Fellowship Hall has been moved to the Choir Room, to replace the piano there that could not be repaired. We give thanks for the generosity of our community and for the possibilities that are realized when we share our resources!





# Calendar: Looking Ahead

## March 2025

- 11: Taizé Tuesday, 7pm in the Sanctuary
- 12: Older Adults Luncheon, 11:30am in the Fellowship Hall
- 18: Taizé Tuesday, 7pm in the Sanctuary
- 18: NBUMC Board Meeting, 7:30pm in the Parlor (and on Zoom)
- 22: Kina Mama Breakfast, 9am in the Fellowship Hall
- 25: Taizé Tuesday, 7pm in the Sanctuary

## April 2025

- 1: Taizé Tuesday, 7pm in the Sanctuary
- 6: Youth Group goes bowling! (Contact Suzanne for exact time)
- 8: Taizé Tuesday, 7pm in the Sanctuary
- 13: Palm Sunday Worship, 10am in the Sanctuary
- 13: NBUMC Board Meeting, 11:30am in the Parlor
- 15: Taizé Tuesday, 7pm in the Sanctuary
- 17: Maundy Thursday Soup Supper, 6:30pm in the Fellowship Hall
- 18: Good Friday Service, 7pm in the Sanctuary
- 20: Easter Sunrise Service, 6:30am outside (followed by breakfast)  
Easter Worship, 10am in the Sanctuary(followed by Easter Egg Hunt and Celebration)
- 27: Creation Service, 10am, followed by Outdoor Workday
- 27: First day of Rummage Sale Donation Collection

## May/June 2025

- May 3: Rummage Sale!
- May 13: NBUMC Board Meeting, 7pm on Zoom
- May 18: Town Hall Meeting, 11:30am in the Fellowship Hall
- June 7: World Pride Day: Join us for the UMC Float in the DC Pride Parade
- June 8: Pentecost & Confirmation Sunday



# North Bethesda United Methodist Church

10100 Old Georgetown Road  
Bethesda, MD 20814

Time/Value Dated Material

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Lent/Easter 2025

Photos of children and youth are printed only with permission of their parents/guardians, and/or we blur their faces out of respect for their privacy. 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: Rose Aehle, Sara Barakat, Natalie McManus, Ken Ow, Janet Replogle, Kara Scroggins, Tsitsi Sithole, Linda Thompson, and JoAnne Wong

## North Bethesda United Methodist Church

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Office Manager: Gwendolyn Daniels

Minister of Visitation: Linda Thompson

Music Director: Simon Charette

Director of Children's Ministries: Tsitsi Sithole

Church Board: board at northbethesdaumc.org

Contact Newsletter Editors and Principal Writers:

Gwendolyn Daniels, Carol Malmi, Kara Scroggins

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## Sunday Worship

10:00 a.m.

and via [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCvK8w8w8w8w8w8w8w8w8w8w)

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[northbethesdaumc.org](http://northbethesdaumc.org)



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