

CHURCH CHAT

Butner Presbyterian Church

Pastors: Brian Stratton, Dewey Cassell

AUGUST 2026



A Message From Dewey

Over the last couple of months, it seems like we have been through a protracted season of sports. From the Stanley Cup (go Canes!) to the NBA Finals to the World Cup, sports have been a consistent source of news and discussion and celebration. (As an aside – I don't recall all these sports overlapping so much in the past, or am I misremembering?)

So, what do all of these sports teams have in common? Each of them has brought together, often at great expense, the best of the best in their fields, be it hockey or basketball or soccer. They've made every effort to "stack the deck" with the best athletes because that's what it takes to win. And that is, after all, the objective – to win.

Which makes you wonder, why didn't Jesus take the same approach when it came to choosing the disciples? He needed a team who could successfully carry the ball – the Word of God – to the multitudes, long after he was gone. You would think he would have recruited the best and the brightest to walk by his side during his earthly ministry.

But he didn't, did he? He didn't choose Nicodemus, the Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin who sought to understand Jesus and support him. No, he chose fishermen, zealots, and a tax collector. Not exactly the cream of the crop when it comes to being respected in society or preaching the gospel with authority.

So, why didn't he recruit an A team? Granted, he didn't have the financial resources of the Carolina Hurricanes. The job of disciple didn't pay very well. Or at all, actually. In fact, according to the gospel of Luke (9:3), Jesus told the disciples, "Take nothing for your journey. Don't take a walking stick, a traveler's bag, food, money, or even a change of clothes."

But at least they would be well received on their journey, right? Well, no, likely not. Some people might be receptive. Others might turn them away – at best – or imprison or stone them at worst. Not exactly something you put on a recruiting poster.

What kind of strategy was this? After all, didn't Jesus want to win? Actually, no.

Winning was not the objective. The objective was to share the good news, to spread the Word of God, to bring as many people as possible into the family of God. And who are the people of God more likely to listen to? A stuffy Pharisee who has been either berating them or ignoring them for years? Or someone who looks just like they do? Who talks like they do. Whose hands are calloused like theirs are?

You see, Jesus did pick the A team. He picked people who were the best suited to share the message. Not because they were getting paid to, but because they believed it. Because they could relate to the people who were hearing it. And because they would continue to carry the message, whatever obstacles they might face.

Over the years, the people carrying the ball have changed, as it has passed from generation to generation. To Us.

You don't have to win. Just don't drop the ball.

Amen. ~Dewey

August Calendar

Sun, 8/2 11am Communion Worship Service
Brian Stratton, Michael McFadden

ACIM after church

Sun, 8/9 11am Worship & Baptism Service
Brian Stratton, Michelle Osborne

2pm Butner Church Council Meeting
@ Community Methodist Church

Sat, 8/15 10am Quarterly Kitchen Cleaning



Sun, 8/16 11am Worship Service
Brian Stratton, Erma Hudgins

Sun, 8/23 9am Session Meeting via zoom

11am Worship Service
Dewey Cassell, Cecil Hudgins

Sat, 8/29 Fellowship at Durham Bulls Game
Durham Bulls stadium
Game is at 6:45pm



Sun, 8/30 11am Worship Service
Brian Stratton, Michael McFadden

Bible Book Club

I accidentally read further into Numbers than the July reading challenge called for - just so many shenanigans by the Israelites! I had to keep reading. I felt bad for Moses.

And boy, the Book of Mark goes from one thing to the other - hits the main points and moves on to the next!

AUGUST READING CHALLENGE:

Old Testament: Numbers 29-36 (end)

Not such a bad book after all!

Old Testament: Deuteronomy 1-12

The last book of the Torah. Lots of passionate farewell speeches by Moses to the people of Israel.

Awww.....

Psalms: Chapters 32-36

Consider these as little poems. Read one per week.

Proverbs: Chapter 8

New Testament: Mark: Chapters 13-16

HAPPY READING!



Church News

PRACTICING RESURRECTION

The Presbytery is providing an opportunity for the small churches in New Hope Presbytery to come and share ideas on repurposing church properties. This will be a time of conversation and idea sharing with other small churches in how to make better use of their properties. This will be held on Thursday, September 3rd from 10am – 1pm. Cecil Hudgins, Erma Hudgins, and Michael McFadden plan to attend.

FELLOWSHIPS

Bulls Game

We will be enjoying our annual Durham Bulls game outing on Saturday, August 29th. This is always a fun time. Go Bulls!

Worship at the Lake

On Sunday, September 20 we will once again gather at the shelter at Lake Holt for our Sunday service followed by a fellowship luncheon. We are currently working with the town and lake employees concerning the fly/bee problem and hopefully, it will be resolved by the time we gather!

THE LITTLE ONES

Pre-K

School will be starting soon! The Pre-K classes are full and will be starting on August 17 and 18. Let's be praying that they will have a wonderful year of learning.

The Kid Zone

What a wonderful opportunity we have had in providing a place – for 2 summers so far – for the Kid Zone summer camp kids to have a place to have lunch. They are renting our kitchen and fellowship hall and their camp will be complete after the first

week in August. It's a blessing to BE a blessing to someone else!

FOR SESSION MEMBERS

The August session meeting has been moved to August 23. Mark your calendars!

BUTNER CHURCH COUNCIL'S THANKSGIVING BOX PROGRAM

Each year, the Butner Church Council blesses the needy in our community with boxes of Thanksgiving food. Our church will once again be the location where the assembly of food boxes will take place as well as the pick-up location. You will start to see evidence of this activity in October.

BUILDING & GROUNDS

Front Door

We have recently had the front doors scraped and repainted. They look so much better!

Bug Service

Once again, we had to hire an exterminator. We seem to be having a perpetual problem with roaches and some are rather large. The exterminator said that those big roaches are congregating in the mulch on the playground as the mulch holds water and they like that environment. Since we continue to have problems with these intruders, we have signed up for quarterly sprays to keep the critters at bay.

Upcoming Cleaning Dates

Our quarterly kitchen cleaning will take place on Saturday, August 15 at 10am. Our regular church cleaning evening will be on September 9 at 6pm. Mark your calendars to come help keep our church clean.

From the Editor

Thankful for the Blessings of Both Feast and Famine



The Lord blesses us in so many ways. Ways that we don't even think about because there are so many. Our hearing and eyesight, our health, our homes and families, our freedoms....the list goes on and on.

And right now, I am thinking about the wonderful gift of rain. Rain on a regular basis is a wonderful blessing from God. It quenches the earth and makes our gardens grow. It cleanses the outdoors by knocking down dust. Animals (and us) thrive because of it. It keeps our lakes and streams at capacity so that we can enjoy having water to drink, wash dishes and clothes, bathe, and water our gardens and lawns. When we have it in abundance, we forget to be thankful and sometimes, unfortunately, we can be less than thankful when rain spoils our outdoor events or messes up our hair! This is like "kicking a gift horse in the mouth" and is an attitude on which to ask for forgiveness. I, myself, am guilty. And yes, I have begged for forgiveness.

The unfortunate part of most of God's blessings is that we take them for granted and forget to be thankful. Until God withholds his blessings. That is when we wake up and take notice. That is when we become aware of the blessing we had and we turn to God in prayer asking to be blessed once again.

After a few years of good perpetual rain, we have enjoyed the abundance and at the same time, taken this blessing for granted. I think sometimes God

withholds his blessings to remind us that we have something in which to be thankful. He pulls us closer to him as we cry out. I believe this is also a blessing as we should always be in prayer. Even if God has to remind us.

Desperation pushes us to pray. And then we will pray hard, often and fervently. This is the kind of prayer needed in today's world every day. There is so much power in righteous praying. We can never allow prayer to go to sleep in our lives and in our churches. What a privilege it is to even be able to come before the Almighty God with our prayers and petitions. Take every opportunity to pray. I know that sometimes we tend to give up when we don't see results right away, but we must remember that we must be willing to battle in prayer sometimes.

Now that God has withheld rain from Butner for some time, he has heard our cries and has provided rain once again. As Cecil and I headed to the beach on July 19, we were expecting rain in the area, and we rejoiced to hear that Butner was finally getting some rain. When we returned on July 22, there was about 5 3/4" of rain in our rain gauge. Hallelujah! It continued to rain and I found a little over 5" in the gauge the following day. And another almost 6" the day after that! And rain is still in the forecast for the next few days!

Let's continue to pray for rain until our drought is over and our lakes, streams, and crucial water supplies are replenished. Then continue to pray for the blessing of quenching rain. Remember to always be thankful for the rain despite our outdoor plans. Continue to pray hard and fervently and be thankful in all circumstances.

Continued next page

From the Editor, continued

Let's remember the lyrics of the hymn **What a Friend We Have in Jesus**:

*What a friend we have in Jesus,
all our sins and griefs to bear!*

*What a privilege to carry
everything to God in Prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
everything to God in prayer!*

*Have we trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged;
take it to the Lord in prayer!
Can we find a friend so faithful
who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness;
take it to the Lord in prayer!*

*Are we weak and heavy laden,
cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Savior, still our refuge –
take it to the Lord in prayer!
Do your friends despise,
forsake you?
Take it to the Lord in prayer!
In his arms he'll take and
shield you;
you will find a solace there.*

Amen!

Peace,
Erma



Anyone can praise when life is easy, but it takes deep faith to still pray and praise through pain. God uses trials to strengthen you. Every tear, delay, hidden struggle is building endurance and faith.

You are not defined by what broke you. You are being refined by it.

God turns your pain into power, your scars into testimony, and your survival into a weapon that will inspire others to keep going too.



**When you can
still pray
while bleeding,
still worship
while waiting,
still believe
while broken –
you're no
longer weak;
you're a weapon.**

@saltandlight.words

AUGUST FELLOWSHIP

**Durham Bulls Game
August 29th at 6:45 pm**

See you at the game!



Holy HUMOR



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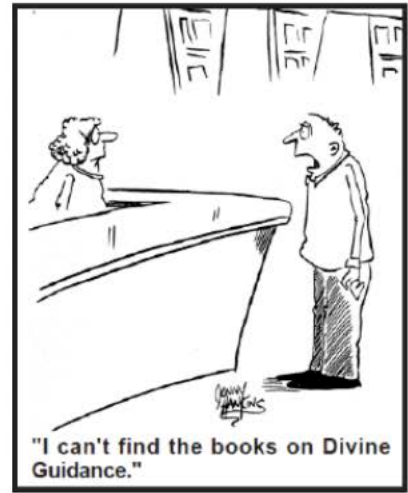
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**Here are some baseball terms found in the Bible:
(Besides "In the Big Inning....") Get it?**

Intentional Walk
Hebrews leaving Egypt

Free Pass
The grace of God

Home Run
Prodigal son parable

Error
Eve and the serpent

Catching Flies
One of the ten Egyptian plagues

Out in Left Field
King Saul, at the end of his life

Circle the Bases
Joshua at Jericho

Rainout
Noah's Ark

Hot Corner
Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego

Double Play
1st & 2nd Corinthians, 1st & 2nd
Thessalonians, 1st & 2nd Kings, etc...

Strikeout
Sodom and Gomorrah

Sacrifice
Yeah, pretty much everywhere

baseball themed amusements

From the Joyful Noiseletter, copied with permission



In the Big Inning....



"I wonder which of the disciples would have been the best ballplayer," pondered Pastor Bing, at the weekly pastor's breakfast at Pam's Sushi and Sauerkraut Buffet.

The others stopped mid-sentence and mid-chew and looked at Bing, wondering again how his mind was working.

"Seriously," he said. "Have you ever wondered how the disciples would have been in other roles? Theater group, rock band, construction crew, baseball team?" Everyone shook their heads, no. But then, their eyes began wandering and gazing as they considered the question.

"I could see them as a solid rock band — AD/BC," laughed Rev. Mike. "Or a theater group — Sabbath Night Live!" offered Rev. Lee. "A baseball team? They would have to play for the Padres," laughed Sister Rhonda. "Or they would all qualify for the Cardinals," said Father Tony.

"Sure," said Bing, "but what positions would they play? I mean, of course Jesus is the manager." "And team owner and coach," Sister Celina said. "I was thinking God the Father as team owner and the Holy Spirit as coaching staff," Bing said. "One and the same," Celina answered.

"Good point," said Bing. "I suppose I would have Peter on the Mound, he seemed to pitch a lot of ideas to Jesus," Vicar Victor said. "And James and John and Andrew in the outfield — fisherman are good at catching things," Pastor Jeff offered.

"And Matthew at first base; a tax collector is used to things being thrown at him," said Pastor Sally. "And Thomas as catcher; he doesn't let anything get past him," said Pastor Kathy.

The pork and sauerkraut omelets were getting cold because suddenly everyone was contributing to ideas of an Apostolic baseball team.

"Let's put Nathaniel and Philip at second and short — they are a good double-play combo, and Simon the Zealot would be zealous at third base," said Father Calil. "And the others can be in the bullpen, although I'm not expecting much out of Judas," Jeff said. "I think he would have fancied himself as a closer, but he obviously was not going to get the save."

"And that's why this is a good idea, this baseball analogy," Bing said. "Jesus always gets the save."