

CHURCH CHAT

Butner Presbyterian Church

Pastors: Brian Stratton, Dewey Cassell

July 2026



A Message From Dewey

As a follow-up to the passage we read from the gospel of Mark on June 21, I wanted to share an excerpt from a sermon by the Rev. Sarah Jackson Shelton (day1.org) that further expounds on the fear the disciples experienced "in the boat" with Jesus.

"We often join these disciples in this fear, for we too recognize the signs of a threatening storm, such as a bad report from our annual physical, a difficult job evaluation, turmoil in relationships. We often feel like little David standing before the giant Goliath. Think of how often we come up against a bully on the playground or in the workplace or in the courtroom or in the doctor's office. At those times we know what it is like to be small, powerless, and on the bottom. We know what it is like to be exposed to the power wielded by another who is larger, richer or more armored than we."

Augustine says of this:

"When you have to listen to abuse, that means you are being buffeted by the wind. When your anger is aroused, you are being tossed by the waves. So, when the winds blow and the waves mount high, the boat is in danger, your heart is imperiled, your heart is taking a battering. On hearing yourself insulted, you long to retaliate; but the joy of revenge brings with it another kind of misfortune--shipwreck. Why is this? Because Christ is asleep in you. What do I mean? I mean you have forgotten his presence. Rouse him, then; remember him, let him keep watch within you, pay heed to him."

This is when the significance of this story strikes us, for it is so much more than the fact that Christ commands all to be quiet and still amidst the chaos. It is the acknowledgment that just as the Kingdom of God indwells Christ like a seed waiting to sprout...so this Christ sleeps within each of us...rousing himself to respond to the intensity of our cries that we cannot stand it any more--we cannot bear it on our own any more--that like the disciples, we have exhausted all of our resources and need help beyond our abilities.

Frederick Buechner has said:

"Christ sleeps in the deepest selves of all of us, and whatever we do in whatever time we have left, wherever we go, may we in whatever way we can call on him as the fishermen did in their boat to come awake within us and to give us courage, to give us hope, to show us, each one, our way. May he be with us especially when the winds go mad and the waves run wild, as they will for all of us before we're done, so that even in their midst we may find peace...we may find Christ."

This is, ultimately, my prayer for each of us. It is my prayer for our churches where we desire that the presence of Christ will be among the pews and the music, in the teaching and in the prayers, in the giving and in the taking, in the rough and in the smooth sailing. But most of all I pray that the presence of Christ will be so alive and awake in our spirits that truth will not only be spoken but heard and carried out into the world...so that something like love may be done."

Let all God's people say ... Amen.
Dewey



JULY Calendar

Sat, 7/4



Sun, 7/5

11am Communion Worship Service
Brian Stratton, Michael McFadden

ACIM Ministry Day

Wed, 7/8

CHURCH
clean-up
DAY



Sun, 7/12

11am Worship Service
Brian Stratton, Michelle Osborne

2pm Butner Church Council Meeting
@ Community Methodist Church

Sun, 7/19

9am Session Meeting via zoom

11am Worship Service
Dewey Cassell, Erma Hudgins

Sun, 7/26

11am Worship Service
Dewey Cassell, Cecil Hudgins

Tues, 7/28

Presbytery Meeting at Trinity
Presbyterian Church

Bible Book Club

With mine and Cecil's travels, I will admit that I am a bit behind on my reading but I did get through Leviticus, which I thought the middle chapters were pretty interesting. Now to catch up!

JULY READING CHALLENGE:

Old Testament: Numbers 11-28

Another difficult book - just do what you can!

Psalms: Chapters 27-31

Consider these as little poems. Read one per week.

Proverbs: Chapter 7

New Testament: Mark: Chapters 8-12

HAPPY READING!



The "do what makes you happy" culture is so toxic for Christians.

We are NOT called to do what makes us happy. We are called to do what glorifies God.

Christianity isn't always sunshine & happiness. It's hard work & dedication to him, not us.

Do. What. Glorifies. God.

Church News

Fellowships

The Father's Day breakfast was a great time of fellowship and appreciating our fathers. Our next fellowship will be our annual Durham Bulls Game outing. If you are interested in going, please let Michelle know.

Missions

We are in the process of switching from donating monthly to World Vision to the program called Living Waters for the World. This mission resource of the Synod of Living Waters within the Presbyterian Church USA equips presbyteries and local churches with the training and technology needed to install sustainable water purification systems and implement health education programs in communities facing water crises.

Building & Grounds

Quarterly Kitchen Cleaning

The session decided that the church kitchen needs some occasional extra care and decided to have quarterly cleanings. Although the next quarter cleaning would be in July, it would be best to wait until the Kid Zone has completed their summer program in our kitchen and fellowship hall. Their last day using our facilities will be Friday, August 7. A cleaning date will be set soon.

Outdoor Light outside Sanctuary

The outdoor light in the front of the church has been fixed. The wiring was "vintage 1965" and had become too old and brittle and had started arcing against the chain that held the light in place. The wiring and the chain have been replaced thanks to Donald Wilkins. He brought in his own scaffolding and did all the electrical work himself, saving the

church from having to hire a professional to come out. This would have been a major expense.

Check out the photos of Donald up on the scaffolding below! Yikes! That's pretty high off the ground!! *(Continued next page)*



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Removal of Damaged Pine Tree

The huge pine tree in the center of the church's memorial garden was struck by lightning about 5 years ago and was heavily damaged. The time has come to hire a professional to remove the tree.

On Saturday, June 27th, Curtis Tree Climbing Service came out and carefully removed the tree from the garden as Cecil, Erma, and Donald watched. (Tree removal is fascinating!) The cost for removal was \$2,500.



Above: You can see some of the damage.



Above and below: Branches are moved with a "grabber" and taken to the chipper.



Above: Branches being cut under the watchful eye of Cecil.



Below: Large branches are chipped.



Above: The old pine before removal.
Below: Curtis Tree Service getting set.





Above: Working their way up the tree.



Above: Finally, the tree top is coming down.

Below: The tree top is lowered by ropes.



Top right: Tree grabber picks up heavy trunks.

Middle right: Notice how deep the lightning damage was.

Right: Nothing left but this stump waiting for church gardeners to come up with decorating ideas.



From the Editor

HAPPY 250th BIRTHDAY AMERICA!



We are celebrating our nation's 250th birthday this week. The "semiquincentennial". For 250 years, God has blessed Americans with freedom. This is an awesome blessing that many take for granted. We were founded based mostly on the principles of God's Word thanks to our founding fathers. But our culture is changing and I am wondering how much longer God will bless us. As Christians, we must remember that blessings come from following Him and curses when you forsake Him.

So, what can us Christians do? We can continue to stand in our faith against all evil. We don't need to march in Washington DC or anything but just stand wherever we are. In our community. In our volunteer associations. On our school boards, in Town Hall meetings, and talk to town and county commissioners. One thing we should always stand for is our freedom to worship.

Be a good model for Christian living. In a sermon, W.A. Criswell said, "I am part of the nation.... And the nation cannot repent unless I repent. The nation cannot believe unless I believe. The nation cannot be baptized unless I am baptized. The nation cannot turn to God unless I turn to God. The nation cannot be saved unless I am saved. The devotion and the fire and the flame must start in me."

We must all vote. That in itself is an awesome privilege that we should never take for granted. Vote for the right leaders by taking the time to understand what they stand for before voting. Vote for righteousness always.

Share the Gospel whenever possible. The more Christians we have, the more the influence there will be.

Pray for our country regularly and for all who govern it and for all who inhabit it. In Jeremiah 29:7, God

told the Jews who were exiled in Babylon to seek the welfare of the city of Babylon. God said to pray for its behalf because Babylon's welfare is their welfare. And pray for others' salvation while you are at it.

For this year's National Day of Prayer, I was asked to lead the prayer for our nation. I worked hard on this prayer, trying to cover every little thing. The following is that prayer and I invite you to use it to lead yourself in constant prayer for our nation. Lord knows, we all need it.

Heavenly Father,

We come before you today in prayer for our nation. We humble ourselves before you and pray for your continued blessings on this country.

We pray for all those who govern our nation, that you would give them your wisdom so that they rule promoting the welfare of the American people. Give them the courage to work toward justice for all Americans.

Whenever tensions rise, we pray for the peacemakers to rise up and give calm to the storms. Let all American Christians rise up and support the peacemakers.

We pray for leaders to work toward peace among all nations.

For all truly good things our leaders strive for, let them be successful. Do not allow those who govern to follow their own selfish plans, but to do your will and for the purposes of YOUR heart.

We pray for peace, love and brotherhood with all people in this world.

We pray for those who serve to protect our country. For the US military, we pray that you give them guidance, wisdom, and cover them in protection. Lord, please let us always be victorious over our enemies.

Lord, we pray for all those who serve to protect us within our borders. FBI, National Guard, police, firemen and other agencies. We pray that you will protect each of them as they strive to protect us. Make them successful in all that they do to serve us.

Mold each American into a people who live in faith, who honor and praise you.

Erase all prejudice, class divisions and political divisions, bring strength to those who are persecuted, and heal the hearts of all those who believe that destruction is the path of righteousness. Turn their hearts of stone and hate into flesh and love.

Remind us that we are to be kind to the foreigner and give us the discernment when faced with an enemy of our country.

Lord, bring your peace, justice, and compassion to every household in this nation. Bind the wounds of those who've suffered from hatred. Lead us in dismantling poverty, disease, and hunger.

We pray for your protection as we worship and serve in your churches. We pray for the protection of the innocent people and children in our schools and colleges. Cover us all and them in safety. Anyone who strives to infiltrate and harm anyone in churches and schools, Lord we pray that you will cause them to be utterly unsuccessful.

We ask for your forgiveness for all the sins we commit and the tensions we cause. We pray that you will continue to bless this nation, heal our land, and bring unity where there is division. We ask that you give us hope where there is despair. Bring love where there is hatred.

Let us show the peace of Christ to a nation full of hatred and violence, share the bread of heaven with those who hunger and offer springs of living water to a nation of pollution.

We pray for your promised kingdom to come, when all wars will cease, and there will be no disease; when courageous faith, hope, and love will cast out hatred and poverty.

All this we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior, Redeemer, and Lord. Amen.

No Sin is Small

What Adam did in the garden seemed small, just one bite of fruit.

What Saul did seemed small, sparing a king and keeping some of the spoils.

But to God, these were not small at all. They were acts of disobedience and rebellion, and the consequences were eternal.

Sin is never small. It only seems small when we try to minimize it, excuse it, or ignore it. Every sin separates us from God and can have life-altering consequences.

There are no small sins, only sins we try to make small.

*For one "small" sin,
Adam lost paradise.*

*For one "small" sin,
Saul lost the kingdom.*

*The truth is:
there are no "small" sins
- only sins we
try to make small.*