



# CHURCH CHAT



Butner Presbyterian Church

Pastors: Brian Stratton, Dewey Cassell

December 2025



## A Message From Dewey

'Tis the season to be jolly. But, to be honest, I suspect a lot of people don't really feel all that jolly. It has been a ... well, let's call it challenging year. At least it has for me. I suspect I am not alone. And I know that I am far more blessed than many other people, so I am certainly not complaining. Just not exactly jolly.

I'll spare you the list of things that made this year a challenge. If you share the sentiment, then you have your own list. It was fueled, at least in part, by a misguided expectation that things would be better. But in many ways, it is not. Better, that is. At least not for many people. Mother Nature wreaked havoc with tornadoes and hurricanes and fires and snowstorms, leading to a devastating loss of life and homes across the nation. The rollercoaster economy has resulted in higher prices everywhere from the gas pump to the grocery store. And violence continues unabated, from the ongoing war in Ukraine to countless lives taken by gun and knife and car in every part of this country.

In the midst of all this, we enter into the season of Advent. And it dawned on me that perhaps we have more in common with our Biblical ancestors from 2000 years ago than we might think.

Even with the reassurance of the angel Gabriel, how must the teenaged Mary have felt upon learning that she was pregnant? What would her family and neighbors think? How would they have treated her? And what about Joseph? Now he had to take care of a young bride and the child of God. How did it affect their relationship? All this while living under the ever-present shadow of Roman occupation and a Jewish

society intolerant of anything outside the norm. And then they learned they must travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem for a census – a journey of 90 miles. They probably weren't feeling all that jolly either.

As we celebrate the season of Advent, we do so remembering the promises of God for hope, peace, joy, and love. I know what the Apostle Paul said about love in his first letter to the Corinthians, but while it helps to endure the challenges we all face, it is not enough. Joy is difficult to find for many people, especially at this time of year. And we are in desperate need of peace, but it seems to elude us these days. But perhaps the promise we need most is the promise of hope.

Why should we find hope in God? Because the scriptures tell us that, "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble." (Psalm 46:1) Because the history of the Hebrew people recorded in the Bible tells of when God has come to their aid, time and again. Because God so loved us and this world that he gave his only begotten son, that we might have eternal life.

It may not happen exactly when we want or in the way we expect, but God's will be done. As Jesus says in the gospels, "all things are possible to him who believes." And that is reason for hope.

In the midst of whatever challenges you find, may you find hope in the assurance of the sovereignty of God.

"but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." (Isaiah 40:13)

Wishing you all the blessings of the season of Advent.  
~Dewey

# DECEMBER Calendar

## FRIDAY, 12/5

7:00 pm Butner Christmas in the Park  
@ Gazebo Park, Pre-K performing



## SATURDAY, 12/6

2:00 pm Butner Christmas Parade  
On Central Avenue



## SUNDAY, 12/7

11:00 am Communion Worship Service  
Brian Stratton, Michael McFadden  
Advent Readers: Michael & Lisa McFadden

ACIM after church

## SUNDAY, 12/14

11:00 am Worship Service  
John Etheridge, Michelle Osborne  
Advent Readers: Michelle Osborne

2:00 pm Butner Church Council Meeting  
@ Community Methodist Church

## FRIDAY, 12/19

7:00 pm Pre-K Christmas Program  
Extra hands are always appreciated



## SUNDAY, 12/21

9:00 am Session Meeting  
via Zoom

11:00 am Worship Service  
Dewey Cassell, Erma Hudgins  
Advent Readers: Nancy & Donald Wilkins

12:00 pm Brief Congregational Meeting

12:10 pm Annual Christmas Party  
White elephant gift exchange



## THURSDAY, 12/25



## SUNDAY, 12/28

11:00 am Worship Service  
Jack Donovan, Michael McFadden

## WEDNESDAY, 12/31



# A CHRISTMAS EVE STORY

**EDITOR'S NOTE: I thought this was a beautiful story to share this season. I hope you are blessed by it. Author Unknown**

The year my dad, who was a pastor at the time, was caught in his addiction, the church leadership asked him and my mom to not attend the Christmas Eve service. The investigation was ongoing and they wanted him to step back while it happened. What they didn't count on, I don't think, was for me to show up at the service.

I have a deep commitment to tradition so when my parents said we weren't going to the service, I resolved to go by myself.

Under the weight of uncertainty and the fear of what I had suspected might just be a true accusation, I showed up to the candlelight service.

Families were there to celebrate, it was Christmas after all.

I found my usual spot at the front and as the first carols rang out, my tears began to fall. I felt like an imposter. I was a cloud of grief and darkness amidst a cheerful celebration. I felt guilty for dampening the time of rejoicing.

As I sat, I found myself talking to Jesus, "I'm ruining your party," I told him. It was His response in that moment that changed Christmas for me forever. He told me, "I came to that manger as a baby not for

those in celebration, but for those in mourning. I came for you. In this moment. Right here."

For the first time in my relatively easy life, I was tasting heartache (and oh if only I knew how much more would come). And it was there that Jesus showed me the heart of Christmas. Jesus stepped down to pursue the broken and the hurting and the lost.

If this year has broken you down, isolated you, left you grieving or fearful or hurt, I want you to know that you don't have to muster up cheer. You don't have to feel like a downer in the midst of celebration. You can sit at the feet of a savior who came for you where you are right now. That's how Immanuel works. It's God with us in the dirt giving us hope in the face of despair.

*"Those who walk in darkness have seen a great light, on those living in spaces of deepest darkness a light has dawned." Isaiah 9:2*





# Church News



## **ALL SAINTS DAY SERVICE**

On Sunday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>, we held an All Saints Day Worship Service. It was a beautiful and emotional time as we all took turns lighting candles for those saints who have made an impact in our lives and have gone on to their heavenly homes.

## **BUTNER CHURCH COUNCIL'S ANGEL TREE**

We are once again participating in the Butner Church Council's Angel Tree. Thank you to all who have volunteered to provide gifts for this community's needy children.

Gifts should be wrapped, tagged, and delivered to the Baptist Church anytime between 8:00 am and 2:30 pm before Saturday, December 13<sup>th</sup>. If that is inconvenient, please bring your gifts to our church before Friday, December 12<sup>th</sup> and place them by the Christmas tree and Cecil will make sure they are delivered.

Gift distribution to the families will occur on Saturday, December 13<sup>th</sup>, 10am-noon. Angel tree kids will have the opportunity to visit with Santa at that time. Shoppers and sponsors are invited to attend to experience the joy and gratitude of these families. Questions? Contact Lisa Kennedy at 919-414-3213.

## **PRE-K CHRISTMAS PROGRAM**

The annual Pre-K Christmas program will be held Friday evening, December 19<sup>th</sup> at 7pm. Please consider helping as Susan Zinc always needs a few extra hands, especially with refreshments afterwards.

## **CONGREGATIONAL MEETING**

There will be a very brief congregational meeting on Sunday, December 21<sup>st</sup> immediately after worship. The nominating committee will present their report concerning elder nomination and the church will vote for elders serving on session in 2026. If you are a BPC church member, please make every effort to attend.

## **CHRISTMAS FELLOWSHIP**

After worship and congregational meeting on December 21<sup>st</sup>, we will have our annual fellowship luncheon and white elephant gift exchange. This is always a lot of fun!

## **NO CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE**

Due to several church members unavailable to attend and/or participate in a service on Christmas Eve, we will not have one this year.

## **SESSION RETREAT**

The session plans to have their annual retreat on Saturday afternoon, January 10<sup>th</sup> at 9 am. It will be held at Trinity Ave. Presbyterian Church in Durham.

## **ADVENT DECORATIONS**

Thanks to all who stayed after church last Sunday to decorate the sanctuary for Advent! We plan to take down the decorations after church on January 4<sup>th</sup> so please mark your calendars.

## **BCC THANKSGIVING MEALS**

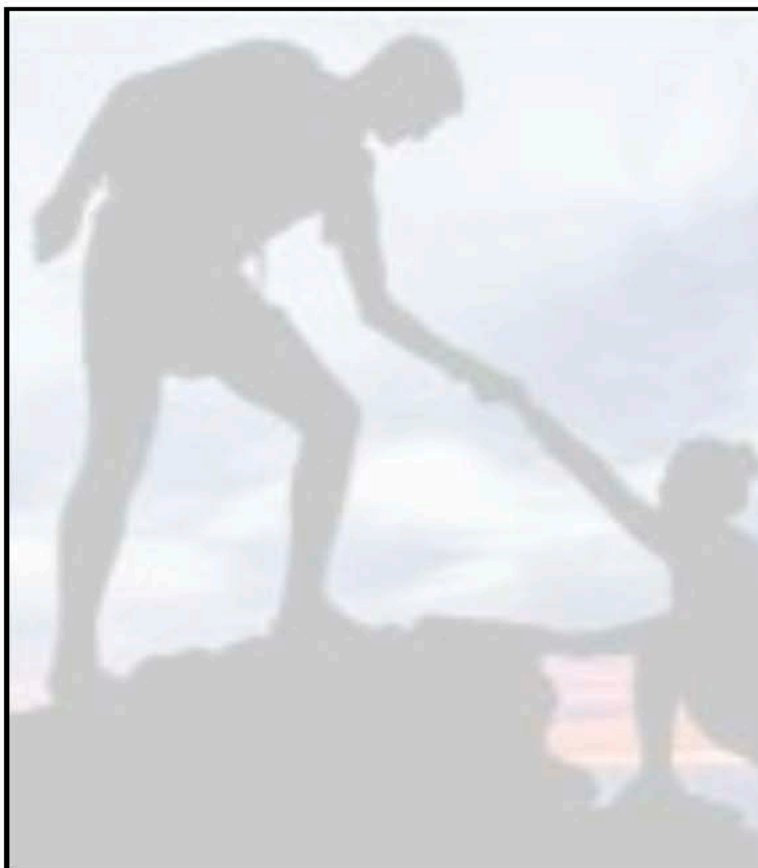
The Butner Church Council's annual Thanksgiving food giveaway to the local needy was once again held at our church. So, you may have noticed crates of food everywhere! There were approx. 40 families served. All were distributed on Saturday, November 22nd.



## **BUILDING AND GROUNDS**

The Pre-K back door has been replaced.

Every once in a while we have to have the parking lot gravel redistributed and smoothed out. Jake Schaper came out with his tractor to give us a hand.



**REMEMBER ....**

*Whenever you're in a position to help someone, be glad and always do it because that's God answering someone else's prayers through you.*

[lessonslearnedinlife.com](http://lessonslearnedinlife.com)



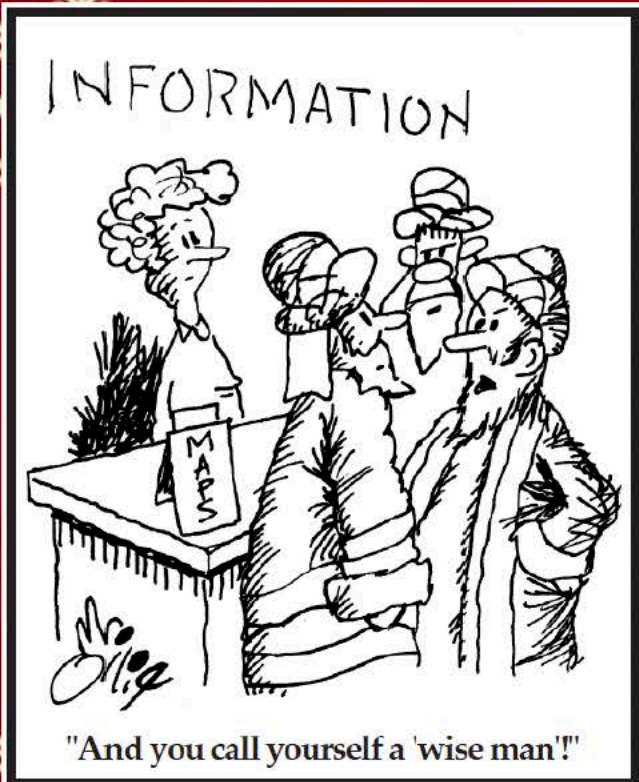
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Ron Morgan

"Gold... Frankincense... Myrrh... why wouldn't *wise* men bring diapers?"

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THE FAMILY CIRCUS By Bil and Jeff Keane



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"I'll have my mommy email you if I think of anything else."

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## FOR BETTER OR VERSE

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

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



**We go from Malachi to Matthew in one page of our scriptures, but that one piece of paper that separates the Old Testament from the New Testament represents 400 years of history - 400 years where there wasn't a prophet, 400 years where God's voice wasn't heard. And that silence was broken with the cry of a baby on Christmas night.**

**~Louis Giglio**

