

Star of Bethlehem

“Abiding in Christ, Loving as Christ, Inviting to Christ”



October 2011

“Discernment” – “the quality of being able to grasp and comprehend that which is unclear.” Some things don’t require a lot of it.

Clear: **65,000.** That’s the estimated number of phone calls made by a Dutch woman to her ex-boyfriend (174 calls per day). I’m pretty sure she has not quite given up on the relationship. And I’m pretty certain of at least one of the reasons the ex-boyfriend is now her “ex.”

Clear: The newly-released movie “*Creature – Terror Has Teeth*” will NOT be an immediate success at the box office. On its opening weekend, it grossed an average of only \$220.00 per theater – a new record low for Hollywood. It scored a **13** on the movie review website “RottenTomatoes.com” (that’s on their “Tomatometer”). What is unclear is if it will become a college cult flick, like the worse than terrible “*Attack of the Killer Tomatoes!*” which continues to have a rather strange following on college campuses.

Clear: The refrain of the Bible book *Judges*, “...and everyone did what was right in his own eyes....” is a formula for lousy living and for displeasing the living God, Whom we have sworn to glorify with our lives.

Clear: That we as believers in Jesus are to be mature, to have our “*senses trained to discern between good and evil*” (*Hebrews 5:14*) that in issues of faith we would “*no longer be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming*” (*Ephesians 4:14*)

Clear: Why our Bethlehem Church elders have serious concerns of faith and life issues in which we differ with our current Presbyterian denomination:

The Nature of God – We trust in a God Who has adequately revealed His character to us in Scripture, not relying upon some projection of human imaginations.

The Uniqueness of Christ – We hold to the core Christian belief that Jesus Christ is uniquely the Way, the Truth, and the Life; not simply one among many nice options.

The Nature of Scripture and Church Authority – We assert that the Bible is truly God’s Word for us, and is to be followed, even when to do so goes against our current culture or personal emotional whims.

Church Membership – We hold that profession of faith in Jesus Christ – the one risen from the dead on the third day - as Savior and Lord is required for church membership, rather than saying that membership should be open to “persons regardless of theological conviction.”

Church Leadership – We agree with the New Testament and with 2,000 years of historic Christianity that the standards for sexual behavior – along with ALL categories of behavior – should be in accord with the norms clearly stated in the Bible. This is true for all Christians, but especially for our ordained leaders.

Unclear – When the Charlotte Presbytery will finally appoint their appointees to the Bethlehem “Discernment Team” so we can proceed in the process of seeking dismissal from the PCUSA to the more Biblically-centered Evangelical Presbyterian Church denomination. Our Session has appointed our four for that “Team” quite some time ago, and for now are still waiting for the Presbytery to cooperate by giving us four names to represent them.

In Jesus,

Dr. T



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1 Christian Music Day— Carowinds
2 Congregational Meeting to elect Elder Class of 2014 6:00pm - Worship MT	3	4 10 - 11:30am Bible Study 7:00 pm - Bible Study	5 7:00pm - Presbyterian Women	6 7:00pm— Celebrate Recovery Leadership Training	7 9am – 10:30am Bible Study	8
9 6:00pm Youth	10	11 10 - 11:30am Bible Study 7:00 pm - Session Bible Study	12 11:30am - Senior Lunch 7:00 pm - Mission & Service MT	13 10:00am— Widows & Widowers' Support Group	14 9am – 10:30am Bible Study	15
16 6:00pm Youth	17	18 10 - 11:30am Bible Study 7:00 pm - Bible Study	19 7:00pm Christian Ed MT	20 7:00pm— Celebrate Recovery Leadership Training	21 9am – 10:30am Bible Study Youth Lock In	22 7:00pm Country Days Corn Maze
23 No Youth	24	25 10 - 11:30am Bible Study 7:00 pm - Bible Study	26 10:00am – Congregational Care MT	27	28 9am – 10:30am Bible Study	29
30 6:00pm Youth	31					



The preschool began revving up for a great year with a race theme at Open House and we have not slowed down yet. We currently have 10 four year olds and four three year olds enrolled. We welcome Miss Kelsey as our new teacher assistant.

With our new Bible time we have been learning how God created the earth and everything and everyone in it. We met Adam and Eve and talked about following God's rules. Right now we are learning that Noah build a boat like God told him to. We thought it might be crowded and stinky with all those animals! We are going to try out some boats of our own too.

Construction on the new playground is set to begin September 22 if the weather permits. The children are excited about it and want to thank everyone who contributed to this project.

Thank you to all who have donated items such as paper, magazines, dry pasta, jars and many other things. We will put everything to good use.

This Fall we have another student with a peanut allergy. **Please note: If any group is using the preschool rooms remember to wash the tables and chairs when food is served and take out the trash.**

In Christ's love,
Robin Graham



- October 10 Scott & Audrey Ferreira
- October 19 Ryan & Mary Knight
- October 28 Rich & Robin Castorina

If your anniversary is not listed or if you are not sure we have your anniversary, please call the church office so we can make sure we have it for the future!

A guide for giving

"I do not believe one can settle how much we ought to give. I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare. In other words, if our expenditure on comforts, luxuries, amusements, etc. is up to the standard common among those with the same income as our own, we are probably giving away too little.

"If our charities do not at all pinch or hamper us, I should say they are too small. There ought to be things we should like to do and cannot do because our charitable expenditures exclude them."
—C.S. Lewis



	<u>September 20, 2011</u>	<u>2011 YTD</u>
Regular Offerings	\$8,619.25	\$106,965.69
Mission Offerings	\$10,127.00	\$33,367.62



"The love of money is the root of all evil? Is that the whole Treasurer's Report?"



*** THIS MONTH'S ***
birthdays

2nd Doris Greene
6th Zoe Lemon
7th Robert Currie
8th Cathy Deason
11th Tommy Aldridge
13th Daphne Caldwell
21st Juanita Cain
23rd Nathan Gianelli
29th Paula Smith

If your birthday is not listed or if you are not sure we have your birthday, please call the church office so we can make sure we have it for the future!



On Saturday, October 22, children K—5th grade and their families are invited to a great night of fun at the Country Days Corn Maze. We'll work our way

through the maze, play games, then make s'mores by our own private bonfire. The event will last from 7—9 pm and costs \$5 per person. Check out the maze at countrydayscornmaze.com. Email or call Andy to register your family.



Bethlehem's Half of the Discernment Team:

Carolyn Gordon
Chad Price
Eric Thomas
Dr. T

Alternates:
Jan Haigler
Pat Sloan



Volunteer
Schedule

October 2011

October 2 -

8:45 Greeters: Ann Cuthbertson
8:45 Nursery: Tim Wilhelm Family
11:00 Ushers: Scott Cuthbertson
11:00 Nursery: Lazette Thomas
Open Church: Patricia Kindley
Close Church: Ryan & Mary Knight

October 9 -

8:45 Greeters: Scott Cuthbertson Family
8:45 Nursery: Kara & Zoe Lemon
11:00 Ushers: Gerald Gaddy
11:00 Nursery: Faye Vicars
Open Church: Danny Philemon
Close Church: Mike McConnaughey

October 16 -

8:45 Greeters: Holeman Family
8:45 Nursery: McConnaughey Family
11:00 Ushers: Johnny & Carolyn Gordon
11:00 Nursery: Donna Wilhelm
Open Church: Don Price
Close Church: George Sloan

October 23 -

8:45 Greeters: Patricia Kindley
8:45 Nursery: Outen Family
11:00 Ushers: B.B. Haigler
11:00 Nursery: Jan Haigler
Open Church: Tom Aldridge
Close Church: Tilden Belk

October 30 -

8:45 Greeters: McConnaughey Family
8:45 Nursery: Don & Ann Price
11:00 Ushers: Henry & Ruby Hall
11:00 Nursery: Brenda Huntley
Open Church: Scott Cuthbertson
Close Church: Gerald Gaddy

****Please Note: Please exchange dates with someone if you can not be at church on your assigned Sunday. Thanks you for your help and cooperation.**



Bethlehem celebrated their annual Rally Day on September 18, 2011. The day began with a breakfast to honor all who attend Sunday School as well as all who teach in the Sunday School program. Sausage and ham biscuits, mixed fruit,

jam and jelly, juice and coffee were the menu items for breakfast. Everyone seemed to enjoy the food and the conversation before the "early service" at 8:45. At ten o'clock, the program moved from the fellowship hall to the Multi Purpose Room to begin the recognition of last year's teachers and commissioning of the new teachers for the coming year. Last years' teachers were honored by Andy with a gift of chocolate from the Christian Education Team and all at Bethlehem, saying "Thank you for teaching the SWEET words of Jesus"! Thank you to all on the Christian Education Team for working to make this event so memorable!

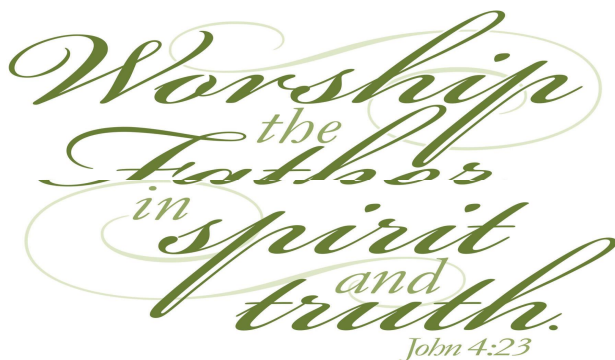


Living by Son-Light

Some of our days seem very dark. Sickness, the death of a loved one, the loss of a job or another struggle overshadows life. In our despair, it can be difficult to sense God's presence. If God were here, we reason, surely he'd be shining his light on our dark circumstances.

When life is bright and joyous, it's easy to sense God; the sun becomes a natural metaphor for God's Son, Jesus, the Light of the world. But even on cloudy days, the sun still shines, its presence not bound by our limited vision. And in the darkest night, the sun remains; the warmth it gave before dusk lingers, enough to preserve us into the dawning of a new day. Sometimes we even catch its reflection in the moon.

"Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning" (Psalm 30:5b, NRSV). Trust in God; even in life's dark times, the Son still shines!



Bethlehem Presbyterian Newsletter -- 7608 Concord Highway -- Monroe, NC 28110 -- Bethlehem@bethlehemchurch.net

EVANGELISM "But how shall they ask Him to save them unless they believe in Him? And how can they believe in Him if they have never heard about Him? And how can they hear about Him unless someone tells them? And



Ministry Team

how will anyone go and tell them unless someone sends them?" Romans 10:14

How do we approach evangelism? In the first century, the church communicated the good news of Jesus throughout their world without fancy programs or elaborate equipment. They lived their faith and taught their neighbors and friends; thus the church saw rapid growth. Jesus was all they had to give people. We can do the same. All we need is the willingness and voice to share with others why we believe as we do. 1 Peter 3:15 says, "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who ask you to give the reason for the hope you have."

Remember people react differently to the message of God's love. One might listen attentively and immediately decide to follow Christ. Another might weigh the truth for many years before believing. Others may never accept Christ. Our responsibility is to talk about how God has changed us and how God assures us of eternal life. But we cannot make the decision for others; we all have free will.

If we look for opportunities to introduce our community and the world to Jesus and His life giving message, we will find them. Ask God to make you a faithful witness for Christ. It doesn't cost money to share he gospel in our daily interactions. All we have to give people is Jesus—What a priceless gift!

May God fill you with holy boldness to speak about Christ to others so they can come to know and believe in Him.



The wonder of worship

How sweet the hour of praise and prayer,
When our devotions blend,
And on the wings of faith divine
Our songs of joy ascend!
—Fanny Crosby

Looking in All the Wrong Places

Why Did London Burn?

Chuck Colson, August 22, 2011

The London riots are over — for now. The perpetrators are facing justice. Some British courts are open round-the-clock to handle the case load. And judges are in no mood for leniency. Now the Brits are struggling for answers. Why? Why did these mostly young rioters go nuts? And lest you think that's their problem, not ours, you might ask the same question about why flash mobs of teenagers have ransacked stores in Philadelphia and terrorized and beaten visitors to the Wisconsin State Fair.

A recent *New York Times* article examined the standard, pat answers: The Police lost control; mob mentality gripped the rioters; kids were unemployed and had no hope; government cutbacks angered them; social media fanned the flames, on and on.

At least the writer, Ravi Somaia, had the good sense to point out that none of these answers add up. And they certainly don't explain why folks like college graduates and aspiring athletes joined in the mayhem. Quoting a British psychologist, the *Times* article ends with a shrug of the shoulders: "We may never know" why the riots happened.

Well as the conventional wisdom always had it, as the *Boston Globe* in an OPED put it last week, it's the result of economic deprivation. Or some people say politics, or poverty, or psychology, or racism, or any -ism.

Well folks, it lies in the human heart. This is basic worldview 101. And no one in our super tolerant society today can figure this out.

And though attacked viciously by the left, Prime Minister Cameron got it right, it's a moral problem. The rioters looted and burned because they chose to do so. They made a moral choice, a very bad one.

All human beings are made in the image of God — free to choose good or evil. Given man's fallen nature, our proclivity is to choose evil. We Christians call the choosing of evil "sin."

This proclivity to sin must be restrained through moral training and the formation of a healthy conscience. And the process has to begin at a young age — with an individual's character shaped, honed, and encouraged by loving instructors, usually the family, the faith community, and, well, once-upon-a-time, by schools.

As the conscience is trained and strengthened, the individual has a fighting chance to reject sin and choose to do good more often than not.

And then, again, as we Christians know, the battle of conscience rages in every human heart. Re-read Roman 6 and 7. It's an unfair fight, one we only win with divine aid — and the support of others who will hold us accountable to do the right thing.

I know we are swimming against the post-modern cultural tide. We've taught our kids that good and evil are in the eye of the beholder; that the key to happiness is self-fulfillment, not virtue. And then we wonder why London burns or flash mobs rage in Philadelphia.

But folks, we have a choice. We see people for who they are — prone to make the wrong moral choices — and commit to train and inspire them to make good moral choices, or this is our choice, we can bar the windows and start hiring more riot police.

Session Briefs for September 13, 2011

Rev. Thomas convened a stated Session meeting with prayer. Seven elders present, two absent. Charles Greene presented the devotion centered on the "Bible, God's Holy Word".

Communications:

Union County Presbyterian churches will have a meeting on September 25 from 2 - 4:00 p.m. at Benton Heights Presbyterian Church for the purpose of reviewing the New Form of Government (Book of Order). All elders are urged to attend.

Letter of transfer for Bonnie Hovey to Mint Hill Presbyterian.

Pastor's Report:

Sept. 16-17 – overnight with Scout Troop to Virginia Creeper Trail.

Date to be announced – Speak with the Session of Kings Mountain Presbyterian Church.

Each Tuesday 10 – 11:30 a.m. – Bible Study at church.

Treasurer's Report:

Bill Moss reported that Jan.1 through Sept.13, 2011, a deficit of \$16,101.65.

Ministry Team Reports:

Building and Grounds – B.B. Haigler reported heating units being converted from propane to natural gas.

Christian Education – Judy Johnson presented a list of Sunday school teachers for 2011-12.

Evangelism - Patsy Cuthbertson shared information on the new member classes for Sept.11 and 25th with Rev. Thomas leading.

Mission and Service – Charles Greene stated:

In September, we will focus on Habitat for Humanity with a speaker during worship services.

The outreach project for 2011 will be aiding needed families at Fairview, Unionville and New Salem Elementary Schools. This replaces the Tazewell, TN. Project.

Pre-School – New playground equipment will be built to replace the existing ones. A donation of \$1500.00 has been received toward this project.

Worship – Faye Vicars stated homecoming on Sept.11 was a success. Team will evaluate best month for homecoming next year.

Old Business:

At a called Session meeting on September 6, the Session selected four individuals to represent the congregation on the Discernment Team. They will be working with four individuals, selected by Presbytery, in considering the withdrawal of Bethlehem from the PCUSA. Bethlehem's team consist of Carolyn Gordon, Chad Price, Eric Thomas and Rev. Ken Thomas.

New Business:

Presbytery meeting at Siler Presbyterian Church will be October 11, 2011 at 10:00 a.m. Commissioners elected: Patsy Cuthbertson and Judy Johnson; alternate, Faye Vicars.

Prayer Concerns: Charles Greene, Judy Johnson, Lucille Purser and Bill Faulk.

Rev. Thomas dismissed with prayer.

The next Session meeting will be on October 11, 7:00 p.m. in the Jones classroom.

In Christ,
Don Price



The Latin phrase *Ecclesia semper reformanda est* means "The church is always reforming"; implied is "And that's good!"

Ongoing change and growth are important for individuals, too, but for many of us, change is hard. Use this prayer poem to embrace positive change, safe in the arms of our unchanging God.

Cradle to grave —
How shall my life flow?
Always the same,
Never daring to grow? Since
GOD is the same, always faithful and near,
I'm free to move forward in spite of my fear. So...
Naming the Lord as my Power through strife, I
Go forth braving newness — in faith and in life!

—Heidi Mann

The benefits of journaling

Regular writing is a rewarding, beneficial way to improve your spiritual life. Journaling allows you to:

- express thoughts and emotions in a safe way,
- analyze problems and find patterns,
- face fears by writing them down,
- record and remember God's work in your life,
- record prayers and answers,
- remember life lessons that God is teaching you
- and stay focused on your priorities.

To begin, all you need is a pen, paper and some regular quiet time.



"I Believe"

I believe in sunshine;
but I cannot clasp its ray.
I cannot capture ocean tides;
just watch them day by day.
I believe in thinking;
yet no brick can think a thought.
I believe in loving;
though love can't be boxed or bought.
I believe in gifts from God ...
diverse, yet clear ... and thus:
I believe God's Love enfolds,
sustains, and blesses us!

—Peggy Ferrell, *Poems and Prayers*

Time to step down

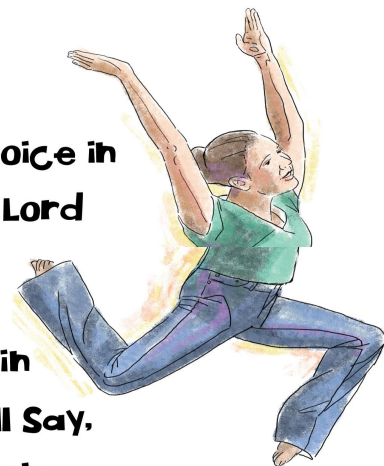
Americans enjoy an abundance of freedoms. From what we'll pursue to what we'll eat for lunch, we're constantly making decisions about what we want out of life. So it's hard to find peace when our plans go awry and we lose control of our circumstances.

A wise person suggested, "For peace of mind, resign as general manager of the universe." What if we stepped down and let God be God? He created the universe, after all. Shouldn't we trust him to run it?

**Rejoice in
the Lord**

**again
I will say,
Rejoice.**

Philippians 4:4, NRSV





Bethlehem Presbyterian Church
7608 Concord Highway
Monroe, North Carolina 28110
(704) 753-4223
www.bethlehemchurch.net

Star of Bethlehem

Bethlehem Presbyterian Church

Mission:

**To glorify God
by leaving a legacy of faith
to succeeding generations through
the proclamation of the good news of Jesus
in word and deed,
by the power of the Holy Spirit.**

We will accomplish our mission by:

Abiding in Christ - *I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing* - John 15:5

We are a community of believers who seek to dwell in the presence of Jesus and who strive to grow into maturity in our relationship with God in Christ. We will encourage others to do the same.

Loving Others as Christ - *This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.* - John 15:12-13
We are a community of believers who seek to respond to Jesus' grace in our lives by loving others with his love.

Inviting others to Christ - *"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? - Romans 10:13-15a Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.* Matthew 28:19-20

We are a community of believers who blessed by the presence of Jesus and provision of God the father will invite all those within our sphere of influence into the saving presence of Jesus.