Love God. Love People.

July 2026

July Events

Men's Basketball
Mondays @ 6:30pm

Young Adults
Mondays @ 6:30pm

Stewarding the Blessings of God
Wednesdays @ 10:00am

Grace Gals
Wednesdays @ 6:00pm

Men's Bible Study
Thursdays @ 6:00am

Men's Basketball
Saturdays @ 7:30am

Summer Softball League
Saturdays @ 9:00am

Youth
Camp July 13-17
See Summer Activity Schedule (p.6)

Save the Date

Men's Meating
August 23

Baptisms
August 30

inside

- June Photos
- Trail Life & American Heritage Girls
- Royal Family Kids Camp
- Pastor Rod
- and more

June Photos

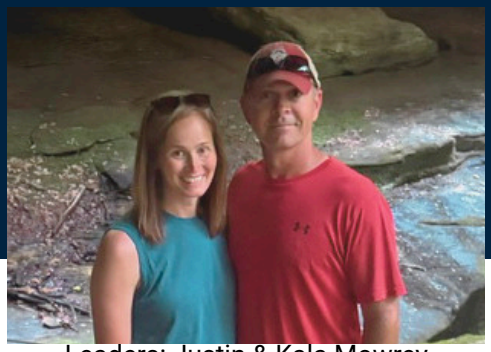
Royal Family Kids, Dad Camp, & VBS 2026

Thank you to all who prayed, served, & gave!

Yes, lots of people showed up!
But the stories we have are precious to us.

We invite you to find those who served and talk to them about their time.
You will certainly hear how God is working!

Trail Life & American Heritage Girls



Leaders: Justin & Kala Mowrey

Trail Life and American Heritage Girls completed their second year as a group and their first year as a chartered organization here at Friends Church. Both ministries are Christ-centered character and leadership development groups that focus on loving God, cherishing their families, honoring their country, and serving their communities, while learning various life and outdoor skills. Currently, Trail Life has 34 troop members and 10 leaders, and AHG has 27 troop members and 12 leaders.

AHG joined with their sister troop in Martins Ferry to pack bags for the Good Shepherd Nursing Home and spent time at the Beacon House caroling and doing crafts at Christmas. Trail Life worked with the House of the Carpenter to pack flood buckets in Wheeling. Both groups served the surrounding community by packing hygeine bags for Street Moms, food bags for Send Me Inc., stuffing stockings at Christmas for Royal Family, working with the Farm Bureau to pack meals for local families, greeting members and opening doors here at Friends Church, and placing flags for Memorial Day at Union Cemetery.

Both groups meet once a month and also complete a monthly service project or fun activity. The groups take a short break during the summer months, but will resume again on ***Monday, September 14, from 5:30-7:00.***

Throughout the year, American Heritage Girls earned badges for crafting, cake decorating, and zoology. They also enjoyed hiking at Barkcamp in October and a fun trip to the Good Zoo in April. The younger boys in Trail Life worked on life skills (cooking, landscaping, personal safety), indoor and outdoor hobbies, and their heritage branch pin (flag etiquette, community service, and family). The older group members learned about camping, outdoor cooking, rifle safety, and emergency preparedness. The boys and their dads put all of their learning into practice with a May campout at the Bethesda Sportsman's Club. Both groups wrapped up the year with an end-of-the-year awards ceremony to showcase all of their hard work.

Royal Family Kids Camp

"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and those who are crushed in spirit." Psalm 34:18 This verse comes to mind every year at Royal Family Kids Camp. We get to partner with Christ to love the children in the Ohio Valley who have experienced childhood trauma, and we get to tell them that their identity is in Him, not the neglect and abuse they have experienced. We get to share that our God is Healer, Lord, Redeemer and Friend. This summer we shared His love through the story of King David; God is our Good Shepherd. We sang and read of how He is with us in the high and low times of life, and he will never leave us. We acknowledge that people in our lives can fail us, and their version of love can hurt, but that is not God's love. This is the goal of Royal Family Kids Camp and the mentoring program.

Royal Family Kids 2026 was beautiful and hard at the same time.

You could see the darkness of trauma being brought into His marvelous light and healing taking place. Let me tell you about Kayla. She came to Royal Family Kids 4 years ago. The trauma she and her brothers experienced left them without a safe place to call home. God opened the door for Kayla and her two brothers to be placed into a foster family. Kayla still has flashbacks of the severe abuse. She still struggles with questions. Why did Mom choose drugs, and did not protect her. Kayla shared her journal entry with me while at camp this year. I asked permission to share her thoughts and emotions with you. As we talked through what she had written and prayed for her and her momma, you could see her sadness change and her burden lifted. Later that week, she shared with staff

that one of the things she likes about being at Royal Family is that if she has a need, the staff at camp finds a way to meet that need. It's moments like these that allow the kids at Royal Family and girls like Kayla to experience God's love. When I asked what she wanted to do when she grew up she said, "I want to be an actress and work at Royal Family Kids Camp"!

We love it when our campers get to come back and work with Royal Family. Five past campers returned to work this year.

James was one of those five returning campers who gave back by being a big brother. Wayne and I met up with James two years ago just by chance. We had not seen James since he was 12 years old. He was at our very first Royal Family Kids Camp in 1996. James had moved out of the area and came back to the Ohio Valley with his family. He told us about his faith journey and said he would love to work at camp. James knew what it was like to be a camper. He wanted to show them what God had done in his life and what he could do in theirs. That is exactly what he did! He not only inspired his camper, but he is an inspiration to all of us!

David said in Psalm 40, *"I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear the Lord and put their trust in Him".* Just like David as a good shepherd bringing his sheep out of the mud and mire, we too get to partner with Christ, The Good Shepherd, to set these precious children on a firm foundation with Him.

Thank you to everyone who prayed, made blankets, gave camp items, donated financially and volunteered at camp this summer. We want to continue to minister to these kids and their families. Please keep praying. If you would like to mentor or help a family in need, please reach out through the church app or email me at heidiberk777@gmail.com.

To God be the glory, great things He has done and will continue to do! 1 Corinthians 15:58

–Heidi Berk

from Pastor Rod

Rod & Zuza
their daughters Simone & Annemarie and Annemarie's friend, Nino

God Went Before Us!
Our recent trip to Serbia, Hungary, and Austria reminded us once again that God is always at work before we arrive. When Zuza and I landed in Vienna, we received unexpected news: our rental car could not cross the Serbian border because of insurance restrictions. Suddenly, we had no way to reach Serbia. But God had already prepared the solution. Years earlier, when we moved back to the United States from Italy, I sold our Nissan Rogue to friends in Serbia. As soon as they heard about our situation, they generously offered to lend us that same vehicle for our entire stay. We met those friends in Hungary, where we were reminded of another example of God's faithfulness. A family in whose home we helped start a church thirty-five years ago welcomed us and allowed us to leave our rental car while we traveled in Serbia. It was a joy to see that they are still faithfully following Christ and impacting their community for His Kingdom.

Our time in Serbia was filled with encouragement. We visited believers in Bačka Topola, where Friends Church hopes to bring a short-term mission team next year. The local church is eager to partner with us as we help equip leaders, encourage the congregation, and serve alongside them in ministry.

Another blessing was carrying a suitcase full of handmade quilts, generously donated by the National Road Quilt Guild that Pam Cleaver serves with. Through our friend Zuza, who has a ministry with *Joni and Friends*, these quilts will be given to disabled children and families in Ukraine as a practical expression of Christ's love.

The Lord not only met our needs but also continued to open new doors for ministry. We met with church leaders in Sombor and Novi Sad, who invited us to return and help develop an evangelism strategy for their communities. It is exciting to see God opening new doors for ministry.

We ended our trip by spending a few precious days with our daughter Annemarie, who lives in Austria. It was an added blessing that our other daughter, Simone, was able to fly from Pittsburgh to join us. Time together as a family is always a gift, although saying goodbye never gets easier. We returned home grateful for God's faithfulness every step of the journey.

-Pastor Rod

Youth

SUMMER SCHEDULE

JUNE 3
WEDNESDAY / 6:00PM

MOVIE NIGHT - IFLC
Bring your students for a fun movie night with snacks, friends, and laughs, a laid-back evening to kick off summer together as a community.

JUNE 17
WEDNESDAY / 6:00PM

VBS SETUP & PIZZA PARTY
Join us for a VBS setup night with pizza, teamwork, and fun, a great way to serve together and get everything ready for an incredible week ahead. Service hours avaliable!

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JULY 1
WEDNESDAY / 6:00PM

4TH OF JULY PARTY
Celebrate the Fourth of July with food, games, and fun, a fun-filled evening to hang out, enjoy summer, and make great memories together.

JULY 8
WEDNESDAY / ALL DAY

CEDAR POINT
Get ready for a day at Cedar Point with rides, friends, and thrills, an exciting adventure to enjoy together and make unforgettable summer memories.

JULY 13-17
ALL WEEK

FRIENDS CAMP
Join us for Friends Summer Camp with fun, growth, and adventure, an unforgettable week to build friendships and experience God in a powerful way together.

JULY 29
WEDNESDAY / TBD

PITTSBURG PIRATES
Join us for a Pittsburgh Pirates game with baseball, friends, and fun, a great summer outing to cheer, relax, and enjoy the game together.

AUG 5
WEDNESDAY / ALL DAY

ZOOMBEZI BAY
Get ready for a day at Zoombezi Bay with slides, the zoo, friends, and fun, a refreshing summer adventure to cool off and make unforgettable memories together.

AUG 12
WEDNESDAY / 6:00PM

BONFIRE & CAPTURE THE FLAG (TBD)
Join us for abonfirenight with capture the flag, friends, and fun, a laid-back evening to compete, laugh, and enjoy time together under the stars.

AUG 19
WEDNESDAY / 6:00PM

POOL PARTY

Join us for a pool party with friends, games, and fun, a refreshing summer hangout to relax, laugh, and enjoy time together in the sun.

AUG 26
WEDNESDAY / 6:00PM

BACK TO SCHOOL PARTY
Kick off the school year with a back to school party, friends, games, and fun, a great night to reconnect and start the year together strong.

friendsyouth

SEPT 2
WEDNESDAY / 6:00 PM

VISION KICK-OFF NIGHT

Join us for a Night with purpose, direction, and community, a meaningful start as we begin our year-long journey through the Gospel of John together.

SEPT 16
WEDNESDAY/6:00PM

JOHN 1:1

Step into a new year together with purpose, growth, and community, an exciting start as we begin this journey and see all God has in store.

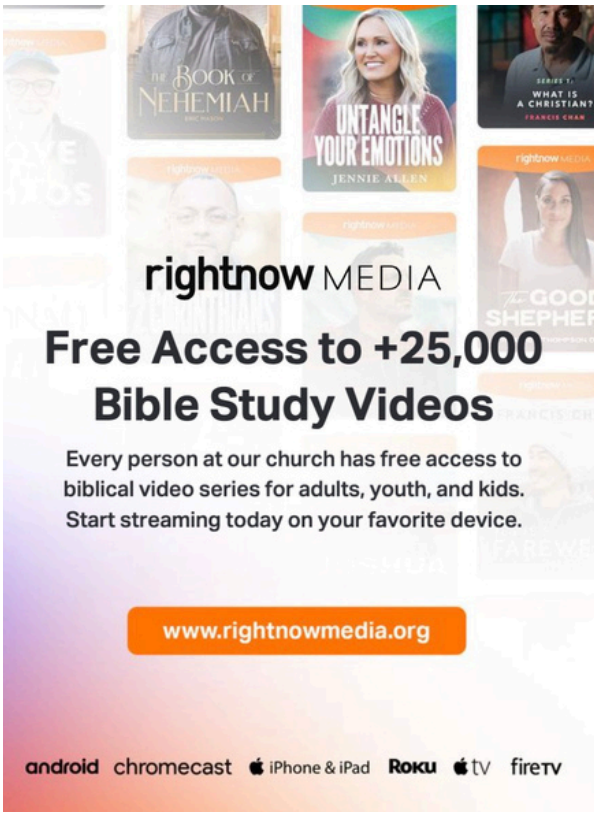
https://runsignup.com/Race/OH/StClairsville/LifeWiseBelmontCounty5K

LIFEWISE 5K BELMONT COUNTY

August 8, 2026
Belmont County Fairgrounds

Race starts at 8:30am

Don't forget you can listen to sermons on the go with Apple and Spotify



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until the whole valley knows.