



CHURCH CHAT

Butner Presbyterian Church

Pastors: Brian Stratton, Dewey Cassell

August 2025



A Message From Dewey

One summer break from school, when I was growing up in a suburb of Atlanta, my parents sent me to a day camp at Fernbank Science Center. The cool kids went to some camp near a lake with hiking and archery and canoeing. I went to nerd camp.

One of the things they taught us at nerd ... I mean Fernbank was about plants and trees. They taught us to recognize trees by their leaves and their bark. They taught us how to recognize poison ivy without touching it. We got to see petrified wood. While the cool kids were roasting marshmallows over a fire.

But what was interesting was what happened after the camp was over. I would go places with my parents and, without thinking about it, point out what kind of tree we saw on the side of the road, or caution them about touching a vine, or comment on how a plant was growing toward the sunlight. They were astounded at what I had learned during my forced exile to nerd camp. To my mother's dying day, she would tell you it was the best money she ever spent.

I'm not sure I would go that far, but it is true that after the camp, I never contracted poison ivy again. By contrast, I wouldn't trust the cool kids anywhere near me with a bow and arrow.

And while I don't remember everything I learned that summer, I can still tell an oak tree from a birch.

And more importantly, I look. I pay attention to the trees I see, wherever I am. And before that camp, I couldn't have told you if we even had any trees in our yard, unless it had a tire swing hanging from it.

The point to all this – and yes, there is a point, for those of you who were beginning to wonder – is that often the key to seeing something is looking for it. How many of you have been somewhere with a friend or family member only to have them comment later, “Oh, did you see the ... whatever it might have been – a flower or car or sign?” And although you both went together to the same place at the same time, you never saw it. Because you weren't looking for it.

We talk about the presence of the Holy Spirit and how we sometimes look back on a decision we made, or a course of action we took, and we realize that the Holy Spirit had to have played a part in it. But only after it happened. Could it be that was because we weren't looking for the Holy Spirit?

It's not about searching for Casper in the shadows. It's about being open to the presence of God. It's about *expecting* the presence of God. Not just at the big forks in the road, but every moment of every day. It won't happen overnight, but I believe the more we look for the presence of God in our lives, the more we will find it. What a comfort that would be.

Oh, and be nice to trees. God made them, too.

~Dewey



August Calendar

Sun, 8/3 11am Communion Worship Service
Brian Stratton, Michael McFadden

ACIM after church

Sun, 8/10 11am Worship Service
Brian Stratton, Michelle Osborne

2pm Butner Church Council Meeting
@ Community Methodist Church

Sun, 8/17 9am Session Meeting via zoom

11am Worship Service
Dewey Cassell, Erma Hudgins

5:00 pm Fellowship at Durham Bulls
Game
Durham Bulls stadium



Sun, 8/24 11am Worship Service
Brian Stratton, Cecil Hudgins

Sun, 8/31 11am Worship Service
Brian Stratton, Michael McFadden



FOR BETTER OR VERSE

A calendar of Bible verses, one for each day.
Compiled by Paul Lintern, Joyful Noiseletter

- 1 Romans 8:1
- 2 Luke 8:2
- 3 Romans 8:3
- 4 Acts 8:4
- 5 Proverbs 8:5
- 6 Romans 8:6
- 7 Acts 8:7
- 8 Proverbs 8:8
- 9 Proverbs 8:9
- 10 Hebrews 8:10
- 11 John 8:11
- 12 John 8:12
- 13 Isaiah 8:13
- 14 Proverbs 8:14
- 15 Romans 8:15
- 16 John 8:16
- 17 Isaiah 8:17
- 18 Romans 8:18
- 19 John 8:19
- 20 John 8:20
- 21 Proverbs 8: (20)21
- 22 Proverbs 8:22
- 23 Proverbs 8:23
- 24 Luke 8:24
- 25 Proverbs 8:15
- 26 Acts 8:26
- 27 Romans 8:27
- 28 John 8:28
- 29 Mark 8:29
- 30 Proverbs 8:30
- 31 Romans 8:31

A CONVERSATION WITH GOD

Me: Hey God.

God: Hello.

Me: I'm falling apart. Can you put me back together?

God: I would rather not.

Me: Why?

God: Because you aren't a puzzle.

Me: What about all of the pieces of my life that are falling down onto the ground?

God: Let them stay there for a while. They fell off for a reason. Take some time and decide if you need any of those pieces back.

Me: You don't understand! I'm breaking down!

God: No - *you* don't understand. You are breaking *through*. What you are feeling are just growing pains. You are shedding the things and the people in your life that are holding you back. You aren't falling apart. You are falling into place. Relax. Take some deep breaths and allow those things you don't need any more to fall off of you. Quit holding onto the pieces that don't fit you anymore. Let them fall off. Let them go.

Me: Once I start doing that, what will be left of me?

God: Only the very best pieces of you.

Me: I'm scared of changing.

God: You aren't changing. You are becoming!

Me: Becoming who?

God: Becoming who I created you to be! A person of light and love and charity and hope and courage and joy and mercy and grace and compassion. I made you for more than the shallow pieces you have decided to adorn yourself with that you cling to with such greed and fear. Let those things fall off of you. I love you! Don't change! Become! Become who I made you to be. I'm going to keep telling you this until you remember it.

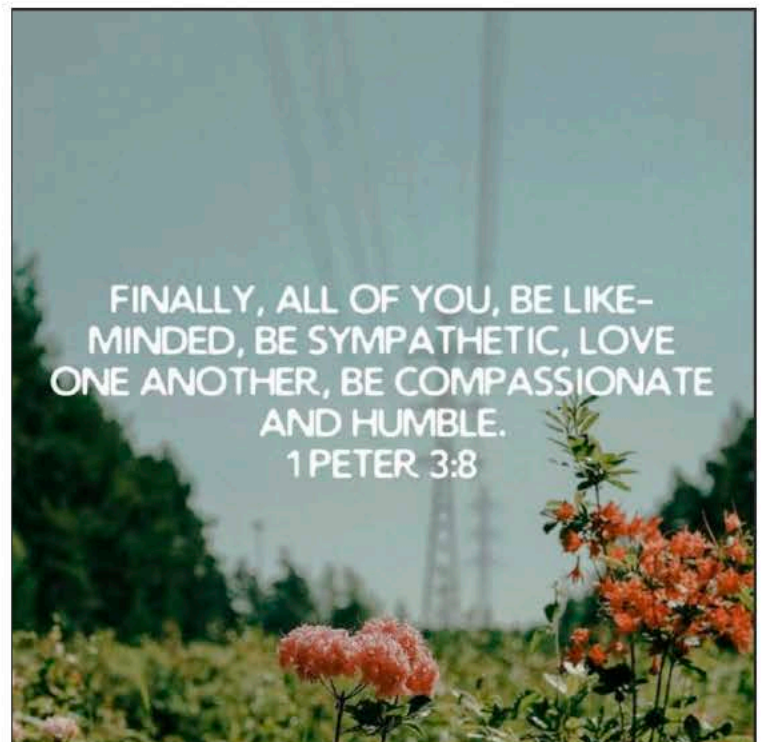
Me: There goes another piece.

God: Yep. Let it be.

Me: So ... I'm not broken?

God: Of course not. You are breaking like the dawn. It's a new day. Become!!!

~Author John Roedel



Church News

Congregational Meeting

There will be a very brief congregational meeting right after worship on Sunday, August 17th to approve the nominating committee members. They are Donald Wilkins, Bebe Coleman, and Cecil Hudgins.

Durham Bulls Fellowship

Our annual Durham Bulls outing will take place on Sunday evening, August 17th. Tickets have been given out and we have 2 left if anyone is interested. Tickets are \$30 each and please reimburse the church by dropping into collection plate, mark it "Durham Bulls Tickets".

September Church Cleaning

Our next church cleaning evening will be held on Wednesday, 9/3. Please come and help keep our church beautiful.

Worship at the Lake

The annual Worship at the Lake will be held September 21st while our weather is still warm and predictable. Our previous October dates have been chilly the last couple of years. Esther will be singing for us, and we may invite some other worshippers to come out as well. And as always, we will have a potluck fellowship afterwards. Mark your calendars!

AUGUST FELLOWSHIP



Durham Bulls Game
August 17th at 5:00 pm

See you at the game!



From the Editor



CONTEMPT

What is it Good For?

"Be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble.

Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. For, whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech. They must turn from evil and do good; they must seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil. Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened. But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. For it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit." 1 Peter 3:8-18

I recently went to my manicurist, Tracy, for a mani/pedi and she talked about a good friend of hers who will no longer have anything to do with Tracy due to political differences. Really? I always find this so absurd. This has become pretty common in our society separating friends and families. It also separates churches, among other things. So, I

decided to scour the internet for a sermon concerning political turmoil.

I found a sermon on YouTube by Ian Simkins that I really enjoyed, and I wanted to share some of his insights with y'all. First of all, the origin of politics comes from two words; poly (many) and ticks (blood sucking parasites). Funny...not funny.

In society and among communities, friends, and families, the subject of politics is becoming increasingly heated and toxic. This is sin. As Christ followers, we must love our neighbors and promote biblical justice. Always. What we talk about and what we support is what we become. We need to become more like Christ. Don't let Fox News or CNN form us. Instead, we need to be in God's word and let that form us.

According to 1 Peter 3:8-18, we are to treat everyone with dignity and respect. When we suffer for good, we receive blessings. We, as believers, cannot respond to evil with evil or insult with insult. We must be Christlike and respond with love, dignity and respect. If you identify as a republican or a democrat, conservative or progressive, instead of identifying as Christian...well that reveals your true loyalty. If you care more for political talking points than the Sermon on the Mount, your faith has become secondary.

Love your enemies, pray for those who do evil. Repay evil and insults with blessings. Christians are meant to be a blessing to the world. And if you see republicans as your enemy or if you see democrats as your enemy, remember what Jesus said about how to treat our enemies.

And please remember, that if you are out there acting and talking with contempt, you are not only representing yourself, you are representing the church, you are representing Christianity, and you most of all, are representing Jesus.

In 1 Peter 3:10 it says, *"Whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech."*

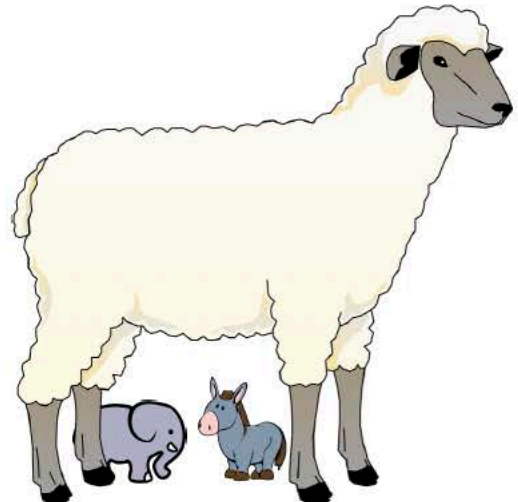
I don't know about you, but I would love to see good days. But you can see in that passage what you must do in order to have that. And you know, the world does not need any more voices that contribute to the chaos.

The next passage in 1 Peter says, *"They must turn from evil and do good; they must seek peace and pursue it."* Not wait for peace, or shut up and keep the peace, but pursue it. Get out there and make it. Blessed are the Peace MAKERS. We are to work to maintain relationships, not win political debates. Our communities are not filled with enemies to be defeated but neighbors to be loved. And those whom we criticize in politics – we more so need to pray for them and their families.

Let's not be defined by an elephant or a donkey. Let's be defined by a lamb.

Romans 13:1-2 says, *"Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves."*

Peace,
Erma



The Lord's Laughter

A man told his friend that he had been working to get rid of a lot of old stuff in the attic of his house. He said: "I was even able to throw out a large, old Bible that had been printed by some guy named Gooden... or Gutten.."

"Not Guttenberg!?" His friend said, astounded.

"Yeah, that's it."

"But don't you know that's a priceless, very rare Bible?"

"I don't think so," the man replied. "It had scribbles all in the margins by some guy named Martin Luther."

A minister was telling a banker about his new choir director.

"He has a tremendous voice!" the pastor said. "He can hold a note for almost two minutes."

"That's nothing," the banker said. "I have held one of his notes for two years!"

"How come it takes so little time for a child who is afraid of the dark to become a teenager who wants to say out all night?"

"No one ever says 'It's only a game' when their team is winning."

A waitress was serving a customer when a bald-headed gent entered and planted himself at a table near the rear. "That's old Professor Snead," the waitress said to a coworker. "He's got a twin brother and they're alike as peas in a pod, except this one's stone deaf. Watch me have some fun with him."

She walked over to the old gent, and, while smiling prettily the whole time, said, "Well, you old bald-headed baboon, what kind of food are you going to pour into that fat stomach of yours today?" "The gent answered softly, "I'll have the ham and eggs, toast, and coffee. And, by the way, my brother is the deaf one."

BLOOPER OF THE MONTH:

In a church bulletin:
"Rev. ____ is attending a seminar on mental illness this week. Please pray for his sane return."

CHURCH SIGN OF THE MONTH:

"This Sunday, Blessing of the Animals. Barbecue after the service."

FAMILY RULES

Always Be Honest

Proverbs 12:22

Count Your Blessings

Psalms 34:1-3

Forgive and Forget

Micah 7:18

Be Supportive of one
Another

Acts 20:35

Be Kind and Tenderhearted

Ephesians 4:32

Keep Your Promises

Romans 4:21

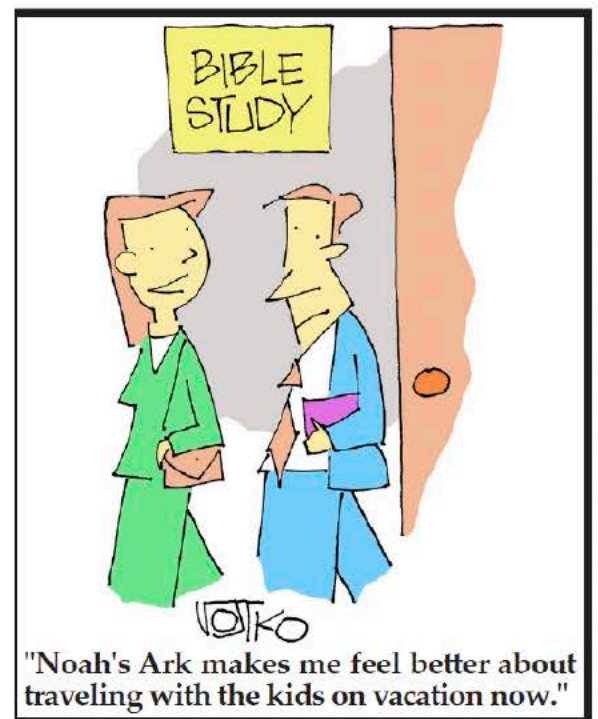
Comfort One Another

1 Thessalonians 4:18

and above all.....

Love One Another

1 Peter 1:22



"Noah's Ark makes me feel better about traveling with the kids on vacation now."

from JoyfulNoiseletter.com

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As the Ancient World Turns

Joshua, Chapter 3

Feet won't slosh when you cross with Josh

Announcer: And now it's time for another episode in the ongoing saga of *All God's Children's on As the Ancient World Turns around the Guiding Light of the Days of All my Ancestor's Lives*, brought to you by Noah's Ark Pet Soap, cleaning up after animals for generations. Now available in a rainbow assortment of colors. Remember, when it comes to animal mess and grime, "Just Say Noah."

NARRATOR: When last we left the Hebrew people, they were completing their 40-year journey from Egypt, through the wilderness, to the Promised Land.

MAN: Sure could have used Google Maps.

NARRATOR: They were camping near the Jordan when they were told to get ready to cross as the ark of the covenant passed by, carried by the priests.

MAN: But this is the rainy season; the Jordan is overflowing its banks. My weather app says it is the worst time to cross.

NARRATOR: The Lord told Joshua:

LORD: Today, I will exalt you in the eyes of the people, the way I did with Charlton Heston. When the priests arrive with the ark of the covenant, tell them to step into the river.

JOSHUA: Will the animals come two-by-two?

LORD: Different ark. And tell the people to stay way back until it is time to cross.

NARRATOR: So, Joshua addressed the people:

JOSHUA: This is how you will know that the living God is among you, he will certainly drive out the nations that live in this land. All of them. He is the Lord of all the Earth and is going ahead of you.

NARRATOR: So, the priests who carried the ark went ahead of them to the edge of the river. It was flood stage, as it is all during harvest season.

PRIEST: Too late to get my floaties? Maybe flip-flops?

NARRATOR: But as soon as the priests' feet touched the water, the water upstream stopped flowing and the water downstream cleared out, and they stood on dry ground in the middle of the river, and the people passed by, with no need for floaties or flip-flops at all. Afterward, the Lord said to Joshua:

LORD: Choose one man from each tribe and tell them to pick up a big stone from the river bed to stack as a memorial where we camp tonight. It will be a reminder of what took place today.

JOSHUA: Someday our children will ask why the stones are there, and we will tell them that the Lord cut off the water so we could cross into this land, and these stones remind us to tell the story. Hey, I've got it! We could also have a big feast with barley loaves and fish and call it "Crossover."

LORD: The stone memorial is enough, but that loaves and fish idea; I might use that somewhere down the road.

NARRATOR: And down the road we go as well. Join us next time for another exciting episode of *"As the Ancient World Turns."*

*By Paul Lintern
Joyful Noiseletter, May 2025
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