



John's Journal

Advent. Again. How can we tell the story in a new and engaging way? We've heard the story so many times. How can we make it fresh, new, as if we're hearing it for the first time?

These are the challenges for us in the clergy business as Advent and Christmas roll around again. I love the familiar rhythms of the church year, but struggle as many of my colleagues do, with how to re-tell these familiar stories in ways that will engage the listeners - you - in new and creative ways.

I hope I have answered that challenge this year with our "Angels Among Us" series. You can read some details about it on page 2 of this newsletter. As I was searching for something new for Advent, I came across this series on the Worship Design Studio website. I was immediately impressed not only with the sound theological underpinnings of the series, but with its creativity, its genuineness, and its groundings in the gospel message.

I also appreciate its embracing of technology and social media in sharing the message. Each Sunday as you watch the announcements roll by on the screen, there's always one that reminds you to silence your phones. Even though we still want you to do that, during this series (and probably after it as well) everyone will be encouraged to keep their phones out, to take pictures of what's happening in worship, to share them on social media, to post about your experiences in worship - all the while using the hashtag #DoNotBeAfraid. And then each Sunday will be a specific hashtag of #morehope, #morepeace, #morejoy, #morelove, #morelife. These correspond to the four Sundays of Advent, including Christmas Eve, and the Sunday after Christmas.

For those who are not on social media, you may not know what a hashtag is and what it signifies. Hashtags are a way to connect with others who have similar interests. For instance, using the hashtag #morehope on Twitter, you could search for that hashtag, and find all the other instances where that hashtag is being used, and what others are doing and thinking.

And hopefully, there will be a lot to share as we make our way through the season. Our worship services will look a bit different - but will still include our traditional elements

as well. Each service will begin with a "Threshold Moment" which will include an introductory procession and music, the lighting of the Advent Candle(s), and Call to Worship.

The scripture passage for each Sunday will be presented in a dramatic and creative way - telling the story visually instead of just reading it.


One thing that we associate with angels is angel wings. And angel wings are made up of feathers. So, feathers will be a very prevalent part of our observance of Advent this year. As part of our communion celebration on the first Sunday (December 3rd) each worshipper will be presented with a feather key ring - just a small token to remind us that angels are among us, and to not be afraid. Each appearance of the angels in the Christmas story includes the admonition to not be afraid. We need to embrace that idea and live our lives according to that sentiment. #DoNotBeAfraid

One complaint that we always hear during Advent is that we only sing Advent carols, and don't sing Christmas carols until Christmas is over. The argument usually is that we shouldn't sing about Christ's birth until it actually happens! Well, this year, we're going to change that a bit! Here's what Marcia McFee, who designed the series, has to say about the carols:

"Each week we start our worship with an Advent hymn/song and we close with a Christmas carol. Traditionally the church waits until Christmas to sing Christmas carols but in our day, these songs ring through the air on the radio, in stores - just about anywhere holiday tunes are happening. So we will take our encounters with these as "messengers," foretelling the good news of the presence of God coming once again in Jesus Christ."

So, this Advent let's be a little different - let's stretch ourselves a little bit to try to be blessed as much as possible by this old, familiar story. And then maybe, just maybe, we can learn to be angels to others as well.

Advent and Christmas blessings to you all.



Angels
Among Us

Advent and Christmas 2017
Bethany Presbyterian Church
www.bethanypreschurch.org #DoNotBeAfraid

Advent is always seen as a time of preparation - preparation for the joyous good news of the birth of our Lord. This year we will be embarking on a somewhat different approach to Advent, with this unique series, "Angels Among Us." Here's a little introduction to the series:

The angels that appear in the story of Jesus' birth would have been very comfortable in our world of tweets and hashtags. Their messages were often short and to the point – their favorite line being #DoNotBeAfraid. As we look at the stories of these winged messengers to Zechariah, Mary, Joseph and the Shepherds and their reactions to them, we will contemplate what messages we can offer that will counteract a culture of fear and bring #morehope, #morepeace, #morejoy, and #morelove to the world.

Advent 1 - December 3rd: Luke 1:5-25, 57-80 - Make Ready a People: #morehope

Advent 2 - December 10th: Luke 1:26-56 - Nothing is Impossible: #morepeace

Advent 3 - December 17th: Matthew 1:18-25 - Do Not Be Afraid: #morejoy

Advent 4/Christmas Eve - December 24th: Luke 2:1-20 - This Will Be a Sign: #morelove (NOTE: Christmas Eve is on a Sunday this year. The Sunday morning service will be a special Christmas presentation by our choir, while our 5:00 Christmas Eve Service will be our traditional service of communion and candlelighting.)

Sunday after Christmas - December 31st: Matthew 2:1-23 - Get Up and Go: #morelife







Christmas
EVE CANDLE LIGHT & COMMUNION

Sunday, December 24th - 5 pm

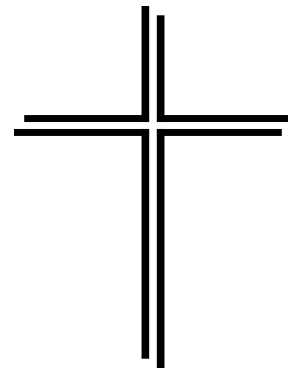




December 3rd - Advent 1:
Luke 1:5-25, 57-80
Make Ready a People: #morehope
December 10th - Advent 2:
Luke 1:26-56
Nothing is Impossible: #morepeace
December 17th - Advent 3:
Matthew 1:18-25
Do Not Be Afraid: #morejoy
December 24th - Advent 4:
Choir Christmas Program
December 24th - Christmas Eve Candlelight
Communion:
Luke 2:1-20
This Will Be a Sign: #morelove
December 31st:
Matthew 2:1-23
Get Up and Go: #morelife

Check out the daily
devotions online at
www.365.org

Also posted daily to
Bethany's Facebook
page.



audio sermons
listen anytime,
anywhere

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



Your Church Staff:

Pastor: Rev. John W. Johnson

Director of Music: Christopher Bagley

Office Administrator: Joy Saleeby

Bookkeeper: Pam Hurt

Elders:

A. J. Campbell

Ron Kimrey

Karen Maxwell

Ron Osborne (Treasurer)

Glenn Patterson

Jean Payne

Nancy Purcell

Brandon Troxler

Rick Purcell (Clerk of Session)



The Session met for its regular monthly stated meeting on November 14th. Here are some highlights:

- Heard a devotion from Glenn Patterson
- Welcomed Elders-Elect Chip Allen and Sandy Cook who were present to observe
- Continued discussion and book study of *Spiritual Leadership for Church Officers* by Joan Gray
- Heard report that rental property is now listed for sale / sign will go up soon
- Heard a financial report from Treasurer, Ron Osborne
- Heard a positive initial report of pledges received
- Were reminded of plans for Officer Retreat in December / will meet at manse December 1-2
- Heard plans for Advent Series "Angels Among Us" / communion on First Sunday of Advent, December 3rd, and Christmas Eve / choir program on Christmas Eve morning worship / traditional Christmas Eve service at 5:00
- Heard initial plans for 5th Sunday on December 31st
- Heard report from meeting of Salem Presbytery from John / report of celebration of retirement of General Presbyter, Sam Marshall

NEXT MEETING: TUESDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2017
ELDERS OF THE MONTH FOR DECEMBER
KAREN MAXWELL AND BRANDON TROXLER





Please keep your 2018 Elders in your prayers as they gather for training and orientation. Meeting in the manse, the Session will gather on Friday evening, December 1st, and return on Saturday morning, December 2nd, ending with lunch. This training is vital in preparation for the coming year, as well as in training the incoming elders. The Session covets your prayers as they continue to strive to be the leaders you have elected them to be.



Have you turned in your 2018 Pledge Card yet? It's never too late! The Budget and Finance Committee will be working on the 2018 budget and will need accurate figures to put together our budget. If you have not had a chance to submit your pledge yet, please do so at your earliest convenience. Cards are available in the church office, and can be mailed or dropped by anytime. Thanks for your committment and support!



REPORT THROUGH END OF OCTOBER

Year-to-date Actual Income	\$140,162.41
Year-to-date Actual Expenses	\$148,534.67
YEAR-TO-DATE SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	\$8,372.26

"LIFE IS NOT MEASURED BY HOW MUCH YOU OWN"
— THOMAS M. STONER




online GIVING
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www.bethanypreschurch.org/online-giving





- Sunday School for Youth and Children / Meets on the second floor of the Education Building at 9:45 each Sunday
- During Worship, children are invited to sit in designated pew (nearest the choir loft) / there are activities provided

- Our Nursery is staffed by a professional, paid worker, as well as volunteers each Sunday morning.
- Watch your calendar and inbox for special activities for our young people throughout the year.

find your place
Adult Ministry

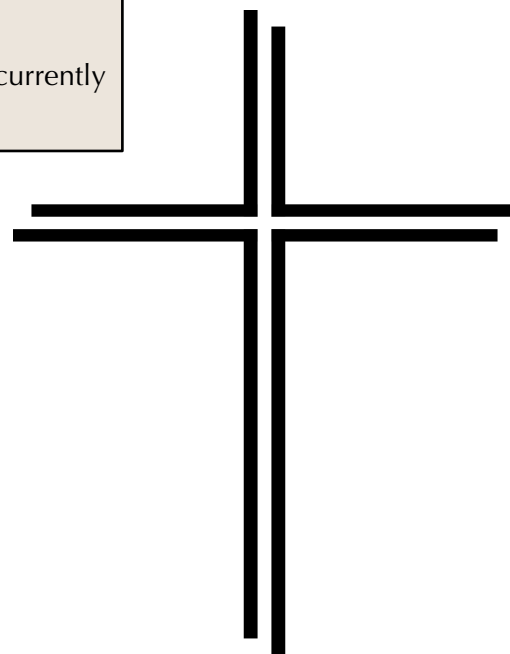


Christian Education Opportunities

The Fellowship Class - Bible study class using our denomination's Present Word Curriculum

The Young @ Heart Class - meets across from the church office / currently using the Uniform Lesson Series

The Seeker's Class - meets in the church office / currently using The Wired Word curriculum



December Birthdays and Anniversaries!

Happy Anniversary to:

Carolyn & Glenn Thompson December 14

Happy Birthday to:

Alan Baldwin	December 2
Jim Guthrie	December 2
Anna Osborne	December 5
Pat Testerman	December 8
Henry Flythe	December 12
Erick Russell	December 23
Pam Hurt	December 31



Presbyterian Women Circles December Schedule!

Circle #1: Monday, December 11th at 10:00 am

Circle #3: Monday, December 11th at 7:00 pm

Circle #4: Monday, December 4th at 7:00 pm



Bethany Prays

Bill Faucette
Faye Campbell
Frances Nolan
Layla Benoklen
Ida Whitney
Rachel Poteat
Jeremy Harden
Anne McDaniels
Mike Sutton
Stewart Dillard
Ben Johnson
Diane Miller

Jack Cook
Polly and Dick Wilson
Teresa Wilborn
Tiffany Tauchren
Jean Berry
Christy Lutterloh
Eleanor Thompson
Nancy Sutton
Norma Proctor
Sandy Cook & niece Rachel
John and Ann Sutton
Peter Slater

Joey Leake
Shannon Russell
Shelvia Russell
Mary Moore
Barbara Cousins
Pat Kennedy
Donna Mitchell-Ayers
Pete Campbell
Carolyn Thompson
Jackie & Tave Holland
Ruby Martin



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