



Bethany United Church of Christ

Embracing the Community

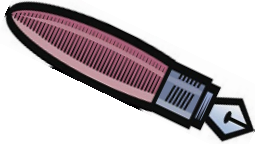
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November-December News 2020



From the Pastor's Pen

Rev. Kathy Naish

The journey of the Magi in Matthew's gospel is one of my favorite stories. Star-gazers follow a message from God written in the nighttime sky. God sent them a sign in the place they were already looking. Perhaps if those wise men had been geologists instead of astronomers, God's message would have been written in the rocks and sands. God knows the signs we read and the vocabulary we recognize. Advent reminds me that God's message can come to each of us in our own language, in the familiar words we already know, and in extraordinary, attention grabbing signs that refocus our attention.

This Advent season will come in a time of particular darkness. Loss and separation have dominated our lives for many months, and we are all dealing with different versions of grief. But we proclaim that even in this year's darkness, God is still speaking. So, this season we will add a special "Advent in the Homes" prayer exercise to our calendars. The devotions are designed to help you listen and speak to God in your own life and language. The materials and resources are easily assembled, and meaningful in their simplicity. The prayers and instructions will be on our website and can also be delivered to you with a socially distant smile and wave, if you don't use a computer. I'll share more details as the journey approaches.

God's message may shine for you in the stars, light up the rocks and stones, or sparkle in the faces of those you encounter. You may light a candle, whisper a prayer, or sing a carol and suddenly find Emmanuel, God With Us, is speaking your language. Your invitation is to anticipate and prepare, to turn your focus to the light that still shines in darkness. Get ready for the journey, Magi.

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.

Every Sunday Morning

Zoom Worship 10:30

Email: bethanyuccclaremont@gmail.com for information to join.



November

- 10 Norma Boggs
- 27 Rev. Kathy Naish

December

- 15 Hunter Ervin
- 18 Bekah Franklin
- 23 Katie Krump
- 20 Malcolm Campbell
- 27 Becky Cline
- 30 Louise Harris

Outreach Through Mission



This fall the Bethany congregation found ways to serve the children in our community. Our first outreach on behalf of children was the collection of school supplies that were donated to Claremont Elementary School. Supplies included glue sticks, scissors, erasers, crayons, paper towels, and hand sanitizer. The donations filled up over two grocery carts used to carry the items into the school.

Our second outreach was participating in the Peanut Butter and Jelly Campaign organized by the Guardian ad Litem Program of Catawba County. We collected plastic jars of peanut butter and jelly during the month of October. Our donations totaled 79 jars that will be given to Backpack Programs, Food Pantries, and Food Banks to feed local children and families. The Missions Committee thanks you for supporting these opportunities of outreach in our community.



From the Worship Committee

We look forward to a special time of worship on Sunday, November 22, when we will celebrate with a season of Thanksgiving. November 22 is also the last Sunday of the Christian year, so you know what that means...Advent is almost here! We'll adapt our worship traditions for Zoom, but those traditions will remain with us, even in this 2020 season.

One adaptation will be our celebration of Christmas Eve. We are planning a brief, outdoor candlelight worship that will take place at dusk on Christmas Eve. We will use luminaries to light the parking lot and we will light the Christ candle while we are gathered. This beautiful opportunity for worship will still require that we wear masks and remain socially distant, but it will allow us to come together to celebrate a holy night in our lives. This celebration obviously depends on the weather cooperating, on your level of comfort with participation, and on the positivity rate of the Covid virus in our area in mid-December. We will keep you informed as the day and time draw near.

We will also add a special time of Zoom worship to our January calendar. This year, Epiphany, January 6, falls on a Wednesday night. Our regular Wednesday night Zoom gathering will include a special Epiphany celebration and we look forward to your participation.

In all our gatherings, we proclaim that our sanctuary does not define us. We are still the body of Christ given to the world and God is still with us. May our worship teach us about God and ourselves, and may it be pleasing to the Lord.

From the Missions Committee

Many of you know that every winter, we at Bethany UCC have helped provide coats for children in Catawba county's foster system. This year, Covid has changed almost everything and this winter tradition is one of them. For several reasons, "Fostering Hope Catawba County," has decided not to collect coats this year. Instead, they have asked that we help collect diapers and baby wipes as we are able. So, our Missions Committee has agreed to take up the cause and to host a diaper drive during Advent. "Fostering Hope" reports that their biggest need is for diapers in sizes three, four and five.

If you are able, while you are buying groceries or shopping online, please add a box of diapers to your cart. You may drop them off at the church whenever it works for you, or bring them on Christmas Eve to our outdoor worship. How fitting that we honor infants in need at such a time!

From the Church Council

Our annual business meeting is scheduled for the second Sunday of December every year. This year, on December 13, via Zoom, we will enter into our business meeting immediately following worship. You will receive by mail both the 2021 budget and the names of those nominated to serve in the congregation. Please save these documents so that you may ask questions and reference them during the meeting. If you are unable to attend the meeting, you may ask questions by contacting a member of the Church Council. Thank you, as always, for your willingness to participate in the important decisions of congregational life.

Did You Know?

Bethany's own Lou Grandmaison has been busy knitting during the Covid19 lockdown at Abernethy Laurels, and the Prayer Shawls she has knitted are being donated to patients at Carolina Caring. Lou knits every day and it takes about four days to complete one shawl. She has been knitting shawls since 2006 and many people have been happy recipients of her talent. Thanks, Lou!



From the Board of Christian Education



Adult Discussion has been a meaningful part of our congregational life, especially while we have been meeting from our homes. We will begin our next study in 2021, and we look forward to growing in discipleship and community. There is always a place for you in our discussions.