



The Window into the heart of

Mt. Lebanon United Methodist Church

Volume 11, Number 2, Summer 2025

FAITH for today!

Date	Program
June 15 th	VBS Preview
June 22 nd	Rev. Eric Hoeke
June 29 th	Spanish Ministry Report/Octavio and Luis
July 6 th	Rob Spicher - Endowments
July 13 th	Realm Connect App + hymn sing
July 20 th	Jack Aueperle book review
July 27 th	Joyful Noise Music Program
August 3 rd	Missions Backpacks
August 10 th	The State of Our Connectional Ministry in Western PA: Roger White & Mallory Miles
August 17 th	Conference Lay Leader, Paul Huey
August 24 th	Youth Mission Trip Report
August 31 st	Combined Adult Sunday School

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*Cheryl L Sorice,
Office & Communications Coordinator*

Pastor Tom's Message

A New Vision + A Fresh Hope

Proverbs 29:18 reminds us that "without a vision, the people perish." There is something about a new vision that gives us fresh hope for the future. On the first day of May, the Council of Bishops of the United Methodist Church in cooperation with The Connectional Table, our denomination's main coordinating body, publicly released the text of a new vision statement for our 12.5 Million member world-wide denomination. The text of their press release was as follows: "The vision states:

The United Methodist Church forms disciples of Jesus Christ who, empowered by the Holy Spirit, love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously in local communities and worldwide connections.

This vision statement complements the Church's longstanding mission statement, inspired by Matthew 28:18-20: "The mission of The United Methodist Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."

The vision encourages United Methodists to embody the following principles:

- **Love Boldly:** Passionately love God and, like Jesus, embrace and include people of every age, nation, race, gender and walk of life.
Inspired by Matthew 22:37-39 and John 13:34-35
- **Serve Joyfully:** With a Christ-like heart, journey alongside the most vulnerable, offering care and compassion with joy.
Inspired by Psalm 100:1, Nehemiah 8:10, John 13:14-15 and 1 Peter 4:10
- **Lead Courageously:** Follow Jesus' example by resisting and dismantling all systems of evil, injustice, and oppression, striving for peace, justice and reconciliation.
Inspired by Joshua 1:9 and Ephesians 6:10

"This is a Kairos moment in the life of The United Methodist Church. This new vision is not simply a statement or a plan, it is a catalyst for transformation," said Bishop Tracy Smith Malone, President of the Council of Bishops. "It is a vision that will help the Church embrace the divine opportunities before us, to follow where God is leading us, and to more fully engage in our mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."

I love it when our church's teaching is memorable and practical! I encourage all of us to consider ways in which we might love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously. You can be sure that in the midst of this Summer's much-anticipated times of rest and relaxation, our church leadership will be considering ways in which this vision might become reality in our own community.

Pastor Tom Strandburg

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Spanish Ministry Sponsorships

We have much to celebrate at MLUMC! Many of you have met our church planter, Luis Soto, who has been working with the Hispanic population in Pittsburgh. Luis has the support of Church Council and the Outreach and Missions Committee, and recently began hosting Sunday services in Spanish at 6:00 PM in Asbury Center. Once a month he plans to offer a meal as part of the service.

We would like to make sure the people attending these services feel welcomed as part of our church, and they are a part of our church, much like our other three services every Sunday. To that end, various groups or families within MLUMC are sponsoring the monthly meals. The majority of these will be the first week of the month, unless otherwise indicated. Sponsoring a meal means you would:



- **Donate** \$200.00 from your committee budget or from a donation given by your members. Luis will use the money to plan and cook the meal. You do not need to worry about shopping or cooking.
- **Attend** the meal and service on the designated Sunday. Don't speak Spanish? That's ok; a smile works in every language! In a pinch, Google Translate is awesome.
- **Assist** with kitchen cleanup if needed.

I hope this partnership will help get our new service established, and will foster cross-cultural friendships! Please reach out to Kim Rhoton to sign up for one of the sponsorships. The following dates are still open:

June 29 September 7 November 2 December

2025 Outstanding PA School Library

Dr. Laura Ward's work at the Fox Chapel Area High School has been recognized with the 2025 Outstanding Pennsylvania School Library, given by the Pennsylvania School Librarians Association (PSLA). The library was recognized because it exceeds the criteria with regard to the six foundations that are part of the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) National School Library Standards. Those standards are that school libraries are places where students are able to inquire, include, collaborate, curate, explore, and engage.

"What makes me the most excited about this award is the idea that others see how great our library is. I've always known the library is the heart of our school, but now everyone can see just how wonderful it is," Dr. Ward says.

Dr. Ward is a member of MLUMC, chair of the Education Committee, and Sunday School teacher. Congratulations!



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Richard Campbell

Richard Campbell was raised Roman Catholic. He resides in Ross Township. Of all the churches Richard has visited, he is thrilled to call MLUMC home. He accepted Jesus as his Lord and Savior through the teaching of Billy Graham. Richard said Pastor Tom is a fabulous preacher and the entire staff deserves a high five!!

Brendan and Jess Demich

We're Brendan and Jess Demich, official new Members to the church recently, but have been attending MLUMC for close to two years now. We became devoted/re-devoted to our faith about 7 years ago, and when we had our daughter, Cecilia, in 2022, we thought it was important to get her baptized.

Brendan and I met at Pitt in the Industrial Engineering program and have built our lives together in Pittsburgh as engineers, parents, and devoted community members. Service, mission, and loving our neighbors are family values for us, and we're so glad that we found a church that mirrors that.

Lauren Thompson

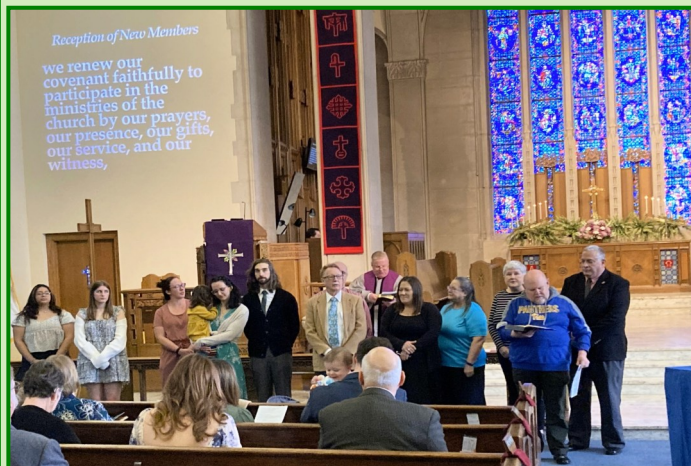
Lauren is a graduating senior at Mt. Lebanon High School, where she has been active in student council, Future Business Leaders of America and Lebo STARS. A member of both National Honor and Cum Laude Societies, she will be attending the Honors College at University of South Carolina in the fall. Majoring in Biology, Lauren plans to make a career of her love for animals by attending veterinary school. She is currently wrapping up her 10th and final season of slow pitch softball.

Elita Usenick

Elita moved to Mt Lebanon in December last year from West Virginia. She has family, including a baby granddaughter in Upper St. Clair. She found our church one day when she was out for a walk and is very happy to have joined.

James S. Hanson

I am one of five children and I was born in San Francisco Ca. in 1956. My father, wishing to pursue a graduate degree, moved the family to Pasadena Ca. in 1962. He attended the University of Southern California (USC). I attended public schools in the 60s and 70s. I chose not to go to college and instead worked full time.



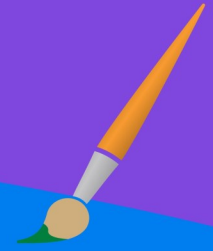
In 1982 I moved to Oakland Ca to work at various non attorney positions in a large Law firm which eventually would be purchased by Reed Smith of Pittsburgh. I spent 20 years in Oakland and I purchased a condo while there. In 2002 I returned to Pasadena to be with my Mother after Dad passed away. I worked full time at a large law firm in downtown Los Angeles and helped my Mother live in her home until the age of 92.

I retired to Pittsburgh May 2022 and purchased a home in Dormont. I hope to live out my days involving myself at church in various volunteer positions. I have much to be thankful for and intend to be a giving

person to the best of my abilities.



You Are God's Masterpiece!



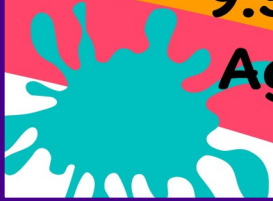
Vacation Bible School

July 28 - August 1

9:30 a.m. to noon

Ages 3 and older

Register online at
mlumc.org



VBS 2025: WE ARE GOD'S MASTERPIECE

"We are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago." Ephesians 2:10

July 28 – August 1

9:30 a.m. to noon

Ages 3 years and older

VBS 2025 is coming up soon! This year we are celebrating creativity with all things fine arts:

Pottery Weaving Dance Music Jewelry making Masterpiece paintings

All of our Bible stories will feature one of these arts, and we will learn about many different artists throughout the week:

The potter and the clay (Jeremiah 18:4)

Baby Moses in a basket (Exodus 2:1-8)

Miriam dances (2 Samuel 6)

Pharaoh gives Joseph gold jewelry (Genesis 41)

Joshua and the battle of Jericho (Joshua 5-6)

We need your support to have a successful week! To help, please:

- **Pray** for the children and adults all week long.
- **Volunteer**, even if for only one day. Contact Kim Rhoton to sign up (krhoton@mlumc.org)
- **Donate** online or in person to help with the cost of supplies; note that it is for VBS so we route it to the correct fund.
- **Share** VBS information with anyone you know who has children ages 3 years and up. Parents can register online by going to the church website.

Thank you for your continued support of Vacation Bible School!

UWF EVENTS

May flower basket sale raised over \$400 for charity!

Thanks to your kind and generous support, the UWF raised \$460.00 during its annual Mother's Day flower basket sale. Equally important, we were able to see and talk to many of our church and neighborhood family members! The money we raised will be used to support women, children, and youth through local and global charities. As always, we'll update you in an upcoming bulletin about how it's distributed.



Pop-Up Mum sale this fall

UWF members will hold their annual pop-up mum sale in the church parking lot sometime in early autumn. Look for more information in upcoming church bulletins.



Save the date! Annual Salad Supper scheduled for Sept. 9 at 6 pm

All are invited to attend the UWF annual salad supper. This will be on Tuesday, September 9, 2025 at 6:00 pm. Please bring a salad to share. We'll provide drinks and dessert. Look for more information in upcoming church bulletins.



MISSIONS AND OUTREACH COMMITTEE 2025 ACTIVITIES, EVENTS, AND INITIATIVES

The Missions and Outreach Committee's vision statement is focused on "serving others in the name of Jesus Christ by providing, hospitality, fellowship, outreach, programmatic support, and nurturance to individuals, churches, and social service organizations locally, nationally, and internationally." Towards that end, the sub-committees led by Donna Chesleigh, Don Langston, Liz DiPietro, and Louanne Bailly have been very active on a variety of fronts, as summarized below.

HOSTED COMMUNITY EVENTS (Donna Chesleigh)

- 3 Friday Lenten Fish Fries (March 7th, March 28th, April 18th)
- Fall Festival with German Partners (Saturday, October 11th)
- Community Thanksgiving Dinner (Thursday, November 27th)
- Volunteer Appreciation Dinner (Date TBD)
- Summer Event (Type and date TBD)

LOCAL MINISTRY PARTNERSHIPS (Don Langston)

- Monthly Beulah Baptist Food Distribution (3rd Tuesdays)
- Community Christmas Dinner with First Presbyterian of Castle Shannon (Thursday, December 25th)
- Monthly Spanish Ministry Dinners (Committee to coordinate and occasionally host)

COMMUNITY OUTREACH (Liz DiPietro)

- Daily Food Lift Distributions to churches and Social Service Organizations
- Monthly Food Pantry Distributions (1st and 3rd Saturdays)
- Monthly North Side Lunches (1st Thursdays)
- Bi-Monthly East End Cooperative Ministries Dinners (4th Sundays)
- Back-To-School Backpack Drive (July/August)
- Advent Christmas Caroling (Date TBD)

MISSIONS (Louanne Bailly)

- 2 Saturday Rummage Sales (June 7th, November 1st)
- Visit by Zwickau Church Partners (October 5th – October 15th)

If you would like more information on the activities of these subcommittees or would like to help, please contact Rob Spicher, Missions and Outreach Committee Chair, at robert.spicher@pnc.com or 412-720-4589. Volunteers are always welcome!

MLUMC LONG STANDING FOOD MINISTRIES

CONTINUE TO NOURISH BOTH BODY AND SOUL

Four (4) long-standing food ministries fall under the umbrella of the Missions and Outreach Committee, most notably the Food Pantry, the Northside Lunch, the Food Lift, and the East End Cooperative Ministries Dinner.



- **The Food Pantry (led by Liz DiPietro and Tom Wagner)** has been in existence for over 20 years and provides perishable and non-perishable items twice a month to approximately sixty families (totaling 160 individuals) in our surrounding communities. The Food Pantry's reach increased during 2024 when it added families involved with the fledging Spanish ministry that our Church is sponsoring.

- **The Northside Lunch (led by Louanne Baily and Francie Robb)** has been in existence for over 40 years and provides lunch on the first Thursday of every month to approximately 150 impoverished individuals in the North Side neighborhood. During the height of Covid, these lunches were supplemented with sanitary and protective supplies. The late Bishop George and wife Carolyn were two of the longest tenured volunteers.

- **The Food Lift (led by Don Langston and Monica Kao)** has been in existence for over 15 years and receives/distributes perishable food items daily (year-round), not only to our Food Pantry but also to churches and social service organizations in economically challenged neighborhoods throughout the Pittsburgh area. The Food Lift also supports a monthly food distribution (third Tuesday of every month) by the Beulah Baptist Church in the Beltzhoover neighborhood.

- **The East End Cooperative Ministries Dinner (led by Rob Spicher and Betsy Raynor)** has been in existence for over 30 years and provides dinner on a bi-monthly basis (4th Sunday of the "even" months) to the EECM housing/social service facility in the East Liberty neighborhood. The dinner feeds approximately fifty residents transitioning from homelessness, addictions, and incarcerations.



In addition to the folks mentioned, many other volunteers contribute their time and talents to these food ministries to ensure their success and sustainability. MLUMC is certainly making a positive impact on the lives of all whom these food ministries touch, both recipients and volunteers alike.

If you would like more information on any of these food ministries or wish to help with any/all of them, please contact Rob Spicher, Missions and Outreach Committee chair, at robert.spicher@pnc.com or 412-720-4589. Volunteers are always welcome!



BREAKING BREAD

Food Lift volunteers provide food for people in need and receive spiritual nourishment in return.

by Monica Matviko Kao

*Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body,
for we all partake of the one bread.* 1 Corinthians 10:17

It's 4 o'clock in the afternoon at the Breadworks Bakery on Pittsburgh's North Side. The bakery is closed to those purchasing bread, but remaining open to those collecting bread donations. Volunteers from MLUMC's Food Lift are there.

Bob Festor and James Hanson of the Food Lift are loading loaves, rolls, buns and special breads into king-sized plastic bags. The bags will be delivered to Beulah Baptist Church for their food distribution, serving over one hundred families in need. Food Lift volunteers will then return to the Breadworks at least one more time during the week to collect breads for other charities and pantries distributing food. "This bread is like the Bread of Life," says Bob Festor. "It's helpful to so many people." While charities can see the effect the food has on those in need, Bob speaks of how the Food Lift has touched him, "It's knowing that you are doing your part to help others in need - it is a blessing."

Volunteer James Hanson explains how collecting and delivering food to hungry people has addressed his concerns, "Food going to waste is enough to make me lose it. I'm doing my part to make sure this food doesn't get wasted." He shares what volunteering has meant to him, "I have a lot to be thankful for and my time with the Food Lift reminds me of all I have."

"I love working with the Food Lift!" That's how volunteer Keith Ray sums up his experience. Like most Food Lift volunteers, Keith has collected bread items from the Breadworks as well as from other bakeries. Volunteers also pick up and deliver donated food from groceries and restaurants. However, what Keith loves most is not the food, but the people. "I have so many interactions with so many people every time I pick-up and every time I deliver. When I arrive with a car-full of bread for Jubilee Kitchen, everyone jumps into action." This enthusiasm to feed hungry people is matched at a number of places that receive food from the Food Lift. Keith describes it this way, "It's a blessing to be able to work with so many wonderful people from different churches and organizations across town."

Food Lift volunteers work throughout the year collecting food donations and delivering the food to pantries, churches and charities that feed hungry people. To become a Food Lift volunteer or for more information, contact Don Langston, 412-894-5559.



Bob Festor



James Hanson



Keith Ray

2025 LENTEN COMMUNITY FISH FRIES

SCORE A HAT TRICK IN PROVIDING GREAT FOOD AND OUTSTANDING HOSPITALITY!



Three goals by the same player in a hockey game is a tremendous achievement known as a “hat trick.” By any measure, the 3 Community Fish Fries sponsored by the Missions and Outreach Committee during the 2025 Lenten Season certainly scored a “hat trick” for all involved!

We served approximately 2,000 meals in total (eat-in, take-out, limited delivery) during our March 7th, March 28th, and April 18th (Good Friday) Fish Fries. We are unique in that we do not charge - all can eat regardless of financial means. Thanks to generous donations not only from attendees but also financial partners of our committee, we were able to cover almost all of the costs – an amazing testimonial to those who believe in these events and the ministry they are providing. We had quite the menu with plenty of everything (particularly desserts). Rest assured that no one went home hungry! Live piano music, the offering of Communion elements, and a prayer table on Good Friday, were all big hits. Attendees were from all parts of our larger church “family” – congregants, friends, Weekday Ministries, Scout Troop 23, English Second Language, Dormont and Mt. Lebanon neighbors, Duplicate Bridge, Bethany Evangelical, First Presbyterian of Castle Shannon, St. Paul AME, Beulah Baptist, etc. Hospitality and fellowship were plentiful for all!

Many thanks to all who supported these Fish Fries through your volunteering of time and/or donating of money. We could not have done it without you! And special thanks to the Fish Fry leadership team of Donna and Alan Chesleigh, Liz and Tom DiPietro, Linh Quach and Dave Langenbacher, and Matt Baker – WE REALLY COULD NOT HAVE DONE IT WITHOUT YOU!

Rob Spicher, Missions and Outreach Committee Chair

MISSIONS AND OUTREACH COMMITTEE – FINANCIAL PARTNERS NEEDED AND APPRECIATED!

Many of the events (such as large community meals) hosted by the Missions and Outreach Committee are self-sustaining, with free will donations from attendees covering event costs. Relative to activities organized by the Committee, however, such is not always the case. Fortunately, members of our congregation have become regular financial supporters of these activities, sparing the general church budget from taking a financial “hit” to cover them.

As the Missions and Outreach Committee continues its 2025 activities, there is an opportunity to provide it with financial support. By becoming a “financial partner” of this Committee, you will not only help to underwrite the cost of these activities but also have the opportunity to assist with them.



The Lenten Fish Fries, the first-ever Volunteer Appreciation Dinner, the annual Back-to-School Backpack Drive, the Harvest Festival, and the Community Thanksgiving Dinner were among the Committee’s 2024 activities. Although one-time donations played an important part in covering the costs of them, funds provided by “financial partners” helped guarantee their success. Having “financial partners” in place will ensure that activities such as these continue to flourish in 2025.

If you are interested in becoming a “financial partner” of the Missions and Outreach Committee, please contact Rob Spicher (Committee Chair) at either 412-720-4589 or robert.spicher@pnc.com. Thank you in advance for your financial support.

Church Council

Do you want to know what’s happening the church before the rest of congregation? Have you ever wondered how decisions are made about church? And want to give your opinion? Then you should attend Church Council. Church Council is open to everyone. This is a great opportunity to what is up and coming at the church, as well as giving your opinion on church decisions. Church Council is held the first Monday of every month (except for July) at 7:00 pm in Wesley Hall. All are welcome to attend. We look forward to seeing some new faces.



CHURCH FINANCIAL INFORMATION

By Rob Spicher, Finance Committee Chair

Since 2018, every edition of The Window has included financial information on our Church – this edition is no different. Summarized below are the Church's 2024 actual, 2025 budgeted, and 1st quarter 2025 actual financial results.

The 2025 budget projects a deficit of over \$100,000, assuming payment in full of the Connectional Contribution (aka Apportionment). A budget with a \$100,000+ deficit was also approved in 2024. Fortunately, numerous unbudgeted and special gifts resulted in a bottom line positive for the year. Let's hope the same result occurs in 2025!

The Finance Committee would like to extend its heartfelt thanks to all whose pledges, non-pledged gifts, and other financial contributions ensure that our staff is paid, our buildings are maintained, and our ministries continue to flourish during 2025. Please keep that financial support coming!

Any questions regarding the actual and budget information shown below should be directed to Rob Spicher (Finance Committee Chair). He can be reached by calling the Church office (412-531-7131) or by e-mailing him at robert.spicher@pnc.com.

	2024	% Of	2025	% Of	1 st Qrt. 2025	% Of
Church Budget	<u>Actuals</u>	<u>Expenses</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Expenses</u>	<u>Actuals</u>	<u>Expenses</u>
Revenue:	\$814,416	103.2%	\$766,356	86.7%	\$204,696	90.1%
Expenses:						
Personnel	\$394,214	50.0%	\$422,528	47.4%	\$105,127	46.4%
Programs & Facilities	167,926	21.3%	207,960	23.4%	49,360	21.7%
Utilities & Taxes	101,233	12.8%	106,490	12.0%	43,357	19.1%
Insurance	64,893	8.2%	70,800	8.0%	18,934	8.3%
Connectional Contribution to WPA UM Conference*	49,923	6.3%	70,023	7.9%	7,500	3.3%
Loan Payments	11,251	1.4%	11,251	1.3%	11,251	1.2%
Total Expenses	\$789,440	100.0%	\$889,052	100%	\$227,091	100%
Total Net Income (Loss)	\$24,976		(\$122,696)		(\$22,395)	

* Payments in 2024 approximated 72% of the requested amount.

Net losses are covered by cash on hand, special gifts, and reserves.

Mt. Lebanon United Methodist Church

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Events and Calendar Information

In an effort to keep up and make sure all the all the events and the are properly updated, besides calling and emailing the church office, fill out the Google Events/Calendar Form (even if we have your event/calendar information):

<https://forms.gle/YoPRcCW1VT165Ecy6>

Please let the church office know if there is anything missing from the Google Form that should be included. Thank you.



Calendar
please

Google Forms