

THE BETHESDA BUGLE

The Monthly Newsletter of Bethesda Methodist Church

XVII:5 • July 2026

CHURCH EVENTS AT A GLANCE

July

- 6-9 VBS: Snowball Mountain Challenge
Fellowship Hall, 6:00 – 8:00 PM
13 Manic Monday Meal: Pulled Pork

August

- 8 24th Annual Peach Festival
Fire Hall, 9:00 AM – 2:00 PM
30 Combine Blessing

November

- 8 Purse Bingo
Fire Hall, 12:30 PM

REGULAR MEETINGS

Official Board

Third Wednesday of each month
Fellowship Hall, 6:30 PM

About the time that this gets out to everyone we'll all be celebrating 250 years of the United States of America. I often tell people that this church has been around the same amount of time: when the people jumped off the boat, they basically started our church! With that said, the Fourth of July is not only a time of reflection, but also of determining where we are headed. We have the unique opportunity to serve the Lord and the country going on 250 years strong. It is really great when you hear it stated like that, isn't it? That this church has been privileged to serve the community as long as our country has been a going concern.

But let's look ahead, too, and see where this church and community will be in the next 250 years. The only way that we will still exist is if we all take the time and support the faith community here in Preston. We need fresh faces in the pews and fresh ideas in our meetings: ask friends and families to come check us out; step up and take a leadership role; volunteer at one of our events. We can stand for so much more if we stand together. That was the vision of the Founding Fathers and it should be ours, too.

In 2026 we are faced with a different world and different problems, but we should be inspired by them and their vision. We are on the cusp of a great revival: of our souls, our church, of Methodism, and our country. This spirit is what Bethesda has been all about for the last 250 years. And God bless this congregation for standing proud and faithful for all those years.

So as you celebrate 250 years of freedom remember that you can also celebrate this little country church, too. Be thankful for the freedoms that our country has. A country that has freedom of religion is not a country that you find very often. It is one of the qualities that makes the USA great. In a way, when we worship freely each week, we are also celebrating the miracle that is America. On this 250th Independence Day, take a moment to remember our little country church that has been serving this community for just as long. During your barbecues and celebrations with fireworks, remember that this little firecracker of a church loves you and is waiting for you to light the fuse that will spark a different kind of revolution. Happy Fourth of July!



NATE'S NOTES

Pastor Nate



Hunter Fitzhugh accepts his graduation gift from the congregation on June 14.

You Will Hear the Trumpet Sound to Wake the Nations Underground!

OFFERING • JUNE 2026

Service	Attendance		Weekly
<u>Date</u>	<u>9:00</u>	<u>11:00</u>	<u>Total</u>
6/7	10	36	\$1,593.00
6/14	9	31	\$2,022.00
6/21	7	37	\$1,687.53
6/28	10	30	\$1,374.00
Weekly required income:		Average weekly income:	
\$2,088.46		\$1,541.86	



Join us on July 13 for another **MANIC MONDAY MEAL!**

This time we are preparing Pulled Pork sandwiches, chips, and soda for \$10 (pre-order) or \$12 at the door. Let us take care of the Monday night dinner stress. We will be serving from 5:00-7:00 pm.

Pre-order by texting 410-200-5815 or emailing kari21632@yahoo.com, or call the church directly at 410-673-7538.

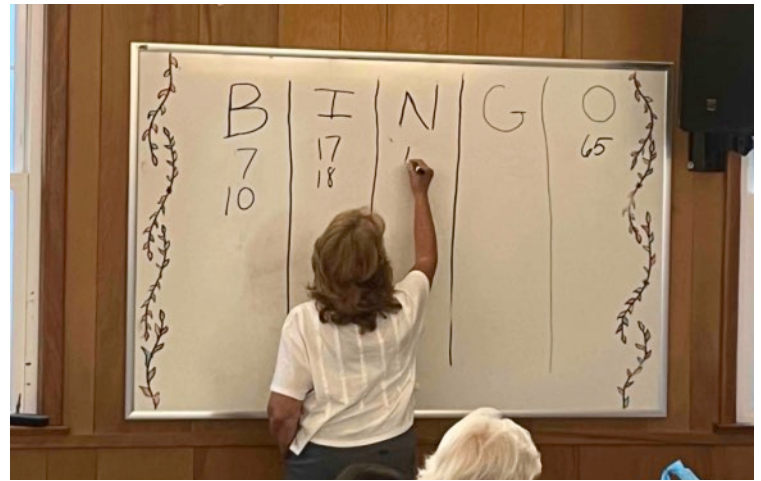
Bethesda Methodist Church
155 Main St., Preston
410-673-7538

24th Annual Peach Festival

Saturday, August 8 will see Bethesda host its twenty-fourth annual Peach Festival at the Preston Fire Hall. As usual, we need all hands on deck to put on this event. We will be baking at the church on Thursday and Friday, August 6-7, and we need lots of help for this vital part of preparation for the festival. In the last few years we have baked over a hundred cobblers to sell – and every year we sell out! Likewise, we need help at the festival itself. If you can help, please let Kari Farnell know so we can get an idea of who will be available on what days. Finally, please consider baking items for the Bake Table. It is a huge earner for us, and we need wares to sell!



GROCERY BINGO PICTURES



The Grocery Bingo on June 22 turned out to be a fun event. We had about twenty contestants, a lot of great prizes, and lots and lots of free popcorn! The Board piloted this event to see how it would be received, and since it proved to be a success another event is tentatively scheduled for the Fall. Watch this space for more details!





Join us July 6-9, 2026,
from 6:00-8:00 pm!

Snowball Mountain Challenge VBS

Dear Friends,

We are thrilled to invite you to an exciting adventure at Bethesda Methodist Church's **Snowball Mountain Challenge VBS**! Join us as we embark on a journey to learn about finding our strength in God through fun and engaging activities.

Event Details

- **Dates:** July 6-9, 2026
- **Time:** 6:00-8:00 PM each evening
- **Location:** Bethesda Methodist Church, 155 Main St., Preston (410-673-7538)

This action-packed week will culminate in a special event on **Sunday, July 12, at 10:00 AM**. Afterward, celebrate with us at our delightful "Sundaes on Sunday" gathering. It's a unique opportunity to experience winter in July, with a sprinkle of sweet treats!

Why Join Us?

- Discover lessons of faith and resilience
- Enjoy interactive games and crafts
- Make new friends in a supportive community
- Partake in delicious ice cream sundaes on Sunday

Come and be part of this memorable week filled with laughter, learning, and love. We look forward to seeing you there!

Bethesda Methodist Church--155 Main St., Preston, 410-673-7538. Pre-register at this link or scan the QR code. www.myvbs.org/snowball-mountain-challenge-vbs



**FIND
YOUR
STRENGTH
IN GOD**

Contact Us : 410-673-7538
office@bethesdapreston.faith



Local peaches
Ice cream
Baked goods

Scrapple
sandwiches
Soft crab
sandwiches

Crafters
and
Vendors

24th Annual **PEACH FESTIVAL**

**SATURDAY, AUGUST 8
9AM - 2PM**

Preston Fire Hall
3680 Choptank Road
Preston, MD

Benefits Bethesda Methodist Church

PASTOR NATE'S REPORT ON ANNUAL CONFERENCE



This year's meeting of the Northeast Annual Conference went well. It was held in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, June 11 through 13. Williamsport is a four-hour drive from

Preston. Traffic was crazy but the drive was good! This year's theme was "passing it on," and we focused on spreading the gospel to the ends of the earth. The conference was definitely spirit-filled!

The mission of the Global Methodist Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ and spread scriptural holiness across the world. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the GMC envisions multiplying disciples of Jesus Christ throughout the earth, who flourish in passionately, love extravagantly, and witness boldly. The scriptural theme of the conference was Psalm 78:4-7: "We will not hide them from their descendants; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done. He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our ancestors to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands."

There were multiple worship services and the Holy Spirit was present at all of them. The way God was worshipped was very different from the annual conferences hosted by the United Methodist Church. It was not political at all, which was very nice. We had several break-out sessions that we could join; I found the one I was in to be very informative. We had three different offerings during conference that supported international partnerships, church multiplication and revitalization, and clergy education.

We held the first clergy session and a separate laity session Thursday morning, June 11. The main item during this session was to assign Washington, D.C. to the Northern Virginia conference. We are also pairing with Malawi in Africa to start the Global Methodist Church movement there. We worked until dinner, then returned for worship at 7:00 PM. It made for a long day, but it was great.

On Friday, June 12, we had an amazing Bible study with Rev. Elizabeth Brake. It was awesome showing how handicapped people are just as capable to do ministry. I went to licensing school with Elizabeth, and to see all she does while being wheelchair-bound was very uplifting and empowering. After this study we had worship service and started our second business section. During the latter, we set the budget

and housing allowances for our conference superintendent at \$67,000 per year. A housing allowance for Rev. Leo Park, Conference Missional Strategist, was also approved at \$37,000 per year. I cast the only vote against this provision, because it seemed like a lot of money just for housing. Before lunch on Friday we had a young adult panel. That was a very good session, with the theme that we must be willing to hand over the reins to the young. Young people are looking for places where they can be loved, allowed to grow in their faith, and where they can make a difference.

Friday afternoon we had the third plenary session, where, among other subjects, we got to see a report on church plants in the conference; the GMC is growing very quickly in our region. Other matters covered during this session included a Board of Ministry recognition of the senior status of several pastors, as well as ministries beyond the church and ordinations (including the historical questions John Wesley put to all ordinands), general conference in Africa this year, prayer, and other sessions reports. Later, we went into our break-out sessions. The topics to be discussed were "pass it on through discipleship," praying with power, reaching and raising young adults through intergenerational ministry, and a few others. I started in the intergenerational break out room, but soon found out that it was geared for people over 55 years old. Instead, I attended a session about an evangelical program called "Alpha." Because I was changing rooms, I missed the first part of the presentation, but I am going to investigate Alpha more on my own to see if it is something we can use at Bethesda. Finally, we came together to worship after dinner. This service was very powerful and I was pleased to be asked to help take the offering.

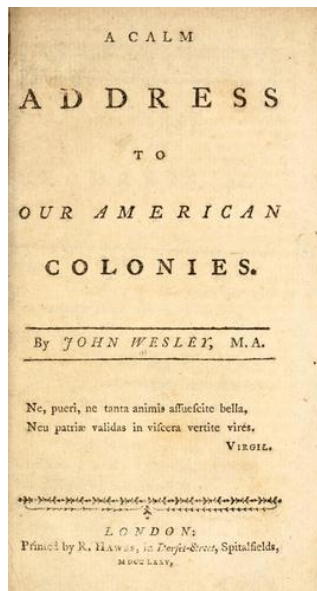
On Saturday, the final day of the conference, we had our ordination service. Fewer people were ordained this year than last, but it still was an amazing service that capped off three days of successful worship and business. I think everyone came away feeling renewed and blessed, with productive ideas that can be brought back to our home congregations.



With the battles of Lexington and Concord in April 1775, the American Revolution had begun. Within fifteen years, a new nation was born, as was a new form of democratic government, which system would set a pattern for national governments all around the world for the next 250 years. The war also dramatically impacted organized Methodism, which itself would profoundly shape American society.

New to the American continent, Methodists had only founded their first enduring societies (later churches) in the 1760s. Their entire membership, as recorded in the very first published minutes of 1773, was less than 1200. At this time, Methodism was not yet a church, but a renewal movement (today we would call it a “parachurch” organization). While Methodists welcomed into their societies people of every denomination, with the idea of bringing spiritual revival to all, they were most closely associated with the Church of England, whose clergy pledged loyalty to the king of England. As the revolution gained momentum, Methodists quickly found themselves in a precarious position due to those ties.

John Wesley and the Revolution



Above: Portrait of John Wesley, and the cover of his tract.

John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement, was an Anglican priest, and he did not help matters. Early on, Wesley was sympathetic to the colonists’ concerns, and even wrote to Lord North (the Prime Minister) and Lord Dartmouth (Secretary of State) urging conciliation: “I cannot avoid thinking that... [the Americans are] an oppressed people [who have] asked for nothing more than their Legal Rights.”¹ Once the shooting started, however, Wesley staunchly supported his king and government.

In October 1775 Wesley published "A Calm Address to Our American Colonies," which tract supported the crown’s right to tax the colonies and repress the rebellion. Perhaps 100,000 copies were printed in successive editions. It caused a firestorm in Britain, prompting numerous responses by other writers. In 1775 and 1776, nineteen antagonistic tracts were published against Wesley and John Fletcher (who had published

a defense of Wesley’s position), including "A Cool Reply to a Calm Address" (a polemic that was decidedly *uncool*) and "An Old Fox Tarr’d and Feathered," the latter penned by one of Wesley’s nemeses, Augustus Toplady, an Anglican priest and hymnist who, famously, wrote "Rock of Ages." In America, Wesley’s tract did not have as great a negative impact on Methodists as it might have done, since a shipment of copies was burned upon its arrival in New York.

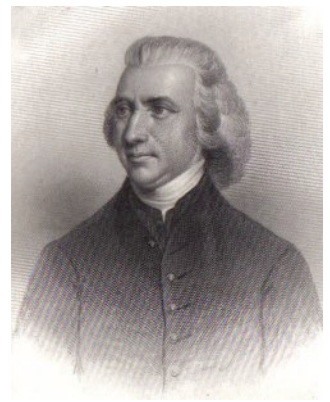
But Wesley’s loyalty to England rendered all American Methodists suspect in the eyes of the patriots. The Methodist circuit rider and historian Jesse Lee, who served as a chaplain for an American regiment (and filled Bethesda’s pulpit about the time Frazier’s Chapel was built), later wrote, “If a person was disposed to persecute a Methodist preacher, it was only necessary to call him a Tory, and then they might treat him as cruelly as they pleased. For in many places existing laws were little regarded.”²

A Divided Connection

Positions on the war varied widely among Methodists. Some were loyalists, while others fought with the patriots – reflecting the fact that the Revolution was experienced generally by the inhabitants of the colonies as a civil war. Some of the early Methodists were pacifists – notably the pioneer preacher Freeborn Garrettson, who was once almost lynched for his refusal to fight.

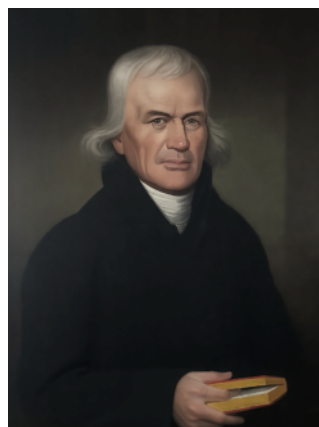
Almost all the early preachers Wesley had sent across the Atlantic to support the movement returned to England after hostilities began. One of them was Thomas Rankin, Wesley’s designated leader for American Methodism, who arrived in the spring of 1773, charged to tighten up discipline and further organize the fledgling movement. Rankin convened the first Methodist Conference in America in July 1773, in Philadelphia, and spent the next four years preaching, leading conferences, and adjudicating disputes.

After the war broke out, Rankin counseled neutrality during the third conference held in Philadelphia in May 1775, reporting in his journal, “We [the preachers] were decidedly of the opinion that we durst not countenance our people in taking up of arms, either on one side or on the other.” But



Top: Freeborn Garrettson;
Bottom: Thomas Rankin

Rankin's Tory and anti-slavery convictions could not be entirely concealed, especially when he decided to talk with members of the Continental Congress in September 1775. "I could not help telling many of them," Rankin wrote, "what a farce it was for them to contend for liberty, when they themselves kept some hundreds of thousands of poor blacks in most cruel bondage. Many confessed it was true, but it was not now the time to set them at liberty."³



Francis Asbury

But there was another of Wesley's missionaries to America who took a decidedly different approach, and that was Francis Asbury. Asbury, who was critical of Wesley's support of the Crown, wrote the following in his journal on March 19, 1776: "I ... am truly sorry that the venerable man ever dipped into the politics of America. My desire is to live in love and peace with all men; to do them no harm, but all the good I can. However, it discovers Mr. Wesley's conscientious attachment to the government under which he lived. Had he been a subject of America, no doubt but he would have been as zealous an advocate of the American cause. But some inconsiderate persons have taken occasion to censure the Methodists in America, on account of Mr. Wesley's political sentiments."⁴

While the others left, Asbury made the commitment to stay and serve the spiritual needs of the colonists. Still, he was forced to take refuge in a safe house in Delaware for two years, until American forces intercepted one of his letters which revealed his solidarity with the American people. Asbury would, of course, go on to become the primary shaper of American Methodism and the first bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church founded in 1784 – not to mention one of the inspirations behind the founding of the congregation that became Bethesda.

To Be Concluded Next Issue

Notes

1. Quoted in Allan Raymond, "'I Fear God and Honour the King.'" John Wesley and the American Revolution," in *Church History* 45:3 (September 1976), 319-320.
2. Jesse Lee, *A Short History of the Methodists in the United States of America* (Baltimore: Magill and Clime, 1810), 74-75.
3. *Journal of Thomas Rankin, 1773-1778*, 132, 144-145, entries for May 16, and September 20, 1775; transcribed by Francis H. Tees, United Methodist History and Archives Center, Drew University, Madison, New Jersey.
4. Quoted in John Fletcher Hurst, *John Wesley the Methodist: A Plain Account of His Life and Work* (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1903), 233.

One of the great American historians, Gordon S. Wood, passed away on June 7. There was little fanfare outside of academic circles to memorialize him, a lack of acknowledgement that is made more unfortunate given Wood's profound influence on the way we think about the founding of the United States and the bedrock values of this country. Wood's central thesis, which he developed across his long career, was that the Founding Fathers (as we have come to know them) were not driven by petty self-interest, but by an almost religious adherence to an ideology he called "Republicanism." Not to be confused with the modern political party, Wood's Republicanism was a collection of beliefs the founding generation held about the importance of virtue and disinterestedness in public matters, values given form and strength by egalitarianism and freedom. My favorite of Wood's many monographs is a deceptively titled book called *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (1991), which plays on the longstanding myth that the American Revolution was a pretty conservative affair. Wood argues instead that the Revolution took the Founders' Republicanism as its starting point, but then unleashed those values in ways that ultimately made the nation *more* egalitarian, *more* free – but also less virtuous, an outcome that troubled the Founders. In Wood's estimation, the Founders unintentionally lit a spark that set the world on fire, but consumed theirs as well.

Wood's thesis comes to mind when I think about one of my favorite episodes in the Bible, in the Gospel of John, when Christ visits the pool of Bethesda and encounters the lame man seeking healing. "Do you want to be well?" he demands of the man, who replies in the positive. "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk!" Christ replies. The exchange is as subversive and radical as Wood believed the American Revolution was. Imagine if we as Christians, or as congregants at Bethesda, finally decided to pick up our mats and be well: that is, to embrace Christianity at the level to which we are called. The growth and change we so often cry out for in our churches would be a force as unstoppable as the rise of the early church, after Christ's Resurrection, or the explosion of freedom in North America, and then around the world, after 1776. And like that explosion, as Wood reminds us, our mat-picking-up will have unintended, but no less spectacular consequences. Are we ready to be well? Are we ready to be consumed by our own revolution? If so, *that* would be truly radical.



REFLECTIONS ON BETHESDA



BETHESDA METHODIST CHURCH

A Global Methodist Congregation

P.O. Box 147 • Preston, Maryland 21655

Celebrating Over 240 Years of Continuous Ministry

OFFICE & CONTACT INFO

Main Office Jo Benner, Admin. Asst.
T – F, 12:00 to 3:00 PM
Phone: (410) 673-7538
Email: office@bethesdapreston.faith

Pastor's Office Nate Weaver, Pastor
Office Hours: T – Th, 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM
Home Visitations: Fridays
Phone: (410) 673-7538
Email: pastornate@bethesdapreston.faith

SERVICE & CLASS SCHEDULE

Sunday Services

Contemporary Worship
9:00 AM
Choptank Marina

Traditional Worship
11:00 AM
Sanctuary

Classes

Bethesda Bible
Adventures
On Hiatus for Summer

Romans Bible Study
Tuesdays, 6:30 PM

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

In Congress 4th July 1776.

In him and through faith in
him we may approach God with
freedom and confidence.

EPHESIANS 3:12, NIV