Friends in Christ, what a delight it is to be joining you in ministry starting this month. My husband Jeff and I along with our two boys, Nathan (7) and Zachary (5), moved to New Bern in June when Jeff accepted a new position at the hospital, and it was a good time for me to explore new ministry opportunities after serving as an associate pastor in a congregation in Winchester, VA for almost eleven years.

New Bern very quickly felt like home – we love the warm weather, close beaches, friendly neighbors, and great activities for our family. I’ve spent the past few months getting the kids settled into school, supply preaching most Sundays at churches in the area, providing administrative support to West New Bern Presbyterian Church, and working on my doctorate in biblical interpretation and proclamation (half way done!). As I shared at the New Hope Presbytery meeting when I was welcomed to the presbytery, I have been cultivating the spiritual discipline of availability, and it has truly been a blessing to be able to go where help is needed. When I was contacted about this position, it felt like God had brought me here at the right time. I look forward to meeting you all and learning more about you, and sharing worship, prayers and meals together! I am passionate about faithful, authentic worship of God, learning and teaching about the Bible, and service to Christ and community.

I like running, gardening, painting, and reading (looking forward to reading for fun again when all this school work is done) and I love watching the Olympics. We also have an old Labrador and four chickens.

-Maren Sonstegard-Spray
The following is a resume of the Stated Meeting of the Session on December 12, 2017:

Attendance averaged at worship in November was 316; average attendance in November 2016 was 318. Sunday School attendance for November 2017 was 59.

The Lord Supper, the Baptism of the Lord, will be celebrated on January 7, 2018.

The Session Class of 2017 who are rotating off the Session were recognized for their service - Bill Lathan, Mike McAden, Lydia Finlayson, Wendy Moeller, Lynn Gorges, Marge Avery, Bill Pope, and Hal Vandersea.

A Congregational Meeting is called for January 14, 2018, at both services, to elect the 2018 - 2019 Nominating Committee. The committee will serve dual roles - to secure nominees for the Session Class of 2021 and to serve as our Associate Pastor Nominating Committee. Presbytery has approved such action.

- Clerk of Session

**Rev. Hawkins Is Published**

We’ve just completed our bicentennial year when we considered our congregation’s past, present and future. Aware of it being our bicentennial year, *MY New Bern Magazine* requested an essay from me that was published in the summer 2017 issue (p. 68) entitled *Nature’s beauty a reflection of God*. It is an article about the colonial American Churchman, Jonathan Edwards. As you have heard, Edwards was the father of Eunice Hunt and the grandfather of Frances Devereux, two of our thirteen founders. To this day Edwards is the leading philosopher and one of two of the greatest theologians America has produced.

A part of my continuing education work over my years in New Bern has been further study of this great man at the Jonathan Edwards Center at Yale Divinity School, New Haven, CT. There are nine other JE Centers in: Melbourne, Australia; Sao Paulo, Brazil; Bloemfontein, South Africa; Tokyo, Japan; Leuven, Belgium; Heidelberg, Germany; Wroclaw, Poland; Budapest, Hungary; and Deerfield, Illinois.

In 1817, over one hundred years after his birth and around the time of the founding of our congregation, Edwards’ writings were all the rage. He has been making quite a comeback since the middle of the 20th century. Available in the church library is the encyclopedia here advertised. I authored five articles in the encyclopedia, having to do with Edwards’ take on Atheism; *Infusion of Grace; the Sacraments; Eunice Edwards Pollock Hunt;* and *Depravity*. Recovery from surgery prevented authoring a sixth on the Natural Order.
The Jonathan Edwards Encyclopedia

Harry S. Stout, general editor
Kenneth P. Minkema and Adriaan C. Neele, associate editors
Foreword by George M. Marsden

Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) is widely acknowledged to be one of America’s most important theologians and considered a fountainhead of American evangelicism. He not only played an important role in his own time but also influenced the generations that followed in profound ways.

With more than four hundred entries, The Jonathan Edwards Encyclopedia provides a wide-ranging perspective on Edwards, offering succinct synopses of topics large and small from his life, thought, and work. Summaries of Edwards’s ideas as well as descriptions of the people and events of his times are all easy to find, and suggestions for further reading point to ways to explore topics in greater depth.

Comprehensive and reliable, with contributions from the premier Edwards scholars in the world, this encyclopedia will be the standard reference work on one of the most extraordinary figures in American history.


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NOTE: This prepublication information is subject to change.
A New Year’s Resolution: “prepare the way of the Lord.” Isaiah foretold of making the road straight and smooth that leads from our exile to the place where God comes in power. (Isaiah 40:1 – 11) Jesus proclaimed the nearness of God’s kingdom, a spiritual kingdom, which we could turn and see. (Mark 1:14 – 15)

As the new year begins, let us consider adopting one new practice to help smooth our road of return to this different kingdom. Devote time to daily meditative reading of scripture; take a course to strengthen your prayer life; add one service weekly in community worship; simplify your focus by intentionally abstaining from excessive attachments to cell phones, Facebook and TV; take a retreat or pilgrimage to give serious consideration to self examination; find a special friend with whom you can share “things of God and other important stuff;” practice hospitality through community organizations serving others.

It is all about small steps to begin our journey with God. A little step into a new spiritual practice smooths the road out of exile. It moves us out of the line of sight. As we change the direction in which we are looking for happiness, “Then God’s bright glory will shine and everyone will see it. Yes. Just as God has said.” (Isaiah 40:5)

Lloyd Griffith
Trail Guide

Mid-Week Bible Study

Monday evening Women’s Bible Study
7:00—8:30 PM—Session House Parlor

Every Monday evening at 7PM, the Women’s Bible Study continues with their winter selection, Half Truths—God Helps Those Who Help Themselves and Other Things the Bible Doesn’t Say by Adam Hamilton. Please consider joining the group for great discussion, fellowship and friendship. During the holiday season, we will not be meeting from Dec. 18th thru Jan 1st, but will resume on Monday Jan. 8th at 7PM For information or to order a book, contact Marice DeBruhl at 252.637.5468 or Wendy Moeller at 252.514.7729.

Thursday Morning Men’s Bible Study
8:00 AM—Ministry Center Café

We are viewing and discussing Simon Schama’s "Story of the Jews." Schama is a Jewish professor of history and art history at Columbia University. Men are welcome to join us for coffee, fellowship, and discussion at 8:00AM Thursdays in the Fellowship Cafe. Resumes after holiday break on Thurs. Jan 4.
Dear Friends in Christ:

Welcome to the NEW YEAR 2018!

I want to thank our choirs and music staff for all their hard work on our music for the advent and Christmas season—one of our best ever. The choirs: Preschool, Kinderchoir, Covenant Choir, Confirmation Choir, Daybreak Choir, Resurrection Singers, Sanctuary Bells and Sanctuary Choir. The staff: Vance Harper Jones, organist; Dru Wilkins and Maggie Wright, Music Assistants; Susan Mabie and Cindy Sutton, Resurrection Singers Director and Accompanist, respectively. I depend so much on these individuals to help in so many ways, and they always come through. Please thank them when you can. We strive to make your worship experience meaningful, with beautiful music and thoughtful lyrics.

I also want to thank Phyllis Harke, who has become my “shopper” for supplies for the children’s choirs, often making snacks “from scratch”; Sandy Williams (Covenant Choir) and Norma Morra and Sandy Miller Prince, who assist with the Preschool Choir and Kinderchoir. I now have a librarian, Maureen Parker, and her diligence in filing away all the music we use has really been a time saver for me. Maybe I’ll be able to decrease the number of “stacks” in my office!

I wish you a blessed and happy New Year.

Yours in Christ,

Pat K. Rowlett
Director of Music
What Good is the Reformation in our Day?

12 Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. **Hebrews 4:12**

...15 but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; 16 yet do it with gentleness and reverence...**1 Peter 3:15**

16 Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. 18 And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 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, 20 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 28:16-20**

In worship on Reformation Sunday, we sang the hymn, *The Church of Christ in Every Age*. As we sang I kept glancing back at the first stanza, wondering if those lines were quite right.

*The church of Christ in every age,*
*beset by change but Spirit led,*
*must claim and test its heritage*
*and keep on rising from the dead.*

Yes, it’s true: The church must keep rising from the dead. But how? How is it possible when large numbers of Christians have no interest in reading and studying what the Bible says, nor any interest in the Church’s heritage to be able to test it? How can it be when many pastors have no interest in knowing why and how to rightly value the church’s traditions, without succumbing to a paralyzing “traditionalism” (which there is little fear of it today)? How do you claim or test a heritage if you are not a part of one, and all you want to know is what works?

The 500th anniversary of the Reformation has prompted some to suggest that there is an every 500-year trend in Christianity whereby a more vital form of faith emerges. While it is not as though you can literally set your clocks and calendars by it, such a convenient historical grid laid over 2,000 years of history is more than a bit arbitrary. Nonetheless, there is a lot to say about what happened at the reformation, and what seems to be going on in the church now, 500 years later.

Ever since the 60’s when the churches first began listing more losses than gains in membership, dramatic change has been afoot in western society. While it has always been that the larger culture shapes the church to some degree, never before has the culture done so as overwhelmingly as it has in our day. Statistically, we’ve heard plenty about the church’s decline in the western world, just as we have heard our nation has never been more secular as we are today.

We need to see if there is a connection between the decline that began four to five decades ago at the same time our nation began experiencing a surge in wealth unequaled by any nation in world history. Over those years, more people and families came into discretionary income unlike anything their parents could have imagined. And they or we use it to go places and do things. Sunday school, summer church youth and adult softball leagues and the like, just do not measure up. The legendary and highly regarded church historian, Martin Marty said 20 years ago, you need not
look any further for the reason why the church is declining. It is strange to me, why all the prognosticators for the future fail to address the impact of wealth on church life in western society. Years ago, cynics began asking the rhetorical question, “Were the churches crowded in the 50’s because of an exuberant faith, or because their members lacked the means and opportunity to do anything else?” I remember the headache I got when I first read that.

Reform movements of significance be they in the 16th century when the Christian West was at the height of its influence (or dominance), and any that might be going on in the 21st century where our influence is the lowest to date, require a great deal more than simply drastic change.

The centrality of the Christian faith in late-medieval Europe would be hard to overestimate. The Church towered over society as the center of life in ways hard for us to comprehend. At such a time, the reforming spirit of Luther, Calvin and their fellow travelers was complex. The Reformation would have likely never happened without the cooperation of local magistrates, princes, wealthy merchants and urban aristocrats.

From the early days of the Reformation, rulers gradually gained final say over what was religiously acceptable in their respective realm. There was a saying at the time, more or less translated: “Who the Monarch is, determines what the faith is.” This was the guiding principle for the way faith acquired legitimacy in the emerging nation states breaking free from the failing grip of the Holy Roman Empire.

Christian symbols in late medieval Europe were hard to avoid. In fact they were ever-present and became potent enough to rise to the level of superstition. So, the reformers went after religious images, shrines, and relics that in their judgment distorted the church’s faith by taking on magical powers. Religious symbolism across America’s landscape today is a startling contrast. On most days, visual symbols of faith can be hard to spot, though we still see it in the distinctive architecture of Protestant churches dotting the landscape, especially in our region of the country. Increasingly however, in a significant number of newer churches in larger cities, the cross is absent and the buildings indistinguishable from big-box-type stores. We see churches with electronic yard signs blinking humorous rhymes about God or faith and mega-churches laying down huge swaths of asphalt, all the while inspirational videos multiply on Facebook and You-Tube. But I seriously doubt that signs, warehouse worship centers, and online videos are the religious symbols destined to renew the church. But that may just be me.

It was vivid imagery and confessional statements that rallied the faith of many 16th century Europeans. It is harder to identify comparable fervor uniting believers today. American Christians – so many of us – are increasingly reluctant to speak of a deep religious identity when describing our lives to others. Look at the obituaries where it is becoming more rare to mention the deceased’s church membership, or how their faithfulness was expressed in their lives. This I believe is a symptom of other things not being said. Conversations of any depth or merit on faith and morality in the public square have been largely absent in the last fifty to sixty years. Not since the 4th century has the Christian voice been more muted in the West than it is today. Regrettably those voices the press gives the most attention to are hardly spoken in the Spirit of Christ.

I mean those voices claiming the authority of God to declare disasters natural and human as divine retribution for the selective sins bothering their constituency. If you believe them, it is too bad God’s targets were people as innocent as you and me. Evangelicalism as we’ve come to know it may be making its last gasp. No greater evidence is needed than the current rush to “defend a child molester in order to maintain a majority in the U.S. Senate.” When Franklin Graham tells us he is going to pray for Roy Moore, I want to ask Mr. Graham if he will also be praying for Judge Moore’s
victims?

Who speaks about what the prophets called “the weightier matters of the law”? That is, the moral issues that matter most in our society, not merely individual sins. But issues of healthcare, the tax system over-haul, voters’ rights, and nuclear war are topics now debated with little to no attention given to their moral implications and religious underpinnings. And yet, these are the very moral themes heard in the thunderous preaching of the Old Testament prophets and Jesus.

Though there are two lone voices: Jim Wallis nationally, and William Barber of late from nearby Goldsboro getting some attention, where are the persons like Paul Tillich and Reinhold Niebuhr who took stands on such issues, the kind of religious leaders whose faces people saw on the covers of the once highly regarded *Time* and *Newsweek* magazines? Theirs was the kind of morality that embodies the ethics that grew out of the 16th century Protestant family of churches. I mean the kind of morality that embraces everyone for healing and hope, opportunity and challenge. I mean a morality respectful of all humanity as is appropriate for being made in the image of God, and as stewards of God’s creation. I hope any new reformation will reclaim those voices.

We live in a nation and a society that is curiously secular and since 1965 has become the home of practically all the world’s family of religious faiths. This being the case, you can expect prophetic concerns on social matters will no longer come from one faith tradition, but the morality shared by all the world’s seven major religions. The presence of these world religions in American society and its impact on the church is another variable that escapes the attention of many prognosticators of the church’s future.

Many people suggest that a good comparison to be made in the last 500 years is that of Gutenberg’s printing press and Bill Gates’ digital age. That may be, though I think the analog age has more in common with our digital one than people realize. Most people forget that our first experience with the large screens of the cinema 100 years ago this year, but mostly in the last 70 or so years, on the smaller and more convenient television screens broadcast right into our living rooms. If we’ve learned anything from this medium we know what happens when the gospel is subjected to the competitive principles of television entertainment.

Devoid of biblical substance, pandering to the selfish needs of its viewers, and condemning only the sins of those not watching their show – or more often ignoring the topic altogether – the television gospel has pretty much flopped. We have no reason to believe our digital age will prove to be any different when it comes to advancing the gospel. Of course it is a bit early to assess the diffuse, multi-layered character of our media-saturated world. We need to remember however, the media does not inspire reformations, now or ever, and this is my point: It is people that inspire reformations – you and me – our daily life in faith and in the fellowship of congregational life to sustain, encourage and grow all of us in faith, realizing that no one of us was ever to do this on our own.

It is hard to picture another Luther or Calvin ever again dominating the religious landscape, just as it is hard to picture Christianity ever again sitting atop the heap of all other religions. Furthermore, the myriad forces of our society are constantly clamoring for our attention at a time when religious faith continues to become peripheral. The odds seem stacked against people connecting the meaning of their lives with the sweeping biblical narrative. But there will be, in God’s good time, there will be. It is to begin anew by even you and me.

We as a congregation are not a collection of individuals but a community of believers seeing and knowing ourselves to be the continuation of the Biblical story. Like the prodigal, we are at last “clothed in our right mind” when we recognize ourselves being read right into Scripture. It is a
sheer gift that it is now our turn to live the faith and claim it as our primary identity. This is also the baton passed to us that we embrace until our dying day. We are the ones whose lives are writing the New Testament Book of Acts, Part two. This traditional and ancient Judeo-Christian understanding would do well to be revived in all of us.

I believe our best hope for the flourishing of the church depends on how thoroughly we – as a congregation – seek to embody the richest elements of Reformation theology. Because the 16th century reformers understood the local church to be a dynamic community of believers who had been granted the gift of faith, the reformation was off and running.

It wasn’t as if 16th century Christians all united together to embrace the goal of birthing a new church. The Reformation was rather an experience of individuals in their own homes and congregations coming alive to Christianity as a way of life. Fresh understandings of God’s grace suddenly gripped ordinary lives. The notion that every believer is a priest, even in his or her own sinfulness, rocked the hidebound, medieval church.

Rather than some arbitrary taskmaster God was more accurately seen as the generous donor of our days, interested only in gifting us with righteousness. It was this rediscovery that upended the ecclesiastical status quo. As Scripture came into the hands and hearts of the ordinary person, they began to feel what Luther felt personally, exclaiming as he did: “The Bible is alive (he said) it has hands and grabs hold of me, it has feet and runs after me.”

The good news is that there is still a whopping majority of churches that exist under the radar of the silliness that gets all the headlines, churches that speak with “gentleness and reverence,” the faith they seek to live. These churches continue living out the “faith once delivered to the saints” as faithfully and sincerely as I pray that we do. The 21st century world in which the church lives, moves and has its being, remains just as hungry as ever for people able and willing to live with confident faith and moral clarity.

We have come to the end the 200th anniversary of our congregation and the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. If these observations and our celebrations can renew even a spark of this desire among us, it will be worth it. If we can more distinctly act that we are not Christian for cultural reasons, but for theological and life-giving reasons, then our commemoration of both occasions will have, by the grace of God, accomplished much.

W.L. Hawkins, Pastor, First Presbyterian Church, New Bern, NC, Officer Retreat, Nov 17-18, 2017

Realize reform and change are not necessarily the same things. When reading those authors projecting the church’s future, I’m hearing more of what they believe needs to happen than an objective appraisal and acknowledgment of their guesswork. There is certainly a place for each but a distinction needs to be made between the two.
CARE COMMISSION
By Becky Nohr, Committee Chair

Lay Visitation Workshop

The lay visitation team is meeting for a workshop on Tuesday, January 23rd at noon in the Lighthouse. This is a ministry lead by pastors and supported by the lay visitation team. The team is currently composed of 21 volunteers who visit church members who for numerous reasons are unable to get out as they once did.

Our need for volunteers to visit is continuous. We are holding this workshop for those currently visiting and anyone interested in joining this team. This is a very worthwhile and rewarding experience for both those being visited and those visiting. Please consider joining the discussion.

FOOD 4 U NEEDS YOU!

During this wintertime as you are preparing warm meals for your family and guests, please consider making a little extra for those in need, those that are recovering from an illness, or perhaps not otherwise able to cook a meal for themselves or their family. You can contribute to the Food 4 U Freezer in the Session House kitchen and help them out. Containers are available (on top of freezer) for your convenience. Please label each item with the contents and date before placing in freezer. Thank you very much!

FELLOWSHIP COMMISSION
By Marge Avery, Committee Chair

BRRR....

Come warm up at our January 3 Fellowship Dinner! Kevin Avolis will be preparing barbeque chicken, veggies, and salad. House Church #10 will be contributing desserts. Please let us know you’re coming by circling your name in the Friendship Pad or calling the church office. Hope to see you at 5:30 in the J Murphy Smith Center!
Presbyterian Men – Season Lineup

Our monthly meetings are going strong! Plan to join us the first Monday of the month at 6:00 pm. We will meet at the Hibachi Buffet (Ollie’s shopping center). Cost of the meal is very reasonable. No need to sign up, just show up! The following is a list of scheduled speakers for the remainder of the season:

January 8 — Jay DeLoach (retired admiral, USN) will describe the continental navy during the Revolutionary War.

February 5 — Mayor Dana Outlaw will present his third annual State of the City Address.

March 5 — Amanda Ohlensehlen of the Aviation Heritage Foundation.

April 2 — (Ladies Night) Archeologist Lara Mazow will discuss Biblical Archeology.

May 7 — Jim Hodges, curator for the New Bern Historical Society will present New Bern: Then and Now.

Presbyterian Women—Update

The women of the church have been faithfully collecting Campbell’s Soup Labels and collectable postage stamps for many years. We are saddened to announce effective Dec. 31st, Campbell’s Soup is no longer offering this incentive. Also, the Stamps for the Congo collections are now only able to accept international stamps, no domestic (U.S.) stamps are needed. You may continue to put international stamps in the basket in the Ministry Center Workroom. Thank you for your contributions over the years.

LUNCH WAGON

Come join us for the Boar's Head and Yule Log Festival at the St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Kinston on Sunday January 7th. The program is an ancient celebration of Christmas in music, drama and dance. The costumes are beautiful. There are even animals walking down the church aisles as part of the pageantry. The choral music is wonderful. Admission is free. The performance starts at 3:00 but seats fill up quickly, so we will leave the church parking lot at 1:15 pm. Afterwards, we will eat an early dinner at King's Restaurant and return to New Bern around 6:30. This is an event you won't want to miss. Sign up in the Church Office or call 252.637.3270. Please turn to back page for a list of upcoming Lunch Wagon excursions.
ALL Sunday School Classes
Now Available
9:40-10:40 am

Adult Sunday School
Winter Quarter (Now thru Feb.25)

700 Years of Jihad & Crusades / SHM/ Chip Chagnon
This course is a study of the changing Christian & Islamic historical environment from the Medieval Age to the eve of the Renaissance. Special emphasis includes the importance of the Christian defense of Europe and the Holy Lands from Islamic Invasion from C 637 -1272. To gain that insight we will focus on key Muslim Jihads and the nine Crusades. The course will also examine other Christian led campaigns against pagans and heretics as time is available. The course will use Power Point, lecture, hand-outs and class participation as its major teaching methods.

Bicentennial Take-aways: If the Holy spoke to our 13 founders, how are we hearing today? / MC 2.26 & 2.27/ Lloyd Griffith
Where do we find our connection where contemporary science meets ancient mysticism and theology engages life? We will be exploring this involvement with a different authority using Richard Rohr’s The Divine Dance: the Trinity and Your Transformation as a guide to participating in the flow of God’s Spirit in these perilous times.

Connections Class/ MC 1.27/ Whitney Bayer & Seth Smith

Koinonia - Stories of Flannery O'Connor / MC 2.21 / Ken Wilkins
Flannery O'Connor was an extraordinary writer, and we have the opportunity to move further on our own faith journeys through reading and discussing her short stories. Join us to learn more about one of the best Southern writers ever. Books are available in the Church Office for $10 each.

Mary Bryan Hollister Class / SHP/ Nancy Chiles

Children & Youth Sunday School

Preschool—Room MC 1.24
God Loves Me -52 story books
(Faith Alive Christian Resources) and
The Children’s Illustrated Bible (Hastings)

Kindergarten - 2nd Grade—Room MC 2.23
Whirl (Sparkhouse)

3rd Grade - 5th Grade—Room MC 2.24
What’s In The Bible (Jellyfish One)

Middle & High School —Lighthouse
Faith Questions (Congregational Ministries Publishing— PC(USA))
On January 21st, both during our Sunday school hour, and again with a presentation after our 11 o'clock service in the Session House, your Adult education Committee is delighted to bring you Katie Archibald-Woodward. Katie has a Master of Divinity degree from Columbia Theological Seminary and certifications in Digital Photography from Emory University and Spiritual Companioning from Shalem Institute. She focuses her energy on sharing stories of the Holy Land, addressing and rooting out the factors prolonging conflict, and inviting her audiences to partner in working for peaceful coexistence and equity for all our neighbors in the region.

Katie has traveled to Israel and the West Bank of Palestine four times, in 2011, 2013, and 2016. For the past 18 months, Katie has been creating and exhibiting her multimedia project “Through The Checkpoint,” which provides vision and voice to life lived amidst occupation in Israel/Palestine. During this time, she lived with Palestinian Christians and Jewish Israelis in Jerusalem and Haifa, Palestinian Muslims in Hebron, and Jewish settlers in Efrat, and spent time with Bedouins in Susiya and Jewish Israelis on a kibbutz. She focused on documenting literal and figurative checkpoints—“points” one could “check” off in one’s mind as identifiers of occupation, such as child incarceration and military control—as a lens through which to present the varied experiences of occupation encountered by Palestinian Christians, Muslims, Jewish Israelis, and Bedouins.

In February of 2018 she will return to Israel/Palestine to focus on the Palestinian Christians, documenting their daily life, faith and history, as well as the unique roles they claim and those imposed upon them in the midst of the conflict. The Christians are a key component for any hope of peace in the region, for they serve as leaders in non-violent resistance to the human rights violations of the occupation and their presence keeps the conflict from being misrepresented as a religious struggle between Jews and Muslims, rather than a political conflict. However, due to the pressures of the occupation, the number of Christians have continued to dwindle, now only 1-3% of the population, thus threatening prospects of peace and the existence of any Christians in the land where the religion was born.

Being an American, she especially desires to shed light on the role Americans have in the perpetuation and prevention of the continuation of conflict, and more particularly, American Christians. To help her develop and refine her new project, she will participate in a workshop on visual storytelling and human rights led by National Geographic photographer, Ed Kashi, in Milan, Italy in January. Katie hopes her work will help our global community gain a fuller picture of life in Israel/Palestine and motivate viewers to join the ongoing efforts working for justice, equity, and a peaceful coexistence without occupation for all in the region.
2018 Youth Group Key DATES

Parents, please make a note of the following key events being planned for 2018 for our youth! There are trips with a minimum requirement to be met in order for us to attend.

- **2/4—Youth Sunday**: Our youth will lead the congregation in worship in both 8:25am & 10:55am services. Our graduating seniors will give their senior sermon and other youth will lead various parts of the service. We will be reaching out to families to help provide breakfast (9:30am) for our youth.

- **3/16-3/18—New Hope Presbytery High School Retreat**: This annual retreat brings 150 high school youth from our presbytery together for a weekend retreat at Camp Willow Run in Littleton, NC. Cost per youth is expected to be $75. We’ll need at least 3 high school youth to attend.

- **6/11-6/15—Vacation Bible School**: We will need adult volunteers in stations such as crafts, music, Bible story, games & snacks. We will also need youth volunteers to lead the groups!

- **6/18-6/21—Mission Trip with Presbyterian Disaster Assistance in Kinston, NC**: We will be working at a Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) worksite in Kinston, NC to help rebuild houses which were flooded due to Hurricane Matthew in Fall of 2016. This trip is open to those ages 14 and older (possible exception if a guardian attends the trip if youth is 13 years old). We will be looking for skilled laborers who can help us during the trip or to teach us skills before the trip. If interested, please talk to Daewon.

- **7/10-7/13—Massanetta Middle School Conference**: Fun middle school conference for those who have completed 6-8th grade. Sign up will be due 2/28 with Daewon. We will attend if we have at least 3 youth.

- **7/15-7/21 — Montreat High School Conference**: A week long conference for high school youth. It’s an amazing conference attended by thousands of youth each summer. Sign up will be due by March 11 with Daewon. We will attend if we have at least 4 youth.
Jan. 7— 5:30-7:30pm—Games
Jan. 14— 5:30-7:30pm—Faith Story
Jan. 21— 5:30-7:30pm—Youth Sunday Preparation
Jan. 28— 5:30-7:30pm—Youth Sunday Practice

S.A.L.T. - Ministry for 3rd thru 5th graders

January S.A.L.T. meeting will be on January 21, 5:30-7:30pm, in the Ministry Center. We look forward to having a great time together. Friends are always welcomed. The future meeting dates are Feb. 18 and March 18.
Outreach Commission

Bangert Elementary Kids Get Gifts

Our First Pres knitting group (Mondays, 2PM in the Session House Parlor) for several years now has been knitting hats, gloves and scarves for the children at Bangert Elementary School. Over the years they have hand knitted hundreds of items for the kids, and wish them warmth and comfort while knitting each piece. Here’s a picture of some of the happy recipients after a recent delivery of goodies.

The First Pres Knitters also knit prayer shawls for our hospital and nursing home bound as well as doing baby blankets for new arrivals. Remember to thank our Knitters for their work keeping those among us cozy and warm.

Bangert Elementary Kids Get Gifts

Brinson Buddies Our children need you! Brinson Buddies is an outreach project whose focus includes building a sense of community among parents, teachers and congregations. Brinson Buddies has a variety of opportunities available to support our community, teachers and students.

Recently we have been able to provide four sets of a “One School, One Book” series to our school. We also treated our teachers and staff to snacks at an after school faculty meeting. Several members of the congregation are working in several classrooms and providing support in a variety of ways. We are looking for members of our church to serve as mentors, be a presence in the school by simply having lunch with a student or a class or welcoming the students as they arrive at school in the mornings, work with students one on one and be a support for our students, teachers and community in any way that you can think of to help!
You do NOT need to be an educator to make a difference in our Brinson community. Everyone can be a part of this outreach. Some of our children are just one caring adult away from being successful. Please contact Carol Hale (carolkhale@gmail.com; 252-638-5517) for more information.
Outreach Commission

Holiday Blessings Coordinator Thanks You

Our Holiday Blessings Christmas food distribution has concluded and I am overwhelmed with gratitude for everyone who took time out of their very busy December to make sure that our Backpack Blessings families received a holiday meal (turkey or ham, dressing, rolls, vegetables, potatoes, yams, cranberry sauce, dessert, as well as so many extras for the two weeks the kids are out of school). I was thinking today how MANY people it takes to make something like this a reality for our families! I would like to say a BIG thanks to . . .

[Editor note: Due to space restraints, a portion of this list has been omitted]

Ellen Corey and friends from Spring Garden Baptist Church, who gave out holiday meals for James W. Smith and West Craven Middle Schools

Carole Hart and everyone at First Baptist for picking up 150 turkeys in their trailer at O-Dark-Thirty on distribution day and for coming back later to hand out the meals for the families

Sarah Moeller and Stacey Griffith and all our friends at First Presbyterian who came and organized the distribution and got ready for the families

Susan Sawyer and Centenary friends, who came to pass out meals to families

Roy Burris, who had “turkey duty” on Tuesday, picking up turkeys when needed from Food Lion

Patti Smith, facilities coordinator at Garber, for clearing Garber’s busy calendar for 2 days in December and making sure we had everything we needed for the distribution

Mary Coleman, for making sure that every box had something about the story of Jesus in it for our Backpack Blessings children!

It really does take a village! Wishing a Merry Christmas to our Backpack Blessings village! We’ll be back at it again in 2018!

-Ruth Powers

WORSHIP COMMISSION  

by Hal Vandersea

SINGLE WORSHIP SERVICE--SUMMER 2018

The Worship Commission is changing Worship to a single service to be held at 10:00 AM for the summer of 2018. This comes from a suggestion from some members of the congregation, and from the Worship Commission because of a reduction in attendance at both services during the summer months. A poll taken from the congregation at both services on October 1 resulted in 164 for this proposal, and 26 opposed.

Tentative planning is for Sunday School at 9:00--9:45, and Worship Service at 10:00. This will be from the first Sunday in June until the last Sunday of August, and then return to two services in September. It will then be re-evaluated by the Worship Commission as to whether to continue this change for subsequent years. The exact details will be worked out by the staff, music program, and Christian Education Commission.
Joys and Concerns

OUR KNOWN ILL, HOSPITALIZED AND/OR RECENTLY RELEASED

Neil Bakker
Art Barstow
Janet Bryan
Roy Cahoon
Janice Dawson
Denton Dodd
Dick Hajeck
Clare Jessup
Jerry Johnson
Linda Jones (Gayle Hardy’s mom)
Carl McMath
Y’Huon R’Cam
Meghan Rishel
Hyel Romah
Alan Ryder
Betsy Shuck
Alie Wilson

CONGRATULATIONS
Birth Announcements

Nov. 14th—Bridges Bolton Moeller, son of Brooks & Brooke Moeller, nephew of Peter, Sarah & Ben, grandson to Phoebe and Mark Moeller.

Nov. 23rd—Hayden Radford Easterhoff, son of Chandler and David Easterhoff of Durham. Grandson of Rad and Wendy Moeller.

Nov. 27th—Beckett Rhys Benrey, grandson of Janet Benrey, son of Alicia and Jeffrey and brother to Rylan, all of Austin, TX.

Nov. 29th—Eliza Rose Rishel, daughter of Meghan and Jay Rishel, sister to Weston and

Sam, granddaughter to Chris and Trish Kelso.

Dec. 1st—Blakelyn Sue Hauck, daughter of Emerson and Karlee Hauck of York, PA, great granddaughter of Ron and Connie MacLean.

Anniversaries

Congratulations to Bill and Betsy Hillhouse who celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on Nov. 16th.

Congratulations to Larry and Margaret Cooper who will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on Jan. 6th.

SYMPATHY

Sympathy to Ray Henderson on the Nov. 25th death of his wife, Frances. A graveside service will take place at Greenleaf Cemetery on Thurs. Jan. 25th at 2PM.

Sympathy to the family of Christine Friedrich on her death Dec. 14th. A remembrance service and reception will be held in the Session House on Jan. 5 at 10AM.

ASSISTED LIVING FACILITIES

BAYVIEW (638-1818)
3003 Kensington Park Dr.
Edna Harkins, Room 101
Ann “Nancy” Howard (Phoebe Moeller’s mother), Rm. 5

Hospice:
Lois Webb (Rm. 37B)

COURTYARDS at BERNE VILLAGE (633-1779)
2701 Amhurst Blvd. 28562
Barbara Bell, Rm 202

NURSING FACILITIES

BROOKDALE (558-1291)
1336 S. Glenburnie Rd.
Kenny Baxter
Sally McConnell (returned home)
Carl McMath

CROATAN VILLAGE
(634-9066)
4522 Old Cherry Pt. Rd.
28560
Jane Ann Blackerby Rm. 203
Andy Davies, (409)

HOMEPLACE (637-7133)
1309 McCarthy Blvd.
Jean Krumm (114)

RIVERPOINT CREST
(637-4730)
2600 Old Cherry Pt. Rd. 28560
Ray Henderson (207)
Joan Morra (211)
Don Ward (110) (Connie MacLean’s dad)

Please accept my heartfelt thanks for all the cards, calls, visits and prayers during the recovery from my unfortunate accident.

-Sally McConnell
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Morning</th>
<th>Evening</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Monday, January 1</strong></td>
<td>Morning: Pss. 98; 145</td>
<td>Evening: Pss. 99; 8</td>
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<td>Isa. 62:1–5, 10–12; Rev. 19:11–16</td>
<td>Matt. 1:18–25</td>
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<td><strong>Tuesday, January 2</strong></td>
<td>Morning: Pss. 48; 146</td>
<td>Evening: Pss. 9; 29</td>
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<td>1 Kings 19:1–8; Eph. 4:1–16</td>
<td>John 6:1–14</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Wednesday, January 3</strong></td>
<td>Morning: Pss. 111; 147:1–11</td>
<td>Evening: Pss. 107; 15</td>
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<td>1 Kings 19:9–18; Eph. 4:17–32</td>
<td>John 6:15–27</td>
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<td><strong>Thursday, January 4</strong></td>
<td>Morning: Pss. 20; 147:12–20</td>
<td>Evening: Pss. 93; 97</td>
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<td>Josh. 3:14–4:7; Eph. 5:1–20</td>
<td>John 9:11–12, 35–38</td>
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<td><strong>Friday, January 5</strong></td>
<td>Morning: Pss. 99; 148</td>
<td>Evening: Pss. 96; 110</td>
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<td>Jonah 2:2–9; Eph. 6:10–20</td>
<td>John 11:17–27, 38–44</td>
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<td><strong>Saturday, January 6</strong></td>
<td>Morning: Pss. 72; 149</td>
<td>Evening: Pss. 100; 67</td>
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<td><strong>Sunday, January 7</strong></td>
<td>Morning: Pss. 104; 150</td>
<td>Evening: Ps. 29; Gen. 1:1–2:3</td>
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<td><strong>Monday, January 8</strong></td>
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<td>Evening: Pss. 82; 29</td>
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<td><strong>Tuesday, January 9</strong></td>
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<td>Evening: Pss. 102; 133</td>
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<td><strong>Wednesday, January 10</strong></td>
<td>Morning: Pss. 89:1–18; 147:1–11</td>
<td>Evening: Pss. 1; 33; Gen. 4:1–16</td>
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<td><strong>Thursday, January 11</strong></td>
<td>Morning: Pss. 97; 147:12–20</td>
<td>Evening: Pss. 16; 62; Gen. 4:17–26</td>
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<td><strong>Friday, January 12</strong></td>
<td>Morning: Pss. 51; 148</td>
<td>Evening: Pss. 142; 65</td>
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<td>Gen. 6:1–8; Heb. 3:12–19</td>
<td>John 2:1–12</td>
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<td><strong>Saturday, January 13</strong></td>
<td>Morning: Pss. 104; 149</td>
<td>Evening: Pss. 138; 98</td>
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<td>Gen. 6:9–22; Heb. 4:1–13</td>
<td>John 2:13–22</td>
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<td><strong>Monday, January 15</strong></td>
<td>Morning: Pss. 135; 145</td>
<td>Evening: Pss. 97; 112</td>
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<td><strong>Wednesday, January 17</strong></td>
<td>Morning: Pss. 15; 147:1–11</td>
<td>Evening: Pss. 48; 4</td>
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<td><strong>Thursday, January 18</strong></td>
<td>Morning: Pss. 36; 147:12–20</td>
<td>Evening: Pss. 80; 27; Gen. 11:1–9</td>
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<td><strong>Friday, January 19</strong></td>
<td>Morning: Pss. 130; 148</td>
<td>Evening: Pss. 118; 111</td>
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<td><strong>Saturday, January 20</strong></td>
<td>Morning: Pss. 56; 149</td>
<td>Evening: Pss. 118; 111</td>
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<td><strong>Sunday, January 21</strong></td>
<td>Morning: Pss. 67; 150</td>
<td>Evening: Pss. 46; 93</td>
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<td>Gen. 13:2–18; Gal. 2:1–10</td>
<td>Mark 7:31–37</td>
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<td><strong>Monday, January 22</strong></td>
<td>Morning: Pss. 57; 145</td>
<td>Evening: Pss. 85; 47</td>
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Upcoming Lunch Wagon Trips

January 2018
 Boar’s Head and Yule Log—Kinston

February
 New Bern City Tour

March (or April)
 Glass Station—Kinston

May
 Sand Dollar Island—Morehead City

June
 Wood Ducks Baseball Game

July
 Church Picnic