

October 2025

THE BETHEL BEACON



FROM MANG SONNA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear valued friends and supporters of Bethel,

I am delighted to share this newsletter with you, as your unwavering commitment to our community endeavors has been truly remarkable. We extend our sincerest gratitude for your prayers and recent financial contribution to the Bethel ministry. This month, I would like to provide updates on what's happening at Bethel at this time of the year.

Bethel officially started working with refugees at the beginning of this month. We have hired four new bilingual and multilingual staff members to work with refugees who have been in the US for less than five years. Our new staff members are currently undergoing training, and we are thrilled to welcome them to our team. We anticipate introducing English Language Learner and Citizenship classes in the near future. We are seeking mentors for refugee youth and seniors. If you have a passion for helping others, we would be delighted to have you volunteer in our programs.

Our Free Medical Clinic has been utilized by patients lacking health insurance, and it continues to grow. Some patients were so eager to consult a doctor that they waited for hours before the clinic opened. We plan to add an additional evening clinic, thanks to the support of physicians and medical students from the KU Medical Center. We need volunteers to register and welcome patients, interpret, and escort them to the waiting area and examination rooms.

Preparations for the Bethel Christmas Shop are underway. Numerous Bethel families have submitted their Christmas applications, and we hope to fulfill the Christmas needs of 100 families this year. If you and your family or your church/organization are interested in adopting families, please contact us at 913-371-8218 or 913-433-8868. We will provide you with the list of items the families need, including sizes for shoes, paints, and shirts. Thank you once again for your continued support. May God bless you abundantly!

REMARKABLE GROWTH AND IMPACT

In a time when community support is essential, Bethel is witnessing significant growth across all aspects of our programs. This expansion is a direct response to the increasing demand for our services, ranging from our crucial food pantry to our booming student programs.

Our senior program, in particular, has experienced a remarkable rise in participation in the month of September. We've even expanded our transportation efforts from one van to two to accommodate over 35 seniors by the end of the month. At the same time, our Wednesday worship and fellowship meals have attracted more attendees, especially from our new senior friends.

The success of our senior program mirrors the growth we have been seeing in our food pantry, where we are serving an increasing number of families. Each week, we provide groceries to new families joining our pantry. The growing number of families we assist highlights the pressing need for food security, which we are committed to addressing.

As we continue on this upward trend with our participation number and the people we serve, our emphasis remains on being here for the communities we serve. Our programs are crafted to address immediate needs while empowering individuals to take time to prepare themselves to achieve a renewed sense of hope, wellness, and self-sufficiency.

Our growth is both exciting and humbling, as we work to innovate and adapt to meet changing needs. We are thankful for the trust and support from our community and remain committed to this journey of growth and impact. Together, we are creating a brighter future for everyone involved in our programs and services.



OUR MIDDLE SCHOOLERS ARE DITCHING THEIR PHONES



Okay, maybe the title was a bit exaggerated, but our students really did give up their phones, willingly, for the duration of our student program! They have shown incredible initiative in reducing their screen time while they're at Bethel, and we couldn't be more encouraged.

In recent months, there's been a growing awareness among parents, educators, and communities of how deeply smartphones are rewiring young minds. While a few changes may be positive, most are not. Books like *The Anxious Generation* by Jonathan Haidt have sounded the alarm, prompting many to take action. At Bethel, we've joined that effort.

At Bethel, we value real connection and community, the kind that screens often disrupt. That's why we took a bold step: during all our programs, students would no longer have access to their phones or gadgets. Knowing this would be a challenge, especially for our middle schoolers, our staff and volunteers spent time training and discussing how to implement the policy with care and clarity. At the start of September, we rolled it out with a couple of presentations explaining the heart behind the change. We expected pushback and resistance, especially from our middle schoolers. Instead, we got cooperation and even excitement about the initiative.

Students willingly turned in their phones each day. Some even willingly shared their average screen times and encouraged one another to cut back. As the weeks went on, we saw them become more present, more engaged, and more connected with one another and with the program. Often, we have to remind them to collect their phones before heading home!

In a world increasingly shaped by digital distractions and social disconnection, what we're seeing at Bethel gives us hope. Our students are showing that they're not just capable of less screen time, but they're thriving because of it. And that's something worth celebrating.

SEPTEMBER PANTRY UPDATE

In September, the growing need for assistance due to food insecurity in our community continues to be evident. Our Food Pantry served a total of 414 households, providing nourishment to 920 adults, 226 seniors, and 794 children. Additionally, we supplied diapers to 58 infants. On-site, we served nearly 245 meals through our community meals, the after-school program, and various ministries.

ATP Property Restoration Co. recently celebrated its 10th Anniversary—and they chose to mark this milestone by giving back to the community in a powerful way. As part of their celebration, they arrived at Bethel with a van full of food for our pantry, along with diapers and baby wipes to support the families we serve. Their thoughtful donation will make a real difference in the lives of so many in the Kansas City area. We are very grateful to them for their generosity.

PRAISE & PRAYER REQUESTS

- Praise God for the new Refugee Support Services we have started at the beginning of this month, and the new dedicated staff who were hired recently.
- Praise God for the new senior citizens who joined the Bethel senior program last month, and the seniors who welcomed them with hugs.
- Praise God for our after-school students and their dedicated teachers and volunteers.
- Please pray for the success of our upcoming Multicultural Lunch and Fellowship to be held on Saturday, October 18, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
- Please pray for the success of the Refugee program and the Bethel Christmas Shop.
- Please pray for the Bethel board, staff members, volunteers, and donors.

To Donate or learn more about us...

Bethel Neighborhood Center



14 S 7th St
Kansas City, KS 66101

www.bethelcenter.org
913-371-8218

