



John's Journal

Well, another Advent and Christmas season has come and gone. And what a great and joyous season it was! Our celebration during Advent included the highlight

of our Service of Lessons and Carols on the 23rd. Many thanks to our talented and dedicated choir for leading us through this meaningful service.

Christmas Eve saw a record number of worshippers for our Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion Service! Nearly 70 folks ventured out for this most meaningful service on this holiest of nights. It was a moving scene as the lights were lowered and the candles lit as I read the John 1 passage, followed by the singing of "Silent Night." And then we went out into the world with the strains of "Joy to the World" sounding in our heads!

It's always a busy season for us in the church world, but always a season that fills our hearts with joy. My drive home after the Christmas Eve service is always meaningful. I'm tired after all the busyness of the season, but I'm always joyous because I know that the Lord will be born! I know that time with family lies ahead with a couple of days off, and that is always a happy thought!

2018 has been a good year for Bethany! We have received several new members over the year, and we haven't had any funerals! That is worth rejoicing in and of itself!

We began the year with a significant deficit in our budget. We don't have the end-of-the-year figures in yet, but as of the end of November, you have almost entirely wiped out that deficit. December is historically a good month for giving, and so we are hopeful that our end-of-the-year report will show that we ended the year with a balanced budget.

2019 should bring to a close the process of the sale of the property across Main Street (Highway 87) from the church. We have had a congregational meeting to tentatively approve of the sale, and work is continuing to that end. The property includes the

former rental house and the vacant lot beside it. And also the other house that is owned by Glenn Patterson. The entire tract is over eight acres.

The contract has been written and accepted, and all that remains now is some zoning issues, and crossing all the t's and dotting all the i's. Hopefully by late spring, everything will be done and the sale will be complete.

My hope is that the Session will see the need for using any available funds from that sale to see to some glaring physical needs of the church. The flooring in the nursery should be a top priority as it is in dire need of being replaced. We also need to look at the flooring in the downstairs hallway. But the Session will make those decisions - being fiscally responsible and good stewards of our finances.

And who knows what 2019 will bring to us. I am hoping that we will continue our recent blessing with new members. I am excited about a new Lenten study that we will begin in March - which will also include a corresponding Lenten Sermon Series.

As to my continuing work with Salem Presbytery, after a year off, I will rejoin the Commission on Ministry (COM) in January, serving as co-moderator. I enjoy my service to the presbytery and appreciate this opportunity to serve.

As is my custom, I will be attending the APCE (Association of Presbyterian Church Educators) conference in Galveston, TX in early February. That is always a soul-filling experience for me as I reconnect with dear friends, and glean some new ideas for my continued ministry. This year's trip will include a side trip following the conference to see our daughter and son-in-law in Minneapolis. That should be interesting to travel there in mid-winter!

So, there is much to be grateful for as we end one year and begin another. Let us covenant to be in prayer for one another, for our church, for the mission and ministry of this family of faith heading into a new year.

As always, I am privileged to be your pastor. You bring me much joy!

sabbatical

rest | refresh | refocus

Last month I shared some information about my upcoming three-month sabbatical in 2020. The Sabbatical Support Group that the session has endorsed for this project has met twice, and we have made some progress in getting started on the application for the Lily Foundation Sabbatical Grant.

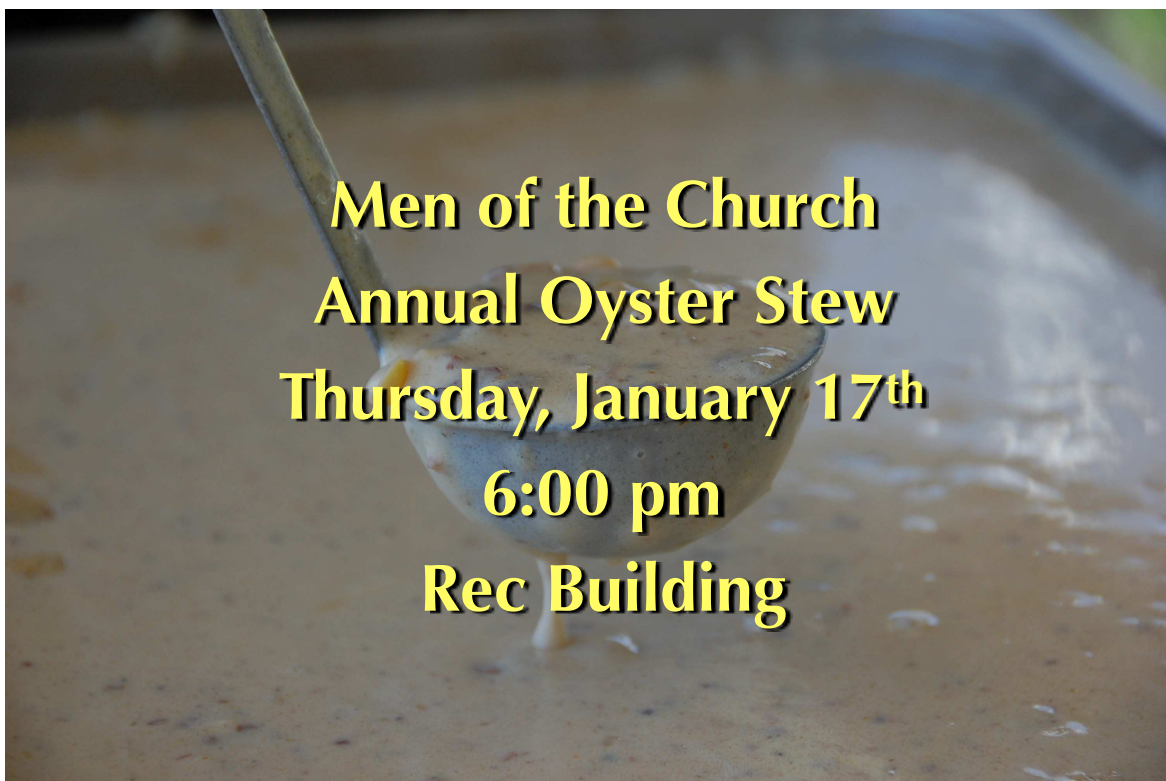
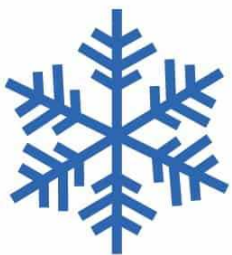
The primary accomplishments have been setting the dates for the sabbatical - May, June, and July of 2020, and setting a tentative itinerary for my time away. We have also secured pastoral leadership for these three months.

Our main focus now is to adequately answer the questions on the grant application, which include questions about how my study and focus of the sabbatical will enhance my ministry here, and will enhance the ministry of the church. We're still working on this!

Once the application has been completed, it will need to be approved by the Session, and also endorsed by the Commission on Ministry of Salem Presbytery. I am hoping to get all of this done by the first of February. The deadline for applications is in April.

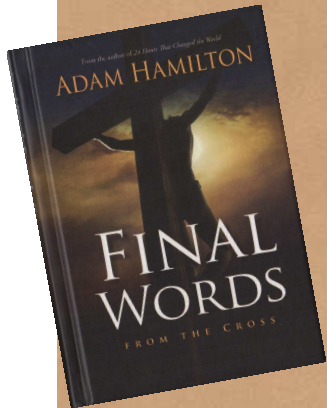
I and the support group continue to covet your prayers as we prepare for this unique opportunity to enhance my continued ministry here at Bethany!

Stay tuned. JWJ





FINAL WORDS FROM THE CROSS



- Session 1: "Father, Forgive Them"
- Session 2: "Today You Will Be With Me in Paradise"
- Session 3: "Behold Your Son . . . Behold Your Mother"
- Session 4: "My God, My God, Why Have You Forsaken Me?"
- Session 5: "I Thirst"
- Session 6: "It is Finished . . . Into Your Hands I Commit My Spirit"

Join us on the six Wednesdays during Lent as we explore these final words from Jesus from the cross. The sessions will be at noon each Wednesday and you are invited to bring your lunch!

Mark your calendars for this Lenten Lunch & Learn Series



Our New Church Photo Directory

DIRECTORY UPDATE:

We're getting close!! All the pictures have been taken and edited and are ready to upload to our online database. This will happen throughout the next few weeks. The hope is that the directory will be printed and put in your mailboxes by the first of January.

Thanks again for your participation in this effort. We think the new directory will be very helpful, especially as we have had several new members over the past year. And thanks again to Salina Russell for her work in getting the photos taken and edited.



JANUARY WORSHIP THEMES

January 6th:

Matthew 2:1-12

Adoration of the Magi

January 13th:

Isaiah 43:1-7

God Didn't Say That

January 20th:

Psalms 36:4-10

Steadfast Love

January 27th:

Luke 4:14-21

Disaster Maps



Missed a Sunday? Check out our sermons online!
There are three ways to listen to audio of our Sunday sermons:

- On our website: www.bethanypreschurch.org
- On our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/bethanypresbyterian
- Or by going to: www.buzzsprout.com/9198

Disciple Fast Track

—Into the Word, Into the World

The Tuesday evening Bible study group completed the first half of their study on December 18th, wrapping up the 12-week study of Genesis and Exodus.

Taking a break during the holidays, the study will resume on **Tuesday, January 15th**, beginning another 12-week course, this time studying **Luke and Acts**. The group meets each Tuesday evening with the exception of the second Tuesday of the month which is when the Session meets.

Anyone wishing to join this study for the new year is welcome to do so. Just let John know so that a study manual can be ordered. The cost of the manual is \$16.00.





The holiday season is finally coming to a close.

Christmas used to last just twelve days (according to the old church calendars). With stores trotting out the decorations before Halloween, Christmas lasts up to fifty-five days now. And after two and a half solid months of Christmas, if you're anything like me, you need to detox and cleanse all the Christmas from your system.

And yet, the days after Christmas are a tough time for me.

After all the excitement of Christmas, it's suddenly over. The trees are still up, but they've lost their magic. They're waiting to be stripped of their lights

and stuffed back in a box or placed lovingly on the curb for pickup. Gifts are being returned with receipts for something a bit more desirable. And in a few days, everyone will feel the need to punish themselves with New Year's resolutions. And the long, cold winter months will set in with not much to look forward to.

It can't really be avoided. With a holiday as huge as Christmas, it's easy for depression and bleakness to set in when it's all said and done. After two months of trying to earnestly seeking the true "reason for the season," it's easy to feel spiritually directionless.

So, if you're feeling the dead weight of January falling on you, try these New Year's resolutions that will actually make you feel better during the after-Christmas season.

Be Present

Maybe you tried to find the real meaning of Christmas this year. Maybe you just mentally zoned out, went through the motions, showed up at the parties, obliged the relatives, and just woke up to realize it's all over. I've done that before.

Even if you tried to really stay awake during the Christmas season, it's easy to zone out during January. If Christmas is a hard time to focus on spirituality, it may be even more difficult in a season when nothing is happening.

Make a resolution to be mentally and spiritually present this winter. Don't zone out. Don't let your spiritual life get out of shape just because the holidays are over. Dig deep into God's word. Push your prayer life to a new level.

Give

Most people treat Christmas as a time to give extravagantly. People give to family, friends, and most people find some way to give charitably. We drop some change in a kettle or make an effort to take a donation to a pantry. If you think January is tough for you, think about those shelters and food pantries. Everyone thinks about them during the season of generosity, but once January hits, it's a few solid months of cold, people are most in need, and everyone is paying off their credit cards. No one is thinking about charity. Make a resolution to give or serve when it's not on anyone else's mind this winter.

Pick Your Battles

Maybe you're an enlisted soldier in the war for Christmas. Maybe you're like me and you're a registered Christmas pacifist. Just because Christmas is over, it doesn't mean that fights are not being picked and battles being waged. There are endless ways that Christians can be tempted to wage war with the world or with each other. If Christmas is an easy time for Christians to "miss the point," January is an even bigger opportunity for wasted effort and needless division.

Make a resolution to pick your battles wisely this January. Start with your own life. What occupies your time, your energy or finances? Are you spending your resources on important things? Or are you distracted by things that God probably doesn't really care about? What drives your spirituality, in other words, what self-improvement do you hope your faith will bring you? Are you hoping that your faith will bring you more success? Better relationships? Better health? Are your spiritual goals even in the words of Jesus? Most people have goals that we try to loosely tie spirituality into, that Jesus never concerned himself with.

Finally, examine the battles that are important to you? Are you a peacemaker, or a troublemaker? What divides you from other Christians, or your non-Christian neighbors? What criticisms are you harboring toward your brothers and sisters? Are they even worth it? Are you criticizing others just to indulge the gratification of being critical? Or are you bringing others to the joy that truth brings? The irony of Christmas is that the season of love and generosity has become a battleground over every holiday custom. But January has no fewer opportunities for division.

This year, make a resolution to pick your battles wisely. Most of them are just distractions from what God cares about. So start beating your swords into plowshares.

The author of the above is Matt Appling, pastor and school teacher in Kansas City. He blogs at TheChurchOfNoPeople.com.

January 2019

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:00 AM 5th Sunday Break-fast 9:45 AM Sunday School 11:00 AM Worship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Church Office Closed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Church Office Closed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:45 AM Sunday School 11:00 AM Worship / Ordination & Installation of Officers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10:00 AM Circle #1 7:00 PM Circle #4 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7:00 PM Session Meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1:00 PM Dream Team Listening Session 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:45 AM Sunday School 11:00 AM Worship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12:30 PM Alamarance County Clergy 7:00 PM Circle #3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7:00 PM Disciple Bible Study: Into the Word, Into the World 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6:00 PM Men of the Church Oyster Stew 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:45 AM Sunday School 11:00 AM Worship 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7:00 PM Disciple Bible Study: Into the Word, Into the World 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12:00 PM COM 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:45 AM Sunday School 11:00 AM Worship 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7:00 PM Disciple Bible Study: Into the Word, Into the World 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal 			

Your Church Staff:

Pastor: Rev. John W. Johnson
Director of Music: Christopher Bagley
Office Administrator: Joy Saleeby
Bookkeeper: Pam Hurt

Elders:

Chip Allen
A. J. Campbell
Randy Cousins
Karen Maxwell
Ron Osborne (Treasurer)
Jean Payne
Nancy Purcell
Ben Russell
Tracey Troxler
Rick Purcell (Clerk of Session)



The process of identifying, electing, and training new officers comes to its culmination in the **Service of Ordination and Installation**, this year being held on **Sunday, January 6, 2019**, during the morning worship hour. This year's service will only include installations, as all three newly elected elders have been previously ordained. Please offer a word of thanks and offer prayers for our entire Session, but especially these new elders: **Randy Cousins, Ben Russell, and Tracey Troxler.**



The Session met for its regular monthly stated meeting on December 13th. Here are some highlights:

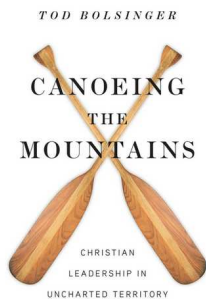
- Heard a Christmas devotion/story from the moderator.
- Proceeded with the examination of elders-elect and heard Statements of Faith from each / enthusiastically sustained the approval of new elders, Randy Cousins, Ben Russell, and Tracey Troxler.
- Shared in joys and concerns of the congregation
- Approved minutes from November stated meeting
- Heard an update from Glenn regarding selling of the property / saw a plan for the property / received more information as to possible timeline for sale to be completed.
- Approved Rick Purcell and Glenn Patterson as leaders for new Cub Scout Pack
- Heard a treasurer's report from Treasurer Ron Osborne
- Were reminded about Christmas Eve communion
- Elected Rick Purcell as Clerk of Session, and Ron Osborne and Church Treasurer.
- The moderator thanked elders rotating off the Session for their commitment and dedication and good spirit. Thanks to Sandy Cook, Glenn Patterson, and Brandon Troxler.

**NEXT MEETING: TUESDAY, JANUARY 8TH
ELDERS OF THE MONTH FOR JANUARY
CHIP ALLEN AND RON OSBORNE**



Christian Education Opportunities

The Fellowship Class - Bible study class using our denomination's *Present Word* curriculum.
Disciple Bible Study - Into the Word, Into the World - meets on Tuesday evenings throughout the school year. New members always welcome.



If you're going to scale the mountains of ministry, you need to leave behind canoes and find new navigational tools.

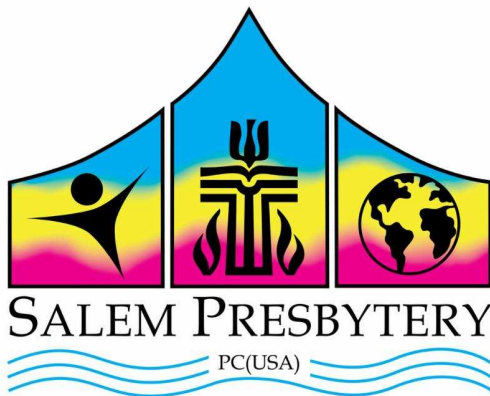


Beginning in January, the Session will embark on a unique book study over the next several months. As a part of an ongoing process of enhancing the leadership skills of the Session, periodically your leaders will pursue a book study on differing topics of leadership. This book has been used as a resource recently in Salem Presbytery as a part of the process of looking at a new vision and new structure for the presbytery. Although we aren't looking at a new structure, we are always looking to learn new skills as we move forward into the future.

Amazon's description of the book said this:

"Explorers Lewis and Clark had to adapt. While they had prepared to find a waterway to the Pacific Ocean, instead they found themselves in the Rocky Mountains. You too may feel that you are leading in a cultural context you were not expecting. You may even feel that your training holds you back more often than it carries you along. Drawing from his extensive experience as a pastor and consultant, Tod Bolsinger brings decades of expertise in guiding churches and organizations through uncharted territory. He offers a combination of illuminating insights and practical tools to help you reimagine what effective leadership looks like in our rapidly changing world. If you're going to scale the mountains of ministry, you need to leave behind canoes and find new navigational tools. Now expanded with a study guide, this book will set you on the right course to lead with confidence and courage."

Please continue to hold your Session and your Pastor in your prayers as they enter into what will hopefully be fruitful conversation evolving from their reading.



Salem Presbytery News

Change is inevitable. No matter how hard we try to keep things the same, change happens - many times due to circumstances beyond our control. Over the past several years, change has been apparent in the workings and ministry of our Salem Presbytery. As some churches pulled out of the denomination, and others faced increasing financial challenges, the presbytery was faced with declining income while continuing to maintain its ministry and mission across the presbytery and beyond.

The past two years or so have seen an increased reliance on endowment funds and reserves to balance the budget. The reality was obvious that this was not sustainable. In March of 2017 the Executive

Council of Salem Presbytery appointed the "Dream Team," with the following mandate: *"to envision and discern where the Spirit is leading Salem Presbytery's ministries, along with the appropriate structure to accomplish this and the staffing to make it possible."*

The Dream Team (see their complete report on the presbytery website, www.salempresbytery.org) has been hard at work ever since, and has presented its report to the meeting of presbytery in November of 2018. Discussions continue within the presbytery and at "Listening Sessions" over the past several months. The proposal will be presented at the February meeting of presbytery for a vote.

There are several aspects of the report and recommendations that will be difficult to implement. The report recommends staffing changes and a restructuring of the staffing model. There is a recommendation to close the presbytery's physical office space and explore other options for an office and committee meeting space.

The details are yet to be worked out, and there are still many questions to be answered. All of the presbytery - which is all of us - need to be in prayer for our presbytery, for its future mission and ministry, and for our dedicated staff. Anyone interested in attending a "Listening Session," there is one scheduled for Thursday, January 10th at 1:00 pm at First Presbyterian in Burlington.

Christmas Caroling - December 23, 2018





REPORT THROUGH END OF NOVEMBER	
Year-to-date Actual Income	\$145,649.44
Year-to-date Actual Expenses	\$149,567.79
YEAR-TO-DATE SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	-\$3,918.35



It's not too late! Anyone who has not yet had the opportunity to complete and return a **Pledge Card** to the church, please know that it's not too late! If you do not have a card, one may be obtained in the church office, or call Pam Hurt, our Financial Secretary (she is at the church on Tuesday afternoons) and she can help you with your pledge. It takes all of us working together to carry out the ministry and mission of Bethany Presbyterian. All gifts are welcome and appreciated!

- Ways to Support Bethany Presbyterian Church**
1. Place cash or check in the offering place on Sunday.
 2. Mail in check to church office.
 3. Use your bank's online bill pay to send donation to the church.
 4. Set up an Electronic Funds Transfer from your savings or check account on our website or scan the QR code below.
 5. Use your debit/credit card on our website or scan the QR code below.
 6. Make a gift of stock or other appreciated securities. Contact the church office for more information.
 7. Remember the church in your will and your estate plans.



New Online Giving Platform Coming Soon

Many of you have taken advantage of our easy and secure online giving option to submit your pledge. The platform that we currently use for this giving option has recently begun assessing an additional fee each month, which the church is responsible for.

Fortunately, we have found another platform that is completely free - other than the usual credit card fees - and is through the Presbyterian Foundation. We will be moving to this platform soon.

Those who currently use our online giving option will be notified when this change will take place, and will be given instructions on how to sign up for the new plan. Thanks for your patience and understanding.

January Birthdays and Anniversaries!

Happy Anniversary to:

Becky & David Eatmon January 6
Nancy & Rick Purcell January 23
Joyce & Bobby Peele January 24

Happy Birthday to:

Joy Saleeby January 6
Sarah Osborne January 6
Foy Bayliff January 7
Bill Abplanalp January 10
Mike Sutton January 17
Mary Moore January 21
A. J. Campbell January 23
Norman Mize January 24



Children & Youth Ministries

- **Sunday school for Youth and Children** / Meets on second floor of Education Building at 9:45 each Sunday
- During **Worship**, children are invited to sit in designated pews (front rows on north side) / there are activities provided
- Our **Nursery** is staffed by a professional, paid worker, as well as volunteers each Sunday.
- Watch your calendar and inbox for special activities for our young people throughout the year.



Presbyterian Women Circles January Schedule!

- Circle #1:** Monday, January 7th at 10:00 am
Circle #3: Monday, January 14th at 7:00 pm
Circle #4: Monday, January 7th at 7:00 pm

Bethany Prays

Bill Faucette
Faye Campbell
Shirley Lane
Ida Whitney
Diane Miller
Jack Cook
Joan Richardson
Teresa Wilborn
Tiffany Tauchren
John & Ann Sutton
Peter Slater
Joey Leake
Shannon Russell

Mary Moore
Rachel Poteat
Jeremy Harden
Mike Sutton
Stewart Dillard
Shelvia Russell
Ruby Martin
Katherine Turner
Dianna Yates
Daniel Mitchell-Ayers
Jean Berry
Christy Lutterloh
Eleanor Thompson

Nancy Sutton
Norma Proctor
Levi Byrd
Randy Thompson
Barbara Cousins
Pat Kennedy
Donna Mitchell-Ayers
Pete Campbell
Ben Johnson
Ruth Younts
Alex Thomas
Bill Abplanalp
Robert Sykes

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