CROSSROADS

BETHANY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2026

Pastor's Report from the December Charge Conference

If you have read the reports from our committees, you will see that there are some wonderful things to celebrate as well as some potential difficulties ahead. I hope that you will take some time to reflect on what may look like unrelated topics to start to see a more unified picture of who we are as a church. As you may assume, I spend significant time thinking about that. The vision of Bethany that I continually return to is as the neighborhood church. A small church intimately involved in the neighborhood.

Last week, while walking past Noe Valley Books, I was compelled to go in due to the chalkboard out from advertising that they (among other things) were hosting a Story Time on Saturday morning. While browsing, Kit, the manager, came over, so I expressed my interest to her and wondered if they needed storybook readers. In fact, she said, when the regular reader is unable to be there it is difficult to find people to fill-in. Our conversation then led to discussion of space accommodation for story listeners, and I wondered if Bethany could help with providing space.

As you know, each week I send out an invitation to the congregation to join me in some activity either working with one of our ministry partners or to an event related to church activity. Each time I participate in one of these events I invariably pass out business cards and invite folks to come join us some Sunday morning. We need to start being more invitational to this beloved community we all hold so dear. The more people who become involved - the better we will be able to reach out to a world in need of connection.

I am focused on making sure that community we invite people into is healthy and loving. We need to be diligent in building trust between each and every person in this church. I intend to foster trust by spending time at each committee and small group meeting with check-ins and time for support, encouragement, and accountability. There is no place in a healthy community for gossip and triangulation. A strong community engages in clear, direct, and open communication; which only happens when we all feel that we are loved and respected.

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COMING SOON

Jan 12	Bagged Lunches
Feb 6	Ring Out Danger

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I have proclaimed 2026 as our Year of Astonishment and have committed to finding ways to create astonishing and awe-inspiring moments. I wrote about this in the December Crossroads. A wise colleague and theologian once told me that she had witnessed small churches increase their vitality with a vision and hard work. My vision going forward is to engage with and invite our neighbors into healthy, loving relationship with God and each other.

Love, Pastor Rob

PHOTO GALLERY

A PEEK AT RECENT ACTIVITIES IN THE BETHANY COMMUNITY!

The Bethany community was very busy over the Advent and Christmas Season.

On the evening of December 21st, we held a Blue Christmas service. This service acknowledges & makes space for those who find the holiday season difficult due to grief, loss, loneliness, or other struggles.

During Advent, Pastor Rob walked us through Cynthia Campbell's ***Christmas in the Four Gospel Homes.*** We toured each of the four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) imagined as a house with different defining characteristics to give us insight into the life of Jesus.

We had a joyful Christmas Eve service.

LAY NOMINATIONS for 2026

On December 14th, Bethany held its annual Charge Conference. As part of this meeting, members elect lay leaders for the coming year. Our leaders and their roles are outlined on the next two pages.

Lay Leader: Jeff Friant

Covenant Council
- Chair: Stan Watson
- Secretary: Cathy Personius

Representatives From:
- Finance: John Nelson
- SPRC: Julie Freeman
- Trustees: Michael Eaton
- Worship: Lawson Barnes
- Nurture/Outreach: Cathy Personius
- Lay Member to AC: Thomas MacBurney

At Large Members:
- Gloria Soliz
- Marilyn Herand

Trustees: Michael Eaton, Chair

2026	2027	2028
Bob Armstrong	Michael Eaton	John Nelson
Racquel Redondiez	Thomas MacBurney	Jerry Winniczek
Shirley Perkins		
Walter Thoma		

Staff Parish Relations Committee: Julie Freeman, Chair

2026	2027	2028
Jeff Friant		Julie Freeman
Stan Watson		Jeannette Given
		Elena Fuentes-Afflick
		Lizzy Hull Barnes

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LAY NOMINATIONS-cont'd

Lay Leadership & Nominations Committee: Rev. Rob Herrmann, Chair

2026	2027	2028
	Jeannette LaFors	Jeff Friant
		Emily Itoku

Finance Committee: John Nelson, Chair
- **Treasurer**: Steve Wereb
- **Finance Secretary**: Jerry Winniczek
- **Trustees Rep**: Michael Eaton
- **Church Council Chair**: Stan Watson
- **SPRC Rep**: Julie Freeman

Lay Member to Annual Conference: Thomas MacBurney
Alternate Lay Member to Annual Conference: Shirley Perkins

Nurture/Outreach: Cathy Personius, Chair
- Jeff Friant
- Marilyn Herand
- Walter Thoma
- Mike West
- Racquel Redondiez
- Kate Armstrong
- Jeannette Given
- Jeannette LaFors

Worship: Lawson Barnes, Chair
- Rev. Rob Herrmann
- Gloria Soliz
- Evan Alparone
- Lizzy Hull Barnes

BUDGET UPDATE

by Steve Wereb, Treasurer

For 2025, we received $118,338 in donations and $174,363 in rental income for a total of $292,701 for the year. Donations were short by -$18,932 vs. the budget, while rental income was higher by +$4,566. Our expenses for 2025 were $273,939 and significantly less than budget, due to lower repairs, and lower overall costs in Staffing & Programs and Building Costs. Due to the lower spending, we had a net surplus of $17,262 for the church.

Also included below is giving information. The distribution of pledges is shown below. Overall, our total average pledge amount is $5,932 per person. However, actual pledge payments were $98,046 versus pledges of $118,644 resulting in an average pledge payment of $4,902. Total donations for the year have been $118,338 across 56 people (for both pledgers and non-pledging donors) which results in an average gift of $2,113 per person.

Our available cash on December 31st was $144,488

Thank you for your generosity and support of Bethany

Summary of Donations

Budgeted Giving for 2025 ==> $137,270

Actual Giving thru 12/31/25 ==> $118,338

Shortfall ==> -$18,932

Actual vs. Budget	Actuals thru 12/31/25	Budget for 2025	Actual vs. Budget
Donations	$ 118,338	$ 137,270	$ (18,932)
Rent	174,363	169,797	4,566
Total Income	292,701	307,067	(14,366)
Staff & Programs	132,110	139,417	(7,307)
Tithe	29,270	30,707	(1,437)
Building Costs	110,011	117,774	(7,763)
Building Repairs	2,548	25,640	(23,092)
Total Operating Costs	273,939	313,538	(39,599)
Increase to Reserves	1,500	6,000	(4,500)
Net Result	**$ 17,262**	**$ (12,471)**	**$ 29,733**

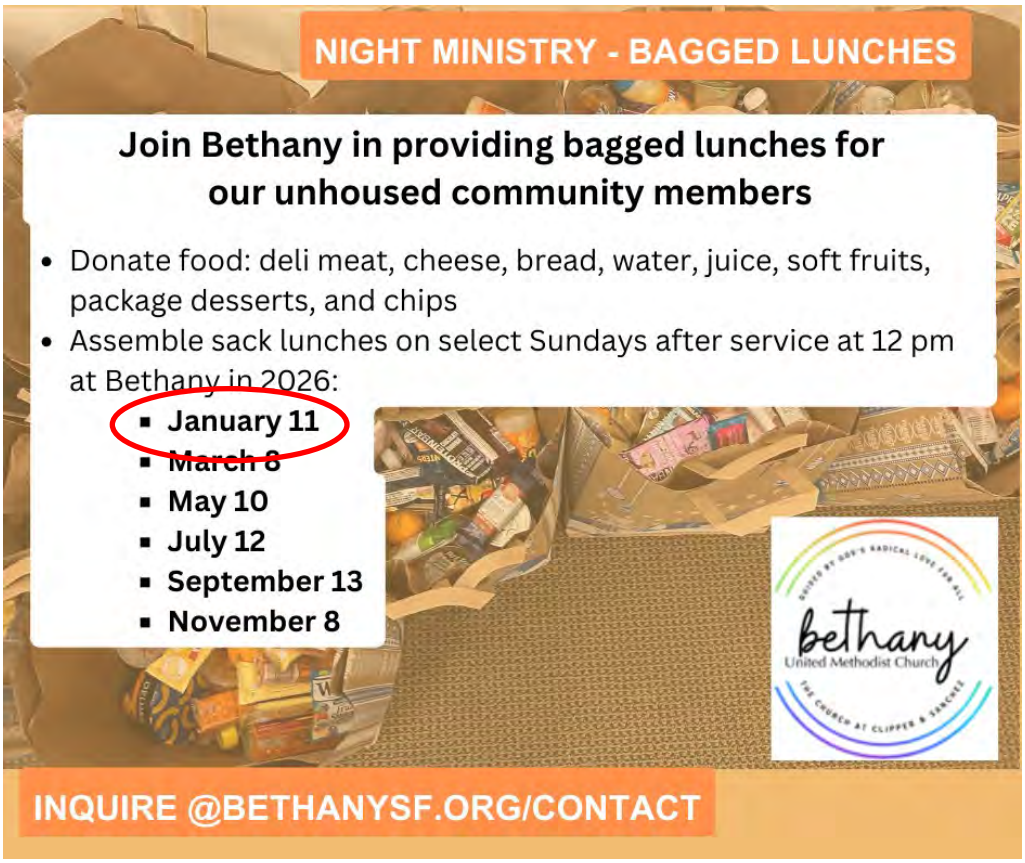
Cash Balances at 12/31/25	
Operating Cash	$ 144,488
Trustee Cash Reserves	$ 41,729
Memorials	$ 11,766

Distribution of Pledges			
Gift Amount	Number of Households	Pledge Amount	%
$1 to $2,500	9	$ 12,744	11%
$2,501 to $6,000	4	$ 18,400	16%
$6,001 to $9,999	3	$ 23,500	20%
$10,000 & Above	4	$ 64,000	54%
Total	20	$ 118,644	100%
Average/person		$ 5,932	

YTD Donations Received		%
YTD pledges received	$ 98,046	83%
YTD other donations	$ 20,292	17%
Total donations	$ 118,338	100%
Total number of givers	56	
Average gift/giver	$ 2,113	

UPCOMING EVENTS

Bagged Lunches, Sunday, January 11th @Noon:
We will continue with our sack lunch ministry with SF Night Ministry. Six times a year we create 125 sack lunches for our unhoused neighbors in San Francisco.



February 6th @ 9:30 am, every 1st Friday of the month, we ring our bells in solidarity with ***Ring Out Danger: People of Faith Opposed to Gun Violence*** (**https://ringoutdanger.org**). Please join us, in front of Bethany, no ringing experience is required.

Bible Study

Wednesdays 3-4pm on zoom. Join to discuss the scripture for the coming Sunday. All are welcome. Email Marilyn for more info mherand@sbcglobal.net

Small Groups – Sign-up at bethanysf.org

Group options:
-2nd Saturdays each month @ 8:30am
-2nd Wednesdays each month @ 7pm

community celebration board

Congratulations to Walt Yú-Martzen, who graduated with a masters degree in Counseling Psychology with a concentration in Drama Therapy from California Institute of Integral Studies. Marilyn, Thomas, Gloria and Carole attended Walt's "enough that's enough" graduation performance.

Marilyn Herand shared a New Year's Eve lunch at Eric's in Noe Valley with Liam O'Connor and his girlfriend, Angela. Liam is now on semester break from USC where he is a communications major.

On December 17th, Ed Eng and Ryan Rillera performed in the Golden Gate Men's Chorus Tidings of Joy concert. Jeannette LaFors, Michael Eaton, Shirley Perkins, and Jerry Winniczek attended to support.

CONTACT US

If you have articles, photos or announcements that you would like to share, please contact us!

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Find us online at **www.bethanysf.org**
FB **@bethanyumcsf** and IG **@bethany_umc_sf**

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

3: Jeannette Given
7: Rick Grube
9: Stan Watson
21: Mattie Armstrong
30: Paulina Personius
30: Phoebe Creager-Horton