



March Update

Dear Bethel friends and well-wishers,

Words fail to express our thankfulness to you for your financial support and prayer for the Bethel ministry. We are able to offer hope and help to our community since 1911 because of generous donors like you. Thank you for enabling us to be the **Lighthouse** for the lost in our community.



The four students in the picture above asked me one afternoon, ***“Mr. Mang, can we visit you? We want to hangout with you.”*** I invited them in to my office, and I am very impressed with them and their level of maturity. They are fifth graders and they thought that they are **too old** to hangout with younger students during their short free time. I expected their visit to be a onetime event and didn't think about it twice, but it has become a regular one. We have been talking about school, life in general, why they feel too old, what kind of field trips they want to go to when they come back in summer, good and bad people, foods they like, and so on. As I reflect upon my time with them and the other young people in our youth enrichment program, I am happy that they love Bethel and feel safe here to talk about their life struggles, fears and hopes in life. I hope and pray that the love, acceptance, hope, respect, and dignity they receive here at Bethel Center will take them far in life.



During one of our community meal and worship services in February, Joel stood up and shared why he keeps coming and volunteering at Bethel. Joel was a Bethel kid from the time he was in grade school and he continued through his middle school years. He was a difficult kid and was occasionally disciplined and suspended a few times to make him think how his actions and behaviors affect other people around him. He stood up and said, ***“I am here today because Bethel never gives up on me. I did many bad things that I am not proud of but I am turning my life around because of the love and acceptance I have received from Bethel. I don't want any of the Bethel kids to do the bad stuff I did. I want to help them to stay away from bad things. Thank you for giving food to my mom. Every time we need help, you all are there for us. Thank you. Please keep me in your prayer.”*** There were days Joel would come to my office and said, ***“Mr. Mang, all the bad things I had done come back to my mind”*** and I listened to what he has to say. When I told him that he can always come and talk to me, he said, ***“Are you a priest or a counselor”?***

Our sewing students at Bethel Center and The Gathering Place in Kansas City, Missouri will graduate **on Friday, March 13th**. Altogether, fifteen students from Bethel will graduate from the sewing class under 'Once We Were Refugees' (OWWR). Upon graduation, they will receive a certificate, a new iron and ironing board, sewing machine, and fabrics to continue sewing! The next batch of training will begin on April 14th. We will accept fabric, new or gently used sewing machine, new iron and ironing board for our students' use to give out upon graduation. You may also make an online donation on our website at <https://www.bethelcenter.org/donate>

As the Spring break is approaching, we are prepared to take 20 middle and high school students to Camp Moses Merrill near Omaha, Nebraska, to attend a youth retreat and to volunteer there at the camp site. With the spread of the Coronavirus in several cities, we ask you to pray for safety as we will be traveling soon. May God bless you abundantly for your generosity!

Rev. Mang & Nem Sonna, Bethel Neighborhood Center