



DECEMBER 2015

Bethany Spirit

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE BETHANY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

CHURCH STAFF

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Secretary

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Pianist

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Choir Director

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SESSION MEMBERS

Class of 2016

Joanne Hooper

Dennis Mills

Tracy Pirkle

Jessica Robinson

Carolyn Sullivan

2017

Stuart Clive

Hal King

Joe Lewis

Donald Smith

Sandi Thompson

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“Making a Stand for Christ”

Rev. Daniel J. Commerford

“There is no way to peace along the way of safety. For peace must be dared, it is itself the great venture, and can never be safe. Peace is the opposite of security... To look for guarantees is to want to protect oneself. Peace means giving oneself completely to God’s commandment, wanting no security, but in faith and obedience laying down the destiny of the nations in the hand of Almighty God, not trying to direct it for self-ish purposes. Battles are won, not with weapons, but with God. They are won when the way leads to the cross.” --Dietrich Bonhoeffer

The above quote is an excerpt from a sermon that German pastor and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer preached in 1934. At the time of his sermon, Germany had just enacted the Law for the Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Offspring, which allowed for the forced sterilization of those who were afflicted with what German doctors deemed to be “hereditary” illnesses (people were sterilized for suffering from Schizophrenia, depression, mental illness, deafness, and blindness, to name a few). Bonhoeffer watched with shock and sadness as Christian leaders and church attenders all across his country begin to support this law as well as the wider effort by Adolf Hitler to create a pure Aryan race.

Today, many of us look back at that time and may wonder how so many God-fearing, Christ-following, and bible-reading Christians could support something that seems so antithetical to Christianity. What could possibly make so many Christians lose sight of their faith?

The answer is simple: Fear. The people of Germany were afraid they were losing their livelihood and decided to place their hopes in the hands of a leader who was promising them safety and security. When given the choice between faithfulness and security, many devout Christians chose security.

When choosing between faithfulness and security, Jesus makes his expectations of us clear in Matthew 16:21-26:

Matthew 16:21 From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. 22 And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.” 23 But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a

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Session Summary

Clerk of Session Chris Mize

The regular monthly meeting of the Bethany Session was held on Tuesday, November 17. The meeting was opened with prayer by Reverend Commerford at 6:40pm in the church office and a quorum was declared present.

Donald Smith, using scripture verses from Genesis 22, provided his insight and encouragement for the Session members to stay strong in their faith as Abraham had done and demonstrate that faith to others in our congregation.

The financial reports were reviewed. There was a discussion about wrapping up projects and getting the books ready for year end.

The prayer list was reviewed and Donald Smith led us in prayer for those on the list as well as others mentioned.

Reverend Commerford led the Session in making a list of strengths and challenges at Bethany using the three best things happening at Bethany now and the three biggest issues facing Bethany now, giving each a rank of 1, 2, or 3. Of all the items listed, these were the top perceived strengths and challenges:

Strengths

Family Feel of/from members

Traditions

Outreach ministries

Challenges

Participation/Attendance

Membership

Financial giving

It was agreed to use this listing as a way to focus our energies during the next year.

The Docket and minutes, pending any corrections that need to be made, were approved. The following correspondence was shared by the Clerk:

Post card from our Polish missionaries in Campus Crusade

Letters from Thornwell thanking us for our support and encouraging us to continue.

Update letter from Stated Clerk of Presbytery, Donna Wells, giving information about Presbytery encouraging the Governor of Georgia to ask for a Medicaid Waiver to assist uninsured Georgians to have health care.

General request from a candidate running for Senate to speak with members of the congregation after a worship service; because of the political nature of the request, the Session decided to not respond to this request.

Rev. Commerford reported the recent Presbytery Meeting on Tuesday November 10, at Northminster Presbyterian Church, concentrated on how churches are focusing on young families.

A request from the Girl Scouts to allow another troop to meet at Bethany on Thursday nights was referred to Sandi Thompson to obtain more information.

Ministry Teams Highlights

After much discussion, the proposed budget for next year was approved at \$148,545. With annual giving currently around \$136,000, the Session agreed to think about ways to make our budget more in line with giving.

The following worship & service opportunities are happening through the end of the year:

- A Joint-Thanksgiving Service at Conyers Presbyterian Church on November 22, at 5pm with dinner following.
- A Thanksgiving Eve Service on November 25, at Bethany at 7pm.
- The Joy Gift Program on December 6, at Bethany with dinner at 6pm (by reservation) and program at 7pm
- Greening of the church will occur on November 28, at 9am.
- The Christmas Eve Candlelight and Communion Service will occur at 7pm.
- The "cleaning of the church" following Christmas is scheduled for December 26, at 9am.

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Session Summary *(Continued from page 2)*

The Session approved the Baptism of Hannah Commerford on December 27. Reverend Joe Sandifer will perform this sacrament to allow Rev. Commerford to participate as Hannah's father.

It was approved for the Douberley-Thompson Wedding to occur on February 13, 2016.

The Building and Grounds ministry team has repaired the leak in the nursery. Estimates are being gathered for new flooring in the nursery.

Proceeds from this year's 4th of July barbecue were used to purchase shelving and plastic tubs for the storage room. The remaining amount is now less than \$50 and will be put into general operating fund.

There were no responses from the recent letters sent to our inactive members. The Session approved the removal of 14 names from the roll bringing our active membership to 128.

The local Church Operating Procedures are in need of updating. The Session will review a section at a time to get them current.

Kid's Club is planning a Christmas Party in December. They will also be helping prepare the Blessing Bags with the Mission & Outreach Team as well as helping with the Sack Lunch program.

Collection tubs for the Christmas gifts for Homeless Shelter and DFACS are now available in the fellowship hall. These items will be prepared for delivery on December 13.

The next regular meeting of the Session is planned for December 15, 2015 at 6:30pm. Dennis Mills will have the devotional that evening.

Worship Ministry Team

Elder Hal King

We hope you plan to attend our annual Joy Gift Christmas Program on Sunday, December 6, at 7:00pm. This year will feature a short drama called "*Bethlehem Speaks*" by Rochelle Pennington. (Produced by special arrangement with Christian Publishers.) This will present the traditional Christmas story through the use of dialogues, scripture readings, congregational singing, and special music presented by the choir and Kid's Club. The Joy Gift offering will be taken during the program. This offering provides financial assistance to current and former PCUSA church workers and their families and also enables deserving students to attend Presbyterian-related racial ethnic colleges and schools. We will also be thanking our church staff for their service throughout the past year. It's a night you won't want to miss, so please bring your friends and family too.

I want to thank Nancy Boyce, Ansley Douglas, Hannah Douglas, and Annie King for helping me build this year's backdrop for the drama. I also would like to thank the following members of the OKB for agreeing to be performers: Rachel, Dan, & Hannah Commerford, Tina & Brandon Douglas, Suzanne Hooper, Kelly & Joe Lewis, Joanna Reesman, Jessica Robinson, Jessica & Chandler Salmon, and Chaz Woods. Special thanks to Kid's Club children and for the Bethany Choir lending their voices as well. Thanks to Kelly Lewis, Jessica Salmon, & Joanna Reesman for leading these singers.



“Making a Stand for Christ” *(Continued from page 1)*

stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”
 24 *Then Jesus told his disciples, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 25 For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. 26 For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?”*

This passage serves as an important reminder to all of us that 1) Jesus knew his path would be anything but secure, and 2) We should not expect anymore security than he had.

It’s easy to follow Christ when we feel safe. It’s easy to follow Christ when there is no personal risk involved. It’s harder to follow Christ when we feel that we need to decide between our obedience and our safety. But, it’s in those moments when we can make a stand for Christ. We make a stand for Christ when we choose Christ while everyone around us chooses security. We make a stand for Christ when we do not let our fears get in the way of our faith. Standing up for Christ happens when we relentlessly love God and love others as ourselves, even if that means going above and beyond the standards our society has set for us.

Later in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus shows what making a stand for him will look like. He says, *“Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.”* (Matthew 25:35-36)

Dietrich Bonhoeffer took this passage to heart and spent the rest of his life defending those who were vulnerable. When given the choice, Bonhoeffer chose to abandon his own security and follow Christ all the way to his own execution at the hands of the Nazis in 1945. May we all be willing to do the same as we make our own stand for Christ, lest we allow our fears to rob us of the compassion Christ calls us to have and to show to our weary world.

Paste Dan

Christian Education Ministry Team

Elder Dennis Mills

With our current Sunday School quarter coming to an end this Sunday and a new quarter beginning on December 6, we are excited about the new lesson material we will be diving into. The Lord always welcomes us to learn more about His word, and Sunday School is the perfect place to do that. Our Adult class will be starting a video series by James McDonald entitled, *When Life Is Hard*, which will cover the trials and tribulations that life throws at us, and effective ways to manage the chaos. Our Young Adult class will be continuing the Explore the Bible series which will concentrate on the book of Matthew throughout the new quarter. Our Youth and Kid’s Sunday School groups will also continue their exciting lessons and activities. As always, please come out and join us for fellowship and fun on Sunday mornings at 9:30am - you’ll be glad you did!

STRETCHING OUR SOULS

Submitted by Elder Carolyn Sullivan

When Rev. Meyers was here a few Sundays back, he included a story something like what is written below in one of his sermons and it really hit home with me and I love the concept behind it.

When I was just a kid, one spring day, my dad called me to go with him to the blacksmith shop. He had left a rake and a hoe to be repaired and there they were ready and fixed like new. My dad handed over a silver dollar for the repairing, but the blacksmith refused to take it. No, he said. There's no charge for that little job. But dad insisted that he take the pay. If I live a thousand years I'll never forget that great blacksmith's reply. He said to my dad, can't you let a man do something now and then — just to stretch his soul?

It is the old law.... The giver becomes the receiver. Bread cast upon the waters comes back. One who stretches his soul into deeds of love and kindness unfailingly reaps a just reward. How often have you heard, "It's better to give than to receive?"

When we give something to "stretch our soul," that means we are giving from our heart and soul. Research conclusively proves that those people who do things for others with no personal gain in mind are the ones who reap the greatest benefits.

The Christmas season seems to bring out the "giver" in all of us. During this time, please consider all the things we have in the works here at Bethany to help others and how in each case, we expect nothing in return. We will soon be taking up the Joy Gift offering to benefit retired ministers and their families who are no longer able to make it on their income. We are also working on supporting the needs of our local community in helping DFACS children and the homeless shelter population with bags and personal care items. We will step up the food pantry collection effort by asking for additional food donations in conjunction with decorating the assembly room tree. In December, we will again prepare sack lunches for distribution in Porterdale, just as we do every month.

For anyone needing or wanting to "stretch their soul," this is the place to be and we know we can count on you.

Youth Group/Kids Club

For the month of October, the church participated in "Socktober." As a whole, we collected 191 PAIRS OF SOCKS!!!! The Kid's Club delivered the socks to the Newton County homeless shelter on November 7.

Upcoming events

The youth group/ kids club will be helping with the sack lunch program on Saturday November 28. The kids also have a special part in the annual Joy Gift program on December 6. We also plan on having a dinner (meeting at 5pm at the church) followed by going to see Christmas lights at the Atlanta Motor Speedway on December 12 to celebrate the most festive time of year!



Assembly Room Christmas Tree

Please help decorate the assembly room tree while helping the food pantry by taking one (or more) paper stars from the baskets provided (narthex and assembly room) and pick up the item suggested while doing your grocery shopping. Bring the items to church and place them under the tree and hang the star on the tree. We will be able to help stock the shelves at the food pantry and make our little tree beautiful.

December 2015

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2 Bible Study 6:00pm Choir Practice 7:00pm	3	4 Bobbie Mote	5
6 2nd Sunday in Advent COMMUNION Sunday School—9:30am Morning Worship—11:00am Christmas Dinner — 6:00pm Joy Gift Program — 7:00pm	7	8 Boy Scouts — 7:00pm Daniel Mote	9 Fun Seekers Christmas Lunch at Papa's Bible Study 6:00pm Choir Practice 7:00pm Cathy Cowan	10	11 Kathi Turner	12 Kid's Club to see Christmas Lights 5:00pm
13 3rd Sunday in Advent Sunday School — 9:30am Morning Worship — 11:00am	14 Girls Scouts 6:30-8:00pm	15 Boy Scouts — 7:00pm Austin Frederick Joe Starr	16 Choir Practice 7:00pm	17	18 McKenna Smith	19 Robinson Family Fellowship Hall
20 4th Sunday in Advent Sunday School — 9:30am Morning Worship — 11:00am	21 Andrew Mote	22	23 NO Fun Seekers Tommy Pirkle	24 Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion Service 5:30pm Ken Frederick	25 Christmas Day Church Office Closed	26 Cleaning of the Church 9:00am Sack Lunch Prep/Delivery 10:00am King Family Fellowship Hall 1:00pm—4:00pm Linda Stevens
27 Men's Breakfast—7:30am Sunday School—9:30am Café Connection—10:30am Morning Worship—11:00am Newsletter Deadline	28	29 Buddy Cook Robin Hall Wayne Mize Joan Wagner Avery White	30	31 New Year's Eve		

Monthly Volunteers

	December 6	December 13	December 20	December 27
Children's Worship	Adrienne Mote	Barbara Smith	Suzanne Hooper	Bryanna Henderson
Acolytes	Brylie Lewis Jordan McCullough	Brylie Lewis Jordan McCullough	Brylie Lewis Jordan McCullough	Brylie Lewis Jordan McCullough
Liturgists	Tommy Pirkle	Jessica Robinson	Stuart Clive	Suzanne Hooper
Greeters	Kelly Lewis Joe Lewis Barbara Smith Donald Smith			
Ushers	Chris Mize Wayne Mize Joanne Hooper Lawson Hooper			
Open Bldg.	Annie King	Bill Mote	Buddy & Rae Cook	Men's Breakfast
Close Bldg.	Lisa Parris	Jessica Robinson	Tracy Pirkle	Wayne & Chris Mize

Prayer Concerns

Lee Allen
 Joyce & Sam Ball (Friend of Nancy Boyce)
 Shane Beam (Friend of the Mizes)
 Donna Borngraber (Friend of Betty O'Donnell)
 The Breen Family (Dan Commerford's sister)
 Melissa Buffkin & Family (Sherill Foster's daughter)
 Mark Burton
 Cheryl Burke - Forman University (Pakistan)
 C. C. for Christ - Marcin K. & Maciek M.
 Stuart Clive
 James Cobb (Friend of Betty O'Donnell)
 Betty Davenport
 Gil Davis (Annie King's neighbor)
 Mazie Davis (Friend of Nancy Boyce)
 Tammy Davis (Friend of Nancy Boyce)
 Perry DeLong (Friend of Carolyn Sullivan)
 Danny Douberley
 George & Matt Dye (Friends of Bethany)
 Gene Frederick & Family (Ken Frederick's brother)
 Kay Hamel (Frederick boys' grandmother)
 Justine Harrison (Friend of Connie Hunt)

The Will Hooper Family (The Hooper's son)
 Dean Hunt (Billy Hunt's brother)
 Phil Kelly (Friend of Sherill Foster)
 Bob King
 Ruth King
 Paul Lewis
 Ruth MacEntee (Friend of Nancy Boyce)
 Traci Mask (Friend of Jessica Salmon)
 David Morris
 Doris Mote
 Joey Parker (Friend of Sandi Thompson)
 Charles & Charlene Rape
 Will Reymundo (Chandler Salmon's nephew)
 Ethel Semrau (Friend of Betty O'Donnell)
 Denise Smith (Robin Hall's cousin)
 Debbie Stotz & Family (Friend of Sandi Thompson)
 Our College Students
 Our Military Men and Women



Notes of Thanks

Thank you for all your prayers and phone calls while I was in Asheville, NC over the past few years. It's great to be back with you.

Nancy

Dear Bethany Family,

Thank you for your continued thoughts and prayers. I know with these, I can develop into the mom MJ needs me to be.

With all the guidance I have received from my church family since I was five, I know I can guide my son, MJ, to be a son of God.

I look forward to seeing you soon and am extremely excited for MJ to meet you!

I know he will love you all just as much as I do.

Love, Sarah Swope

Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion Service

This beautiful and meaningful service begins at 5:30pm. The churchyard will be decorated with luminaries (weather permitting) in memory of Ed Lawson, Carolyn Starr and Patti Starr who passed away this year. We hope you will plan to celebrate Christmas with us, and be sure to invite your friends and family to join you!



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