

# BETHANY BEACON

Preparing for Christmas By Rev. Colleen Samson

When you think about preparing for Christmas, where does your mind take you? Perhaps you think about getting the tree. Will the tree be real or artificial? Will it have white lights or colored lights? Will we put tinsel on the tree, or is that too tempting for the cat or a toddler? Maybe you will make the decision not to have a tree. Does your mind go to the meal? Will we have turkey or ham, maybe prime rib or something simpler? And, what about the Christmas cards? Will we send cards this year, or has the postage gotten too expensive? And then there are gifts to buy and wrap!

Preparing for Christmas in the above ways wears me out just to think about it. For so many years, that was what preparing for Christmas was about in my family. And, of course, the traditions of Christmas are important. Some of you may really like all those kinds of preparations. To that I say, "More power to ya!" But, as I write this article, I am wondering if "transitioning" to some other traditions might be a good idea. This Christmas will be very different for us, and in considering being away from our church during this season, we will have to be creative in how we prepare for the birth of Jesus.

We will do our own Advent wreath. Either I'll make one or find one somewhere, because the wonderful gifts of hope, love, peace, and joy have become engrained in my soul. They are the gifts offered to each of us by God every day of our lives. As Christians, we can look to God to supply these Advent gifts to each of us. We will find scriptural read-

ings to do daily either on line or in a resource book. By reading scripture and praying, our hearts will be open to accept Jesus when he is once again born this Christmas.

Christmas carols offer an insightful way of understanding how the composer thought Christmas should be celebrated. We will take one of our favorite carols and explore its meaning and intent for Christians who enjoy singing our traditional carols. Every week we can explore a different one in hopes that new light will be shed upon the birth of Jesus.

Providing for others who are less fortunate is another way to open our hearts to Jesus who was born to two young people who had very little. Without a pillow for his head, Mary and Joseph made a way for the infant child. At Bethany we can give through the Salvation Army Christmas Stocking Program, through our teens' Project Hope, make a special offering to Bethany, or give to the UCC annual Christmas Fund which is very important to many of our needy and retired clergy. We will participate in as many of those opportunities as we can, even from a distance.

Many people read the story "'Twas the Night Before Christmas" to their children on Christmas Eve. What if we take the time to read aloud with our family, even if it is only two of you and even if you just heard it in church, Luke's story together on Christmas Eve in the privacy of your own home? Take time to thank God for the gift of Jesus who was brought into our sin-filled world to save us from both sin and death. Is the gift of Jesus enough for you/us this

## BETHANY UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

December



2014

**2952 Bethany Church Road  
Claremont, NC 28610**

**Phone: 828-464-5194**

**Email**  
**bethanyuccoffice@aol.com**

**Website**  
**www.BethanyUccClaremont.org**

**Pastor**  
Rev. Colleen Samson

**Pastor Emeritus**  
Rev. Nevin Feather

**Minister of Faith Formation**  
Pastor David Samson

**Director After School All Stars**  
Brenda Josey

**Youth/Teens Minister**  
Position Available

**Interim Organist**  
Jane Cadwallader

**Bethany Beacon  
Co-Editors**  
Vivian Cline  
Donna Ervin

**Sunday Schedule**  
Sunday School: 9:30am  
Worship: 10:30am

Christmas?

If we celebrate in the ways mentioned above and cut back on secular consumerism, maybe our Christmas preparation will be heartfelt and meaningful, just as it is intended by God. Please don't take this as a *Bah Humbug*; take it as the Christmas gifts

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from God to you and your family.

David and I miss each of you, and although we will be spending Christmas Day with our son and his family (health permitting), we will be remembering our church family and friends in the WNCA. We will also

be celebrating David's donor who so willingly offered part of himself for David to continue living in this world. That in itself puts a new meaning into hope, peace, love, and joy. Merry Christmas, my friends! May God's face shine upon you and give you peace. **Amen.**

### **David's Bone Marrow Transplant**

How many times do we get a second chance at life, our marriage, or estranged relationships? When the opportunity comes around, do we take advantage of it and treat it as a gift, or do we say, "No thank you?" I want to tell you about my experience with David's Bone Marrow Transplant and how my heart is ever-softening through his second chance at life.

During our stay on the campus of the Mayo Clinic, I have been reading two books: Jan Karon's new book ***Somewhere Safe with Somebody Good*** (Mitford Series #10) and Nickolas Spark's ***The Best of Me***. Both stories take place in North Carolina and, unbeknownst to me when I purchased them, they each contain stories of transplants. Jan Karon's book tells of how Father Tim, an Episcopal priest, gives his bone marrow to his brother who has leukemia. Nickolas Spark's book is a love story with a twist that involves a transplant. The grace of God is felt in my soul.

God speaks to us in many ways when we allow ourselves to feel loved by God in the midst of difficult times. One crucial question we have to ask ourselves is can we get past our fears and not let them come between us and God? Fear can separate us from God. Fear is one of my major human qualities that at times has not allowed me to feel God's presence in the midst of my own life experiences.

Our prayers have been that the transplant would be as gentle and easy on David's body as possible and still be effective. We asked you to pray for no infection, a perfect match, and for his body to accept the transplant. I don't know why God seems to answer some prayers and not others. I don't know why some peo-

ple live through the transplant and have many, many years of good life, and others do not. These are the mysterious workings of God. What I do know is that we prayed and felt like God led us to this place at this time to have the transplant. I know that David has not had any infections since he started this process in March, they found him a perfect 10 match, and that engraftment into his bone marrow has been successful, and amazingly all of his blood counts are recovering to a normal level. He was able to be discharged from the hospital with only minor kinks in his progress. We are so thankful and grateful but yet always mindful of others who may not be so fortunate.

Our hope is that God is leading this journey not just for us but for our congregation. A pastor does not go through a life experience like this without being changed and without the congregation being changed through the process. We have needed our Bethany family's prayers, love, and support. Think of yourselves as carrying David on a mat and lowering him through the roof to make sure Jesus responded.

David is certainly not "out of the woods," so please don't stop praying. He is on a good start to health, healing, and wholeness. That road, for a Bone Marrow Transplant patient, is filled with twists and turns, bumps and mountains. Our teamwork with our Creator is ever important. We need to continue listening and following God, because God's presence makes all the difference.

May God's grace and love carry you through today and tomorrow's difficulties. Thank you for being our church family.

*Pastors David and Colleen*

### **Christmas In A Box**

Our annual Christmas Play performance is on Sunday, December 14, at 4:00 pm. Please bring guests with you (grandparents especially) to see us present "Christmas In A Box." We will have a social time following the play. There will be Christmas presents and delicious food!

**Everyone is invited!**



## ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS

### Sunday Morning Worship 10:30 am

November 30	Stay Awake
December 7	Prepare the Way
December 14	Here Am I
December 21	Blessed ?
December 28	Guided By The Spirit

### Special Programs/Services

December 14	4:00 pm	Youth Christmas Program	Christmas Social
December 24	6:00 pm	Candlelight Christmas Eve Service	

### Come Let Us Adore Him, Christ, the Lord



### Vocalists to Sing



The Worship Committee has invited several vocalists to share music with us during this special season of the year. They graciously accept our invitation, prepare, and present their offerings of song for us to enjoy. **Pamela Pope** began our Advent season with special music on November 30. Other vocalists in December include **Debbie Mitchum** on December 7, **Ingrid Keller** on December 14, **Madeline Mehaffey** on December 21, and **Pamela Pope** on December 24 for our Christmas Eve Candle Light Service. Some may even bring their family members to sing or play with them. We are blessed to have talented members and friends so willing to be part of our Christmas worship season at Bethany.

***This is your invitation! Be sure not to miss a single service!***



## Mark Your Calendars

Annual Congregational Meeting on Sunday, December 14  
Immediately following the Worship Service

## November Meet & Eat

will be at Western Steer in Newton on Sunday, November 30, about 5:00 pm  
following the decorating of the church.

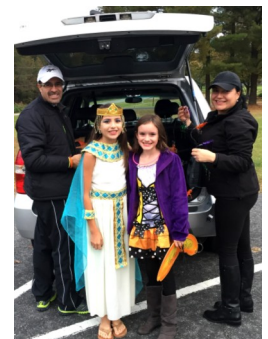
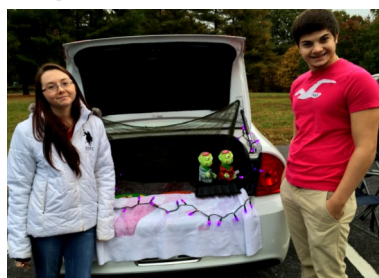
Join in having a great time of Fun & Fellowship at this event.  
Bring your family and friends with you!



*Bethany UCC all  
"dressed up" for  
Thanksgiving Sunday*



## *TRUNK N' TREAT*





## **Bethany After School All Stars**

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### **Merry Christmas from all of us at Bethany After School All Stars!**

We are busy practicing our Christmas play for you. We want to invite you to our performance on Sunday, December 14, at 4:00 in the afternoon. Please bring guests with you (grandparents especially) to see us present "Christmas In a Box." We will have a Christmas social in the Fellowship Hall following the play. There will be Christmas presents and delicious food!

The children were so proud of their report cards this time. You know it is a good sign when they can't wait to show them. I was so proud of their hard work. Twelve students made the A honor roll and thirteen made the A-B honor roll. They deserve a big Way To Go! Our goal is to have 99% of the children show improvement, and they are well on the way to accomplishing that goal.

We have 27 children enrolled at this time. We want to welcome Jordan, Jacob, Briana, and Hannah. New to our program is Cameron and Alexis. We now have triplets and twins.

You really have to see our K-3 room. Miss Jessica Shook leads this class of 8 students. What a wonderful job she does! This is the future of our program.

Ms. Jeannine leads our 4-5 grades. They have been in the program for years and are doing the great job you would expect. Thank you, Ms. Jeannine, for your guidance.

I have 6-7 grades and 1 eighth grade student. This is our largest class. We meet in the older side of the basement. I have to tell you that their grades are wonderful. I enjoy this class. They teach me as much as I teach them.

It is the little things that we do that influence these children. I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that they will be prepared for the next step in their lives.

I want to thank all of you who support our program in any way. Your financial support, your prayers, gifts of Kool Aid and cheese crackers. Everything helps us keep going.

Thanks to Catawba County United Way, we now get our snacks from a sister agency, ECCCM. This is such a relief to know that I can go there and pick up all we need. The only thing not provided is paper products, but we get contributions of these on a regu-

lar basis. You could help us with wipes and small packs of Kool Aid.

We are implementing a program from United Way that tracks the life skills of our children. This is done because we teach so much on bullying, personal growth, maturity, and the everyday problems that children incur at school and in their families. This will give credit to our program and help us obtain more recognition and funds. Surveys are completed by students on the classes and by parents on the benefits.

Our funding from CCUW in 2015 is a little over \$15,000. These funds are non-stipulated and can be used for anything that our board approves. Thanks to the board members who give us direction. These members are Vivian Cline, Donna Ervin, Lou Grandmaison, Pastor Colleen Samson, and myself. We do have a few parents who come from time to time.

We study, we play, we talk, and we grow. That is pretty good. I have always known that God is leading this program. Six years ago, He planted me at Bethany and introduced me to wonderful friends Ms. Lou and Pastor Colleen. I love you dearly and thank God for you each day.

Merry Christmas to all! The bonds of friendship and love continue to drive the program, and God will give the increase.



Brenda Josey/Program Director  
Jeannine Poole/ Assistant Director





## Eastern Catawba County Cooperative Ministry

ECCCM is located in Newton. In their recent newsletter, they published a pie chart explaining how their services are distributed to people in the local area who qualify for assistance.

Please note the following explanation: The numbers listed represent the **3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter of 2014**.

10, 371 lbs of food were distributed to individuals

924 applications were received to help individuals with their utilities

346 pieces of clothing were given to needy families

344 toiletries given out

103 baby items were given

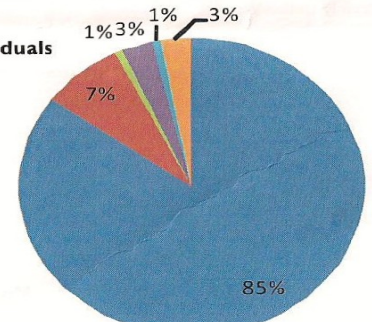
95 applications received for help with rent/mortgage

Explanation of the percentages ----- 85% of every-

thing they do is food related

Executive Director Rev. Robert Silber says that the need in Catawba County continues to increase. Donations are gladly accepted, and volunteers are always welcome.

Services Provided to Individuals



*Submitted by Norma Boggs and Pastor Colleen*

## TAKING TIME TO SAY THANK YOU!

It takes many hands and feet to be THE BODY OF CHRIST. We are His hands and feet. Each of us has a ministry within THE CHURCH, and Christ asks us to be servant to all. When you do any task, no matter how great or small, you are in the service of Christ. Actually, it does not have to be inside the church, although for this article I want to talk about your ministries at Bethany and on behalf of Bethany.

As we start a new church year on November 30, it is with respect and gratitude that I look back over the year at how you have been servants. Notice, I do not call you volunteers because we are all ministers. When you work on behalf of Christ, you are a servant minister, each of us serving at the pleasure of the One who calls us, Jesus Christ.

Acolytes, liturgists, ushers, and choir members serve during the worship service. Committee leaders, team leaders, board members, deacons and elders, make decisions on behalf of the church and carry through with the work of the church.

Staff members serve in the administration of church business. Many of our staff members are minimally paid, or give freely of their service. The following persons are considered church staff: Beth Cline, Brenda Josey, Jane Cadwallader, Larry Sink, Vivian Cline, Pastors David and Colleen Samson, and Lou Grandmaison, who represents LINC and the council at

staff meetings. Staff members work hard to keep communication open and help church life to run smoothly.

It is at the end of December that many people will be going off council, boards, and committees. They have fulfilled terms of their office, a covenantal promise made to the congregation and God. One of the most difficult ministries is that of church council president. Eddie Ervin has served as president for several years. Jane Cadwallader, serves as our "interim" organist, but is like a member of the Bethany family. She serves along-side Bethany members in many ways. Larry Sink has served as our treasurer and has resigned as of March of 2015. Lou Grandmaison gives so generously of herself and her financial resources to our church. And, Brenda Josey has a wonderful ministry to children in this community. I could go on and on, but have just named a few.

Each of you is important. And, each ministry you serve in is vital to the church. You are appreciated. Thank you for being a servant minister. Many of our long-time members have served in the same capacity for years providing continuity in the church. Our new members are stepping forward to serve in many areas. It takes all of our hands and feet to do the work of Christ. Thank you for serving Christ in such faithful, loving, and caring ways.

*Submitted by Pastor Colleen*

## Prayer List

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If you want to activate the Prayer Chain, please call Becky Cline at 828-464-4346.  
Anyone can activate the Prayer Chain with a prayer request or gratitude for a prayer answered.

Annette	Lyerly Cline (AL Pavilion 210)	Christy Isenhour	Bill Wahl
Vicky Allen	Michael Cline	Lisa Janulewicz	Cindy Watson
Billy Beard	Bertha Crosby	Lori Kelly	Jeannie Willis
Robert Belk	Sheila Earp	Donald Laney	Barbara Wireman
C.J. Brooks	Sheila Eisenhour	Dorothy Lassinger (CVL 106)	O.D. Witherspoon (CVL 105)
Linda Brooks	Beverly Faris	Kenneth Lockwood	
Bill Cline	Lisa Goins and family	James Lowe	
Elizabeth Cline (CVL 126) (New)	Donnie Harris	Steve Moore	
	Louise Harris	Nadine Pennell	
		Pastor David Samson	



## SERVING IN DECEMBER 2014

### **Elder of the Month:**

#### December

Eddie Ervin

### **Ushers:**

#### December

Gina Beard  
Lou Grandmaison

7  
14  
21  
28

### **Acolytes:**

#### December

AJ Ellison  
Peyton Laney  
Zach Stewart  
Vivian Cline



### **Happy Birthday!**

#### December

5 Leah Boggs  
10 Lanie Stewart  
15 Hunter Ervin  
21 Shon Kale  
23 Katie Barrett  
27 Becky Cline  
30 Louise Harris

### **Liturgists:**

#### December

7 John Pope  
Isaiah 40: 1-11  
14 Vivian Cline  
2 Samuel 7: 1-11, 16  
21 Lou Grandmaison  
Isaiah 61:1-11  
28 Pamela Pope  
Psalm 148

### **Counting Offerings:**

#### December

Eddie Ervin  
Steve Kale

7  
14  
21  
28



### **Childcare**

#### **Providers:**

#### December

Beth Cline  
Lynn Brooks  
Louise Setzer  
Katie Barrett

### **Staff -Parish Relations Committee**

Rev. Samson's SPRC members are:

Chris Brooks  
(459-4491)  
Becky Cline  
(464-4346)  
Vivian Cline  
(464-6471)  
Larry Sink  
(612-8042)

Thank You!

TO ALL WHO SERVE THESE MONTHS....

WE COULDN'T DO IT WITHOUT you!!!!

THERE IS ALWAYS ROOM FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS!

Bethany United Church of Christ  
2952 Bethany Church Road  
Claremont, North Carolina 28610

Bethany is a  
Community of Justice  
and Peace serving the  
needs of people on  
their spiritual journey.

NO MATTER  
WHO YOU ARE  
OR WHERE  
YOU ARE ON  
LIFE'S  
JOURNEY  
YOU ARE  
WELCOME  
HERE!



Rev. Colleen E. Samson  
Pastor, Bethany UCC

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BethanyUCCOffice@aol.com

EVERYONE  
IS  
WELCOME



We Are on The Web

[www.BethanyUccClaremont.org](http://www.BethanyUccClaremont.org)

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

*Hanging of the Greens*

*Sunday, November 30 3:00 pm*

*Followed by*

*November Meet & Eat*

*Western Steer in Newton Sunday, November 30*

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*Annual Congregational Meeting*

*Sunday, December 14*

*Immediately following the Worship Service*

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*Christmas Program and Social*

*Sunday, December 14 4:00 pm*

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*Candlelight Christmas Eve Service*

*Wednesday, December 24 6:00 pm*