

Asbury First NEWS SHEET

MAY 2025

asburyfirst.org

*You're invited! Join us for upcoming
worship, fellowship, and fun.*

(585) 271-1050

Summer Worship Schedule

Asbury First's summer tradition of hosting our **9 am worship service outside on fair Sundays continues this year from May 25 to August 31 (Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend)**. This year, we will assemble in front of the 1050 building due to construction on the Columbarium. We ask that you bring your own lawn chair or lawn blanket if at all possible — go ahead and toss them in your trunk now!



New Members Classes, June 2 & 9, 6:30 pm, Red Room

If you are interested in joining Asbury First, we will be having New Members classes in June. These classes take place over two consecutive Monday evenings, and will teach about the history of Asbury First and United Methodism, while also providing an opportunity to meet other new members of Asbury First. **Classes are June 2 and June 9 at 6:30 pm in the Red Room of the Community Outreach Center.** New Members will be joining at the 11 am Worship Service on June 15. If you are interested, please contact Deb Bullock-Smith by calling the office at (585) 271-1050.



Cookies Wanted!

Asbury First hospitality is in need of cookies! If you are a baker, please consider making a couple of dozen and dropping them off at the church office. They will be frozen until needed. This will help us give our marvelous hospitality team a break over the summer, but still ensure we have yummy treats after the Sunday worship service.

Thanks in advance, we truly appreciate your sweet treats. For more information, please contact Paula Dugan at (585) 271-1050 x111.



World Religion Wednesdays

Wednesday, May 21, 10 - 11:30 am in the Red Room (1010 East Ave) and Zoom. For this final meeting, the focus of our learning will be on **Sikhism**. Participants are invited to learn a bit about each religion before the class, or to just come ready to learn.



David Strong to Retire – Update Note from David

Since I announced my retirement plans a week ago, I've received feedback that, perhaps, my health status was (or is) a factor in my decision to retire. I very much appreciate the concern but want to convey that I have responded well to the initial and ongoing treatments for stage 4 cancer. I want to retire while I am doing and feeling well.

Furthermore, I've moved up my retirement date to the end of July rather than the end of August.

Thank you for your support as I make this transition to the next chapter in my life.

- David Strong



Morning Prayer at Asbury First

In these turbulent times of shifting headlines and unsettling political events, our pastoral staff feels called to help our community maintain spiritual grounding. We invite you to join us for Morning Prayer every Thursday from 9:30-10am in the Meditation Chapel (within the Sanctuary). This simple service offers a space to center ourselves in God's presence, solidarity, compassion, and love. No special preparation needed—come as you are, whenever you can join us.



Sing This Summer! No Commitment!

Sunday, June 8, Asbury First's Summer Choir kicks into gear! Join the choir for the whole summer or for any individual Sunday! Summer Choir gathers at 10 am in Wesley Hall to rehearse accessible music that will be sung at the 11 am service. No need to be a member of Sanctuary Choir, but basic choral singing experience is recommended. If you have any questions, please reach out to our Director of Music Ministry, Carl Johengen at (585) 271-1050x134.



Collaborative Makers Gathering Returns!

Good News! The first Collaborative Makers Gathering was a great success, and we're excited to continue meeting monthly on second Saturdays from 1 to 4 pm. Bring a project to work on, sewing or knitting items to share, and an empty bag to take home treasures from other makers. We'll typically meet in the Gathering Center, with alternate campus locations as needed.

Call Rev. Kathy Thiel with any questions at (585) 271-1050 x106



Youth Envelope Fundraiser!

Over the next couple Sundays, find our "wall of envelopes" fundraiser in the Gathering Center! Take an envelope, return it with a donation matching its number (\$1 to \$100). This supports our youth summer mission trips. Can't attend in person? Contact Mike Mullin at (585) 271-1050 x105 to contribute.



Mission Trip Prayer Partners

Do you like supporting people in prayer? Become a prayer partner for our high school mission trip to Tampa, Florida, where students will assist with Hurricane Helene disaster relief. You'll write a letter of prayerful encouragement to a missionary, which they'll receive during the trip. For information and to sign up, contact Mike Mullin at (585) 271-1050 x105.



Rabbi Or Zohar

Join us Wednesday, June 18 at 7 pm for an engaging evening as we welcome Rabbi Or Zohar, Temple Sinai's new Senior Rabbi, who will speak about the Kabbalah, the Jewish mystic text, in the Red Room (1010).

For more information, contact Rev. Kathy Thiel at (585) 271-1050 x106.



Summer VBS 'B Camp'

Half and Full Day Options

August 4-7, 9 am - 12 pm (or 4 pm)

Join the buzz at "B Camp" this summer! All Kids (PreK-5th grade) will have a blast August 4 - 7 exploring the B's: being, beatitudes, and bees! NEW this year: Choose our exciting all-day adventure (9am - 4pm, lunch needed) or the morning option. Don't miss out on this hive of fun and learning! ***Asbury First members and VBS alumni can register from May 25 to June 13***, at which time spots will become open to everyone. Questions? Buzz Paula Dugan at (585) 271-1050 x111. Register at asburyfirst.org/vbs



KOP needs volunteers

Keeping Our Promise has welcomed 164 people in the last 94 days

NEEDED: A Sunday School group to adopt a new family or

Volunteer—This lets a new family know they are not alone, and to familiarize them with the Rochester area, and help them with mail.

Drivers—New families have many appointments in the first couple of months.



Gift cards—Most new families do not have money for items such as diapers, feminine hygiene, and Tylenol, which SNAP does not cover.

Used computers that will be wiped clean and Used TVs.

Volunteers can sign up on the Keeping Our Promise website. A background check is required. Call or text Cindy Malone with questions: (585) 645-4060

May COC Chapel Challenge

Each month we collect different needed supplies for the ministries of the Community Outreach Center. **For the May COC Chapel Challenge, we are collecting diapers, deodorant, and disposable razors.** A list of specific needed items is available at asburyfirst.org/coc. Drop them off near the rail in the front of the Children's Chapel before or after services.





On a somber April evening, the Rochester community demonstrated the profound power of unity and compassion. An interfaith healing service at Asbury First United Methodist Church became a beacon of hope and solidarity, commemorating the life of Sam Nordquist and standing together in support of the transgender community.

The service, lovingly organized by Rev. Kathy Thiel, transcended the boundaries of individual faith traditions. Religious leaders and community representatives from Temple Sinai, St. Paul's Episcopal Church, the United Church of Christ, and other organizations came together, symbolizing a collective commitment to healing and understanding. This remarkable gathering illustrated that in times of profound grief, the human spirit can rise above denominational lines, creating a tapestry of empathy and mutual support.

Sam Nordquist, a 24-year-old transgender man from Minnesota, had tragically become a victim of a horrific act of violence that shocked the Rochester area. The healing service sought to transform this devastating loss into a moment of communal resilience. Speakers from various backgrounds – including the Rochester Gay Men's Chorus and the Assisi Institute – shared messages of remembrance, solidarity, and hope, creating a powerful narrative of support for the transgender community.

The essence of the service went beyond traditional mourning. It was a deliberate attempt to restore

IN THE SPIRIT OF ETERNAL LIFE AND LOVE: AN INTERFAITH SERVICE OF HEALING

faith in human connection, to bring comfort to a grieving community, and to affirm the inherent dignity of every individual. By gathering in this sacred space, participants sought not just emotional healing, but a form of collective justice – a commitment to standing against hatred and violence, and to creating a more compassionate society.



Local media, including Channel 13 News (WHAM), covered the event, helping to amplify the message of love and support. The well-attended vigil demonstrated that the community refuses to be silenced by tragedy, instead choosing to respond with unity, understanding, and a resolute commitment to healing. It was a powerful reminder that in the face of senseless violence, compassion can be a transformative force.

As the candles were lit and stories were shared, the service became more than a memorial – it was a promise. A promise to remember Sam Nordquist, to support the transgender community, and to work towards a future where every individual is valued, respected, and protected.

FLOWER CITY BEEWORKS — AN INTERVIEW WITH NICK LORD

photo by Philip Kruse



We recently caught up with Nick Lord, founder of Flower City Beeworks after the Asbury First Earth Day Event to discuss the roots of his passion for beekeeping and the honeybees currently living on the roof of Asbury First.

How did you get into beekeeping in the first place?

I have always been fascinated by bees and how they operate, and could go on about the cool things they do and bee facts for hours. During the pandemic I took an online course at Penn State Cooperative Extension, and got started that season. My dad also started that same season downstate, and at the same time found his grandmother's journal with several mentions of buying beekeeping equipment and keeping a hive. We found out it's been in our family for 4 generations, albeit a bit indirectly!

Why Asbury First — what made it a good location for bees?

In my brief time on-site working with the bees, it's

clear that Asbury First is a thriving group of people committed to serving their community, and the more time I've spent here, I've really seen how many avenues that manifests in. So many people I've stopped and talked with have been supportive and interested in the bees and how they operate here.

What inspired you to place beehives on the roof of a church?

When I got into beekeeping I had to choose between keeping bees way out on a farm that was a decent drive away, or finding a way to make it work here in downtown Rochester. I researched urban beekeeping and decided I wanted to fully commit because of all the benefits to the bees and all of the awareness they bring to urban pollinators, and not to mention hyper-local products. To further this goal, I set out to partner with businesses and organizations to make the project very collaborative, to get the bees not only here, but involved in collaborations and community projects to further their involvement and awareness. My first two locations were churches, which felt like a good fit because both locations had a great commitment to sustainability that was furthered by adding honeybees on site. Also, the opportunity for community projects with the bees has been constantly growing - from the pollination of produce, and honey, for food pantries, to educational opportunities for all ages.

What do you hope people take away from knowing there are bees on the roof of their church?

I hope people are curious and want to learn more about bees and how we coexist and work alongside these hardworking little critters. There are so many ways they can help our community, and they are truly essential.

More about Flower City Beeworks and the work Nick Lord is doing in the community can be found on their [instagram account](https://www.instagram.com/flowercitybeeworks):
www.instagram.com/flowercitybeeworks



SACRED GROUND: THE COLUMBARIUM AND MEMORIAL GARDEN AT ASBURY FIRST

watercolor painting of the planned Memorial Garden and Columbarium by Cheryl Thompson

A new sacred space is taking shape at Asbury First this summer—one that completes our spiritual journey from cradle to grave. The Columbarium and Memorial Garden, years in thoughtful planning, will soon transform our grounds into a place that honors the full circle of life we celebrate together. This meaningful addition fulfills our mission to walk alongside our congregation through every sacred milestone: from the joy of birth, the commitment of baptism, the nourishment of communion, the growth of discipleship, to the final farewell of death. In creating this contemplative space, we acknowledge that all seasons of life—even its conclusion—are held within God's loving presence.

The Memorial Garden will offer a serene setting where loved ones can be remembered amid natural beauty. Its design incorporates elements that invite quiet reflection, providing our community with a physical space to connect with memories and find spiritual comfort. As Robert Schuman notes, this

transformative project begins in earnest this summer: "On May 27th, ground-penetrating radar will scan the site for any unknown subterranean obstacles," after which construction fencing will secure the area on June 2nd, and foundation excavation will commence.

During construction, we'll adapt our campus routines. The south doors of the Gathering Center facing East Avenue will serve as emergency exits only until the project's completion. Additionally, our beloved outdoor summer worship will relocate from the sanctuary lawn to the lawn in front of 1050 East Ave, the Church Offices, allowing construction equipment to access the Columbarium site.

As we gather for worship at 9 am on summer Sundays in our alternate outdoor location, we'll have a unique opportunity to witness this sacred space taking form. Surrounded by flowers and trees, we'll continue celebrating creation, community, and the changing seasons that remind us of God's constant presence—even during times of transition.

WHAT'S NEW AT THE ASBURY FIRST LIBRARY??

**The Best-Kept Secret at Asbury First Is Out!**

4,000 Books and Counting... Our Library Is Calling Your Name!

Ever wandered through those mysterious double doors next to the elevator in the Welcome Center? No, it's not a secret passage to Narnia (though we do have those books too!)—it's Asbury First's very own literary treasure trove, bursting with more than 4,000 volumes just waiting to meet their next reader!

The Roving Bibliocart: Books on the Move!

Once a month, our famous "bibliocart" rolls out to display that month's featured reads. Our recent Mother's Day collection shared space with picture books AND some rebellious titles recently banned at the US Naval Academy. (Nothing makes a book more enticing than someone saying you shouldn't read it, right?)

Whether you're a fiction fanatic, memoir enthusiast, poetry lover, or devotional seeker, our shelves are practically doing the wave to catch your attention. And yes, we've joined the 21st century with graphic novels too!

This Month's Must-Reads**For the Little Bookworms:**

"The Verts" by Ann Patchett

"What If Everybody Did That?" by Ellen Javernick

For Middle Schoolers & Budding Bibliophiles:

"The Civil War of Amos Abernathy" by Michael Leali

"Ban This Book" by Alan Gratz (We sense a theme here!)

For Young Adults: (Find these cool reads in the Teen gathering space downstairs)

"Bait" by Alex Sanchez

"Black Star" by Kwame Alexander

For The Grown-Ups:

"The Theft of Memory" by Jonathan Kozol

"The Women" by Kristin Hannah (Spoiler alert: It's fantastic!)

We're Taking Requests! Got a book you're dying to read? Let us know! Our dedicated library team researches suggestions from parishioners, clergy, and our own book-obsessed team members. We're like your personal literary shoppers—except everything's free to borrow!

You can find us across from the Daycare Office (through those double doors by the elevator in the Welcome Center). We are open every Sunday! (No excuses!), so come see what all the page-turning excitement is about.

OLDER ADULT LUNCHEON



The Older Adult Spring
Worship and Luncheon
was all smiles!



Sunday, May 18, as part of Confirmation Sunday, we celebrated six new confirmands at Asbury First. Photo by Director of Music Ministry, Dr. Carl Johengen.



Spring is springing on the grounds of Asbury First!

Photos from rehearsals for Asbury First Community Theatre's production of *My Fair Lady*. This intergenerational musical was produced by Asbury First's own alongside new members from the local community.

MY FAIR LADY

Behind
the scenes!

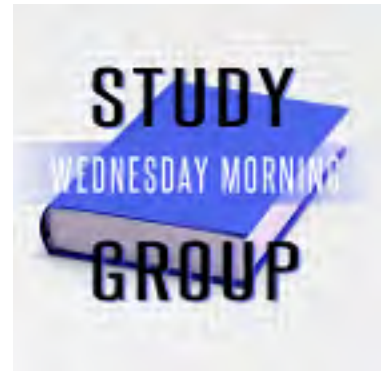


CONTINUING CLASSES, GROUPS, AND EVENTS

Wednesday Morning Study Group

Wednesdays, 10–11:30 am , 1010 Red Room and Zoom (zoom.us/j/6174865464 PW Disciple)

All are invited to join this book discussion group as we meet in-person and on Zoom on Wednesday mornings. Some have been a part of this group for years, while others come and go depending on availability and the books that we are reading. We will begin our next book on **March 5**, *The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together*, by Heather McGhee. For more information, please contact Mike Mullin at mmullin@asburyfirst.org.



Lectio Divina

Tuesdays, 8:30–9 am, Zoom (zoom.us/j/8347173468 PW 200)

Lectio Divina is a contemplative practice on reading scripture. A passage of scripture is read, then there is silent meditation, then the passage is read again, then more silence, and then discussion. The silence is an opportunity to reflect upon what you experienced in the scripture. This half hour opens and closes with prayer. All are welcome. For more information please contact Rev. Kathy Thiel at kthiel@asburyfirst.org or at 585-271-1050 x106.



Tuesday Women's Fellowship

Tuesdays, 9:30–10:30 am, Zoom (zoom.us/j/8347173468 PW 200)

Looking for a way to stay connected to your Asbury First friends during the week? Want to meet new Asbury First friends? All women, all ages, are welcome to join the Tuesday Women's Fellowship via Zoom, 9:30–10:30 am each week. Bring your coffee or tea, and perhaps a treat, zoom in and enjoy an hour of devotion, sharing, and connection. If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact Elizabeth Church, coordinator, at emchurch418@gmail.com. Hope to see you soon!



Asbury Art Class — Watercolor Painting

(On Hiatus for the Summer but returning in the Fall)

Fridays, 12:30–3 pm, 1040 Room 205 (upper level, bell choir room)

Now meeting on Friday afternoons, the Asbury Art Class is exploring watercolor and card-making. Watercolor is a terrific medium for capturing the form and surprise of the natural world. Please email Linda Clemow at soulsourcestudio1@gmail.com for more information and to register.



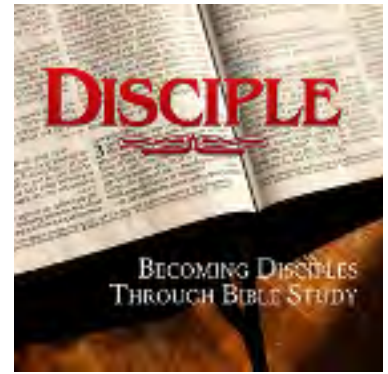
CONTINUING CLASSES, GROUPS, AND EVENTS

Disciple IV Bible Study

Tuesdays, 2:15 - 3:15 pm, Zoom (zoom.us/j/8347173468 PW 200)

Have you ever wondered what the Bible really says—and if it truly has any meaning for us in modern times? If so, then you're not alone. Most Christians have never really read the Bible, and many wonder if it's antiquated teachings truly transcend time. If you would like to grapple with these questions, then you are encouraged to join in the Disciple Bible Study.

Disciple IV spends the first half the year looking at the *Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament*, and the second half of the year focused on the Gospel of John and Revelation. The Disciple IV Bible study will be starting later this spring. Please contact Mike Mullin for more information or to sign-up contact mmullin@asburyfirst.org

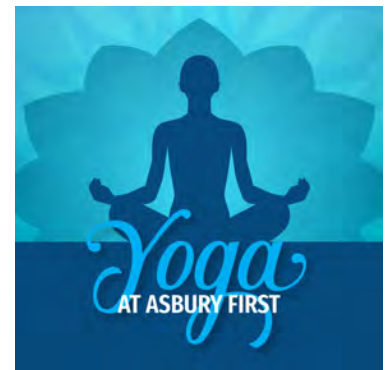


Yoga at Asbury First

Tuesdays, 3 pm, Gathering Center, \$10 pay at the door

Join us for our weekly sessions of Gentle Yoga. This gentle attention can help both to bring inner awareness to your body, as well as clarity and peace to the mind!

Classes are an hour long and open to participants at any level. \$10 at the door, you're encouraged to wear comfortable loose-fitting clothes, and to bring a towel and water with you.



Men's Devotional Group

Wednesdays, 7 am, Zoom (zoom.us/j/8347173468 PW 200)

Men of all ages are welcome to join us on Wednesday mornings via Zoom as we discuss topics of faith, life, and more. Each week, a different member of the group leads us in a devotion for our time together. These can be instructional, reflective, conversational, and more. This is a wonderful group to make and build connections, and we hope that you will drop in to join us! or more information, please contact Mike Mullin at mmullin@asburyfirst.org.



CONTINUING CLASSES, GROUPS, AND EVENTS

Prayer Shawl Ministry

4th Wednesday of the Month, 3–4:30 pm, Library

A prayer shawl is a simple shawl or a lap blanket knitted by members of our group. It is symbolic of an inclusive, unconditionally loving God. The knitting itself is very simple and we have “experts” on hand to help you if you are a beginner. The group meets monthly on the fourth Wednesday. Clergy and lay members of our church identify those who may benefit from our ministry and a shawl, and they're delivered by ministers or congregation members. Questions? Contact Meredith Pixley at meredithpixley@gmail.com.



Carvers of Hope

4th Wednesday of the Month, 6:30–8 pm, Education Wing

Carvers of Hope is a wood carving ministry that helps people who find themselves in the very difficult places of life. Its members carve handmade crosses as a reminder of the hope Jesus brought to us through the cross. All materials, wood, and carving tools are provided, as well as carving lessons. No prior skill is needed to carve crosses with this group. If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact John Smalt at jhsfalt@gmail.com.



LGBTQ+ Advocacy Meeting

3rd Sunday of the Month, at 9:45 am, 1040 Youth Room (lower level)

Asbury First's LGBTQ+ Advocacy Group continues to hold meetings seeking new ways to support the LGBTQ+ community. Meetings are held in the Youth Room (in the lower level of the church). Anyone affiliated with LGBTQ+ community and allies are welcome to attend. We will be planning for events, outreach, and educational opportunities in our community. Youth and adults are welcome! For more information, please contact Deb Bullock-Smith at (585) 271-1050 x117 or at dbullocksmith@asburyfirst.org.



As The Spirit Moves Us

Sundays, 9:45–10:45 am, Room LL03 and Zoom (zoom.us/j/6174865464 PW Disciple)

As The Spirit Moves is a class founded on forming a welcoming community to study Biblical events through scripture as well as Christian-based literature. All are welcome, and every voice is heard as we become better together.

For more information about this class, please contact Mike Mullin at mmullin@asburyfirst.org or at 585-271-1050 x105.





CELEBRATIONS AND CONCERNS

ALTAR FLOWERS

The flowers on the altar are given to the glory of God and in loving memory of John E. Clarke and in honor of servicemen and women who have served or are serving our country by Dawn Riedy, David Berg & family and in loving memory of Michael Graney, nephew of Annette and Jim Farrington, on the 10th anniversary of his passing.

If you would like to place flowers on the altar, please contact Jeanne Ristau at (585) 223-4356, preferably two weeks ahead of requested date.

PRAYERS AND CONCERNS

We offer our prayers and concerns for all those who are ill at home, hospitalized, or in hospice care.

Our hearts are with Pamela Koon and her family as they mourn the passing of Lee Koon, who died on April 18.

Our hearts and prayers are with the family of Karen Masters, especially her husband, Bill and their sons, Eric and Lance. Karen died Monday, April 21.

Our hearts are with Susannah Bellanca as she grieves the death of her mother, Helen Bellanca, who died on April 29.

Our hearts are with the family of Bob Stokes who died on Sunday, May 11. Please keep Bev and Bob's family in your prayers.

A memorial service to celebrate the life of Enid Graham-Raad, who died on November 7 will be held on Sunday, June 8 at 3 pm.

We want to be able to visit and pray with those who are in the hospital. If you know someone who is in the hospital and would like a pastoral call, or if you yourself are in the hospital or have a date for surgery, please call Rev. Kathy Thiel who will be most glad to be with you in that moment. (585) 271-1050 x106.

Stay up-to-date with events, links, and information with our online calendar, or call (585) 271-1050.

asburyfirst.org/events

To submit an announcement, email communication@asburyfirst.org, call the church office at (585) 271-1050, or fill out the online form at asburyfirst.org/bulletin-announcement.

If you'd like to receive regular paper communications, please call the church office at (585) 271-1050.