



John's Journal

Well, the hits just keep on coming. Just when we thought things were beginning to ease up a bit, the second wave hit and we are back to not having in-person

worship again. To say that I am disappointed would be an understatement!

As I told the Session when we met in a called meeting on Sunday morning, the 22nd, I am so grateful to be part of a connectional church. Salem Presbytery, under new leadership with our new Transitional General Presbyter, and with a Task Force that was put together in the spring, issued new guidelines over the weekend for churches in the presbytery in regards to worshipping in person.

Following state guidelines and using the advice of medical experts as well as using scripture as a guide, the presbytery recommended that churches worship online only until February 1st. The Session adopted these guidelines, with the option to revisit them if things improve before February.

The Advent and Christmas seasons are always a highlight of the year for me, and I told the Session that I hated it from the very core of my being that we have to worship through this glorious season online. But, I would hate it even more if we met in person and someone got sick, or God-forbid, would die. I don't think any of us would be able to forgive ourselves if that happened.

And so, we resume our practice of online only worship. Just to remind you, there are three options for gathering online. You can use our Zoom option, using the link that will be in our weekly emails on Friday and Saturday mornings.

You can also join in via Facebook Live, by going to Bethany's Facebook page on Sunday morning. Or, you can also join is via our YouTube Live stream. The link for this will also be available in our weekly emails on Friday and Saturday mornings.

We will gather each Sunday morning at 11:00 (I'll start the Zoom meeting a little early so we can visit a little bit). We will follow the same practice for our Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion Service, at 5:00 on the 24th.

So, yes, this Advent and Christmas will be different. But this entire year has been different! I am gratified that it seems that viable vaccines will be available soon. I would encourage us all to take the vaccine whenever it is available. The risks of not taking it are just too great.

2020 has presented us with many challenges. We have journeyed through Lent and Easter virtually - learning as we go about the technological challenges.

I experienced a sabbatical in a pandemic. It was different, but very productive and restful. Other than the travel restrictions, I was able to do most everything that I had set out to do for my sabbatical.

We had our first pandemic Stewardship Season. We haven't gotten any results yet, but with just the number of initial pledge cards turned in so far, it looks like we are on track for good news soon! Keep your fingers crossed.

And now we will journey to the manger in a very unique and different way than usual. We will certainly miss gathering in our beautifully decorated sanctuary. We will miss the glow of candlelight and the familiar Christmas carols sung together. We will miss the hugs and "Merry Christmas" greetings on Christmas Eve.

But here's a truth that we can't forget: THE LORD WILL BE BORN! Nothing can change that. And we will celebrate - maybe not as we have in the past, but in new ways that will echo our joy and hope that comes with the birth of our Savior.

Happy Advent everyone! And Merry Christmas!

As always, I am grateful to be your pastor.

Grace & peace,

Returning to Online Worship Only

November 23, 2020

Dear Bethany Family,

In a special mailing to the presbytery over this past weekend, a task force led by our General Presbyter offered new guidelines for churches regarding worship. I forwarded this information to our Session on Saturday, and the Session met in a called meeting before worship yesterday.

At this meeting, the difficult, but wise decision was made to gather for worship **ONLINE ONLY** beginning this Sunday, November 29th. This will be our practice for the coming weeks and the Session will periodically revisit our policy as needed.

There are **three options** for gathering for worship online: **Zoom, Facebook Live, or YouTube Live**. There will be links to these platforms in our usual Friday and Saturday morning mailings. If you have questions, please contact the church office.

I am heartbroken that we will not worship in our beautifully decorated sanctuary for the Advent and Christmas seasons. But I would be even more heartbroken if someone got sick because we were worshipping in person. As I shared in my Digital Church series, God is present in our virtual world just as in our physical world. In that truth, we can rejoice!

Remember that this Sunday is the **First Sunday of Advent**, and we will celebrate the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, as well as the lighting of our Advent Candles. Please have your own elements for communion ready - a piece of bread, cracker, or whatever, and something to drink.

Let us pray that this pandemic that has turned our world upside down will soon be a thing of the past and we can get back to normal lives. Let us pray that the vaccines will be available soon and will be effective in their use. And let us pray that our worship life will continue in the best way possible, even if it is through our screens. And let us be grateful for the technology that allows us to gather in this virtual space.

Grace & Peace,

John W. Johnson
Pastor, Bethany Presbyterian Church



We did it! We did Stewardship Season in a pandemic!! What a wonderful Consecration Sunday we had on the 22nd as we gathered in person and virtually to "Give Thanks!"

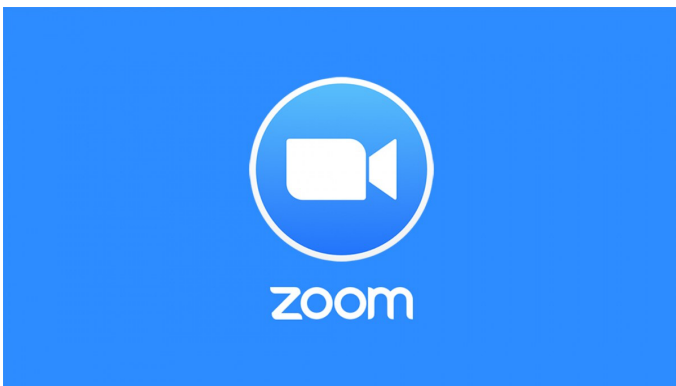
A huge shout-out and thank you to our Generosity Team who went above and beyond the call of duty to make sure that Stewardship 2020 was a celebratory and successful as previous years - even with the challenges we all face. Please offer your thanks to **Helen Brown, Glenn Patterson, Tina Patterson, Seth Smith, and Morgan Troxler** for their many hours of commitment.

We hope everyone is enjoying their special surprise gift box. Those who were here on Sunday morning were able to pick theirs up on the way out, and those who were not here were all delivered their box by a Session member on Sunday afternoon. This was just a small way of saying "thank you" to everyone for your continued support for the mission and ministry of Bethany Presbyterian. We are confident that this year's campaign was successful, and we'll be sure to share the results just as soon as we can.

For those who have already turned in a pledge card - either in person on Sunday, or by mail or dropping it off at the church - thank you so much! For those who have not had a chance to return yours yet, please do so as soon as possible. You can mail them to the church to our bookkeeper, Pam Hurt, bring them by the church in person, or you can use our secure online pledge card (<https://www.bethanypreschurch.org/2020-pledge-card.html>), that will also go straight to Pam. The Budget & Finance Committee will begin their work soon to put together our 2021 budget, so having all the pledges in hand is important so that this work can proceed. Thanks in advance!

If you have any questions about your pledge, you may contact Pam Hurt at finance@bethanypreschurch.org, or by phone here at the church on Tuesday afternoons.

Thanks to all for a (hopefully!) successful Stewardship 2020 campaign!



There are three options to gather for online worship: Zoom, Facebook Live and YouTube Live. Links for these options will be available in your usual weekly emails, as well as on our Facebook page.

INCARNATION

REDISCOVERING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRISTMAS

We are so excited about our Advent series for this year, looking at Adam Hamilton's new study, *"Incarnation: Rediscovering the Significance of Christmas."* We have completed several of Hamilton's studies and have not been disappointed yet! The unique aspect of this series is that he developed it specifically for a virtual setting. And since we will be all virtual for Advent, this will be a wonderful way of journeying on our way to Bethlehem together.

Each session will begin at 9:45 on Sunday morning and will be available on the Zoom platform. The link for the meeting will be on our weekly emails that everyone should receive on Friday and Saturday mornings. But here's the link that you can go ahead and copy ahead of time: <https://zoom.us/j/95793778101>

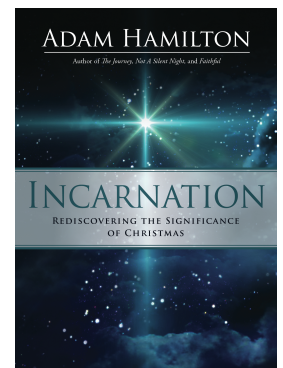
Everyone will need a book that we will read together for our weekly discussions. These books (shown below) are available in the church office or you can order your own on Amazon. They are \$12.00 each. They are also available on Kindle through Amazon for \$9.20 each. If you have an Audible account, the book is available there as well.

The series looks at all the names we have for the incarnate Jesus. Here's an overview of the series:

- November 29th - *Presidents and Kings*
- December 6th - *The Savior and Our Need for Saving*
- December 13th - *Emmanuel in the Midst of a Pandemic*
- December 20th - *The Light of the World*

In addition to the study series, our virtual worship services will be based on the themes of this series as well. John will be digging into the material a little deeper to look closer at each of these themes.

Even though we may have already had our first session by the time you get this newsletter, please don't hesitate to go ahead and join us for the next ones. Let's journey to the manger together through this unique and powerful study.





December 6th - Second Sunday of Advent:

Matthew 1:18-21

The Savior and Our Need for Saving

December 13th - Third Sunday of Advent:

Matthew 1:22-25

Emmanuel in the Midst of a Pandemic

December 20th - Fourth Sunday of Advent:

John 1:1-5, 9-14

Light of the World

December 24th - Christmas Eve:

Luke 2:1-20

A Gift for Everyone

December 29th:

TBA

TBA



Join us on **Thursday, December 24th at 5:00 pm** for our annual **Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion Service**. Yes, it will be different this year (what else is new!), as we will gather virtually on the Zoom platform, as well as Facebook Live and YouTube Live. Look for the link for the service that will be available the week before in your usual emails, as well as on our Facebook page.

December 2020

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|---|--------|---|--|---|--|----------|
| <div>29</div> <div>First Sunday of Advent</div> <div>Incarnation Advent Series</div> <div>9:45 AM Sunday School</div> <div>11:00 AM Worship (online only)</div> | 30 | | <div>1</div> <div>7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal (not meeting)</div> | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| <div>6</div> <div>Second Sunday of Advent</div> <div>Incarnation Advent Series</div> <div>9:45 AM Sunday School</div> <div>11:00 AM Worship (online only)</div> | 7 | <div>8</div> <div>7:00 PM Session Meeting</div> | <div>9</div> <div>7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal (not meeting)</div> | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| <div>13</div> <div>Incarnation Advent Series</div> <div>9:45 AM Sunday School</div> <div>11:00 AM Worship (online only)</div> | 14 | 15 | <div>16</div> <div>7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal (not meeting)</div> | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| <div>20</div> <div>Incarnation Advent Series</div> <div>9:45 AM Sunday School</div> <div>11:00 AM Worship (online only)</div> | 21 | 22 | <div>23</div> <div>7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal (not meeting)</div> | <div>24</div> <div>Christmas Eve</div> <div>5:00 PM Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion Service</div> | <div>25</div> <div>John on Vacation</div> <div>Christmas Day</div> | 26 |
| <div>27</div> <div>John on Vacation</div> <div>9:45 AM Sunday School</div> <div>11:00 AM Worship (online only)</div> | 28 | 29 | <div>30</div> <div>7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal (not meeting)</div> | <div>31</div> <div>New Year's Eve</div> | 1 | 2 |

Your Church Staff:

Pastor: Rev. John W. Johnson

Director of Music: Christopher Bagley

Office Administrator: Joy Saleeby

Bookkeeper: Pam Hurt

Elders:

Bill Abplanalp

Chip Allen

Helen Brown

Randy Cousins

Karen Maxwell (Clerk of Session)

Tina Patterson

Nancy Purcell

Ben Russell

Tracey Troxler

Glenn Patterson (Treasurer)



The Session met for its regular monthly stated meeting on November 10th. Here are some highlights:

- Heard a devotion from Tracey Troxler
- Welcomed representatives from the local Boy Scouts who shared information about Bethany being the chartering organization for a troop. More information is being gathered for a decision in December.
- Heard joys and concerns of the congregation
- Received a treasurer's report from Glenn Patterson
- Received a positive report from Glenn Patterson concerning the progress on the sale of the property across the street.
- Discussed options for returning to in-person worship services
- Discussed options for Stewardship Season events in light of the pandemic
- Heard info regarding upgrade of church wi-fi and phone system.
- Discussed plans for Advent and for decorating the church for the season.
- Heard a detailed report from the virtual meeting of Salem Presbytery from Helen Brown.
- Approved a request for our parking lot to be used for a mobile library.

**NEXT MEETING: TUESDAY, DECEMBER 8TH
ELDERS OF THE MONTH FOR DECEMBER
CHIP ALLEN AND TINA PATTERSON**



BETHANY ANGEL TREE 2020

This year the Presbyterian Women will be adopting Alamance Eldercare and Alamance Meals on Wheels clients for the Christmas Season. This year we will provide Christmas items for elderly citizens who are clients of Alamance Eldercare and Meals on Wheels.

Alamance Eldercare & Meals on Wheels

Alamance Eldercare provides assistance to elderly citizens in our area who have very little to no family to assist them. Meals on Wheels provides one meal daily to elderly or disabled persons who may have food instability along with other issues. These citizens usually still live in their homes, many of them alone, and have no one to make their Christmas special. In participating in our Angel Tree effort, we help provide these beautiful people who are often overlooked, with some simple Christmas cheer!!!

How does the Angel Tree work?

The social workers who are familiar and are assisting these clients interview the families and come up with "wish lists". These lists are turned over to us at Bethany, and requested items are placed on the tree. Each Eldercare or Meals on Wheels client will have multiple items requested on the tree.

With the pandemic situation this year - we understand if you are uncomfortable shopping, or leaving your home. If you would rather give a monetary donation, and let us do the shopping, please send to Bethany and designate for Angel Tree - OR contact Tina Patterson at 336 260-6082 and she will coordinate someone to come and pick up your donation. ANY Amount is greatly appreciated and 100% will be used towards this effort. **ALL monetary Donations are needed by Wednesday, December 16th.**

How do I participate?

- Choose Angels or Snowflakes from the tree for items you would like to purchase.
- Purchase the item written on the Angel or Snowflake -
- Wrap the gift, and **attach the Angel/Snowflake you chose to the gift** so that we know which item the gift contains.
- Return the gift to the Fellowship Hall and place in the designated area **NO LATER THAN NOON on SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20th.**
- **SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20TH - at 5:30 pm** - Join us in the Fellowship Hall to SORT the gifts, and Wrap any gifts that were shopped for with monetary donations



“Hark! The Herald Angels Sing”

“Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” is one of our most beloved Christmas carols. Published in 1739, Charles Wesley composed over 6,000 hymns. He particularly didn’t like people changing his words, but we are grateful to the man who changed the first line of the hymn from Hark, how all the welkin rings, to it’s current, more singable title. The following hymn story was written by Bill Dagle.

Hark the Herald Angels Sing

In 1627, the English Puritan parliament abolished the celebration of Christmas and all other “worldly festivals.” For the remainder of the seventeenth century and well into the eighteenth, hymn carols were hard to come by, but there was an exception. John and Charles Wesley had aroused the anger of the Anglican Church in England by their Armenian doctrine of “free grace.” While students at Oxford University, fellow classmates started calling them “Methodists” because of their methodical ways; and now because of a printer’s mistake, Charles’ poem was in print in the Church of England’s Books of Common Prayer.

The hymn, “Hark, How All the Welkin Rings”, was actually Charles’ “Hymn for Christmas Day.” The church fathers weren’t too happy about it. Angered by Wesley’s inclusion in the prayer book, the church fathers concluded that at least the song would only be used once a year and would probably fade into oblivion. They couldn’t have been more mistaken, for Charles Wesley’s Christmas hymn was just beginning a most interesting journey.

For more than a century, the song was sung with mild enthusiasm. Then, in 1840, Germany’s boy wonder, Felix Mendelssohn wrote an opera, “The Festgesang,” to celebrate the four hundredth anniversary of the printing press. Fifteen years later, a nineteen year old tenor named William Cummings, in England, discovered that Mendelssohn’s second chorus of “The Festgesang” fit perfectly with Wesley’s “Hymn for Christmas Day.”

Originally titled “Hark, How All Welken Rings,” it might have been lost, but for a printer who used it to fill an empty page. The hymn was edited and re-edited and sung to different tunes until, finally, an English tenor linked a Methodist’s words to a German’s music, written for a celebration having no connection to Christmas. The end result was “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing,” which has gone down in history as one of Charles Wesley’s greatest songs—a hymn predicted to fail by man, but overseen by God to become the most widely sung Christmas hymn ever written. Isn’t that just the way He works?

Respectfully submitted,

Christopher A. Bagley, Director of Music





GIVE+Church

Giving to your church is as easy as 1-2-3

Go to the App Store or Google Play and search for "GivePlus Church" to download for FREE.

We are grateful for those of you who have kept your pledge up-to-date using our new online giving platform. As we continue to live in this time of pandemic, having this option for giving has been most helpful.

One added feature - also free - is the option of using an app on your smartphone. Just go to your app store and search for "GivePlus Church" and download it for free. You can then search for Bethany and follow the instructions.

There are two documents that you will find useful in answering your questions about this new electronic giving portal. They are on our website here: <http://www.bethanypreschurch.org/online-giving-faq.html>

In this time of upheaval in our normal routines, it is important to remember that the work of the church continues as we continue to live up to our commitments. We are confident that this new platform for electronic giving will be a great enhancement to our stewardship efforts at Bethany.

Please make every effort to keep your pledge up-to-date, either giving by check or using this convenient method of giving online - securely and safely.



FINANCIAL REPORT - END OF OCTOBER 2020

| | |
|--|---------------------|
| Year-to-date Actual Income | \$112,035.99 |
| Less Year-to-date Actual Expenses | \$144,404.43 |
| Plus Other Income (from investments) | \$15,316.55 |
| YEAR-TO-DATE BUDGET SURPLUS (DEFICIT) | -\$17,051.89 |

**Scan this QR code for direct access to
our new Online Giving Platform**



December Birthdays and Anniversaries!

Happy Anniversary to:

Carolyn & Glenn Thompson

December 14th

Happy Birthday to:

Anna Osborne

December 5th

Henry Flythe

December 12th

Brent Dampier

December 14th

Erick Russell

December 23rd

Pam Hurt

December 31st

Children & Youth Ministries

- **Sunday school for Youth and Children** / Meets on second floor of Education Building at 9:45 each Sunday (as announced during the pandemic)..
- 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.



Find your place!

ADULT MINISTRIES

Christian Education Opportunities

The Fellowship Class - Bible study class using our denomination's *Present Word* curriculum. The class will resume when we return to our normal schedules.



Bethany Prays

Christopher Bagley
Frederica Beatty
Jean Berry
Jack Cook
Bill Faucette
Christy Lutterloh
Norma Proctor
Joan Richardson
Nancy Sutton
Tiffany Tauchren
Eleanor Thompson
Randy Thompson
Grace Johnson
Karen Maxwell

Carol Brooks
Pat Kennedy
Family of Mary Moore
Peter Slater
Diane Miller
Barbara Cousins
Ben Johnson
Joey Leake
Pete Campbell
Shannon Russell
Alex Thomas
Sylvia Donley
Family of Norman
Whitney

Janie Holt Clapp
Stewart Dillard
Richie Fishburne
Jeremy Harden
Family of Shirley Lane
Ruby Martin
Anne McDaniels
Shelvia Russell
John & Ann Sutton
Mike Sutton
Katherine Turner
Ida Whitney
Frank Wrenn
Bill Abplanalp

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