

August 2020



# Bethany Road

Bethany Presbyterian Church

## *From the Desk of Rev. Bob Stauffer*

If you have not noticed we are living in strange and uncertain times. Not only is Bethany in transition, it feels like the whole world is in transition. While I am not prepared to expound on the transitions in the whole world I do want to share a little bit about the transitional process going on at Bethany.

There have been so many things that are happening it is hard to know where to start. First, we have been undertaking a careful analysis of where Bethany is as a church. One thing has become very clear over time. Bethany has not been a healthy church for quite some time. The reasons for that are many but the first thing we have needed to do was come to grips with the reality that we are about a hundred person church. That reality has caused us as a session to rethink what we are doing and why we are doing it. It has been necessary to look at all parts of the church including our staffing situation and realize that we had a lot of support and organizational staff but very little if any ministry staff. If we are going to move into the future it was apparent that we were going to need to downsize support staff so that we could hire the right ministry staff to move us into the future. Literally, our future depended on those kinds of actions. Unsuccessful churches make decisions based on the present while successful churches have to make decisions based on the future. While many of those personnel decisions were difficult, we are now in a position to think about the staff that we need for the future that the Lord has for us.

In addition, the vision team has been hard at work and prayer. You will be hearing from them in the near future but be assured that the Lord is doing some amazing things through that team. We have been meeting and learning and praying and prayer walking the community of Mercer to see where the Lord might call us to go and serve our community well in order to share the Gospel. I think every member of the team would say that many of us thought we knew the community well but as we have prayed and walked, that the Lord has shown us many new things that we have never seen before. We are seeking the Lord and praying hard that the Lord would give us His eyes as we wait to see where He would have Bethany serve in the community. In addition we have talked to dozens of community leaders about the community and have reflected on their experiences in the community as well.

From here we will listen carefully to the Lord and determine where He wants us to go and serve. Then we will begin to strategically look at how we can live out the vision that God has for us and what it will take for us to do that well. Then that strategic plan will be given to the session and they will amend and approve it so that a team can then be formed to implement the plan and begin our outreach into the community. Alongside that we want to establish a strong small group ministry so that we can care for each other well as we strive to live out the Great Commission in Mercer.

So in broad strokes that is where we are. We always welcome questions and comments and ask that you would pray with us and for the vision team as they continue on this very important work and may the Lord bless you and keep you in the palm of His hand. And may He bless Bethany as we seek to be an outpost in the Kingdom of God here in Mercer.

Volume 17, Issue 8

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### Committee Meetings:

- Deacons  
*No August Meeting*
- Vision Team  
*July 30 at 6:30 p.m.*
- Personnel  
*August 4 at 9:00 a.m.*
- Property  
*August 4 at 6:30 p.m.*
- Christian Education  
*August 4 at 7:00 p.m.*
- Outreach/Member Involvement  
*August 11 at 7:00 p.m.*
- Worship & Memorials  
*August 11 at 7:00 p.m.*
- Finance  
*August 20 at 7:00 p.m.*
- SESSION  
*August 27 at 7:00 p.m.*

## Church Up-Dates

Samaritan's Purse - It's not too soon to start praying for the Samaritan's Purse Shoe Box collections. As you are doing your 'back-to-school' shopping it would be a good time to think about your shoe boxes. Start now collecting exciting things for the children that will receive your Christmas shoebox.



Sunday School - We would sincerely like to start Sunday School in September. However, we are just not sure what the situation is going to be. The Christian Education Committee will be reviewing the status of everything at the beginning of each month and we will keep you posted.

Children and Youth Ministry - Many are wondering about the future of our youth groups. Again, for various reasons, youth groups are on hold. At this point, we have very few youth, we don't have a leader, and we have the virus. However, youth and children's ministries are a very important part of who we are at Bethany. Reestablishing it is definitely a priority and focus of the transition process. You will be hearing more as the process unfolds.

Worship Time - Starting September 6th worship time will be moved to 10:30. The new time will give us a little more time after Sunday School and it's an easier time to remember for visitors and new attenders. The Sunday School hour will still be 9:00 (when it starts).

### Staff Changes

Please welcome Kim Watson as our new Financial Secretary. Kim has been working with Tonya for several months and as of July 1st she was officially approved for the position. We are sure she'll do a great job!

Tonya's last day as Financial Secretary was June 30th, although she graciously continues to work with Kim to make a smooth transition.

Dayle's days of duty will be changed to Wednesday and Sunday.

The paid positions of Organist and Music Coordinator have been dissolved. Gerri will be called upon for playing organ and piano on a substitute basis when the conditions improve with the pandemic. Denny Horkey will be assuming the organist duties. Jane Deitrick will be playing the piano.

Laurie and Crystal Ruhlman have resigned as nursery supervisors. For now, the nursery will be open but it will not be staffed.

Tonya, Gerri, Laurie, and Crystal have served Bethany wonderfully during their period of employment here. Because we cannot meet together to thank them, it seems appropriate that we would all express our thanks to them with cards and tokens of our appreciation.

*The road that leads to the pearly gate,  
Is full of treachery, lies and hate.  
But God Almighty, from above,  
Awaits beyond the gate; with love.  
Joe Burns*

# Bethany News

## *Vision Team Update*

Thank you for your ongoing prayers for us. We continue to meet and pray together on a regular basis.

As you may know, we have been prayer walking around Mercer and praying with a variety of people. As we have walked, we realize that there are a large variety of ways that Bethany could serve within our community of neighbors and friends.

The survey, that was given by Bob to about 80 people within our congregation, clearly showed that you saw some of the greatest needs were to single families, teens and children.

From that survey, we are asking you to pray with us. "Where does God want Bethany to serve in Mercer that would create a warm and caring place; a place where people would feel welcomed, accepted and loved?"

Our next meeting is July 30. As always, please feel free to share with any of us your thoughts and ideas that you have from your times of prayer.

Together let us love God and love others by serving and sharing the gospel.

With thanksgiving for your prayers and support,  
The Vision Team

## *Attendance and Prayer Cards*

Attendance cards can be found on the tables when you enter the sanctuary and pick up your weekly bulletin. If you forget to pick a card up, you can find one at the end of each pew. Thank you for filling these cards out for us. Prayer requests will either be put on the prayer chain if requested or your request will be prayed for at Thursday morning prayer.

## *Vision Team Members*

Sue Allen, Steve Amsler, Mark Hayes, John Inman, Joni Knechtel, Mike Piddington, Crystal Ruhlman, Laurie Ruhlman, Nancy Thompson, and Bob Stauffer

## *Thank You*

TO ALL MY BETHANY FAMILY,  
Thank you for the beautiful cards I have been receiving.

I was richly blessed with your friendships in the ten years that I was with you. My first Sunday as your Minister of Music was the first Sunday of January in 2011. It truly was a pleasure to share my music and serve our Lord and all of you in that way.

Louie and I feel that you are our extended family and have enjoyed all the warmth and concern shown us. We really miss the fellowship. The circumstances that we have been living through during the last several months have been beyond our understanding but the Lord has been good to us and we are well.

We hope to come back at some point (hopefully soon) to see all of you once again. We haven't forgotten you, so please keep in touch.

Love and Prayers to everyone,  
Gerri Fidanza

## JUST TO KEEP YOU POSTED. . . . FROM THE HEARTS OF BETHANY WOMEN

As you can see the following Bethany Women activities are cancelled for the month of August. Stay tuned each month for updates and new dates:

**My Ladies Bible Study—my hope is that we can resume this fall.**

Fall Brunch—since it is scheduled for October we are still on hold.

**“Not only can we know that God is with us, we also can take comfort and find hope that our God rules over all. He is sovereign over every detail of our lives. Not a single sparrow, a single atom or a single germ lies outside of His control. He rules over nations, over kings, over history, over evil, over pandemics. There is nothing outside of His command, and He will use everything for His glory and our good.” ~~from Franklin Graham.**

When we are called to be courageous and not fear . . . it is hard, even as Christians, to take this to heart. It seems like since the “virus” has raised its ugly head. . . it is hard not to fear. So many questions go through our minds, but when I feel this way, I look to a favorite verse (and, yes, I have SO MANY OF THEM). Matthew 5:16—“In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.” This is a reminder that we all need. It is hard to shine when we are afraid. . . but we look to these words that Jesus spoke in Matthew—shine your light, love others well and be an encourager.

Here are five (5) Old Testament scriptures that to me are a perfect way to encourage yourself and others. When you cannot sometimes think of the right words—here are God’s perfect words.

Psalm 121:1-3~~“I lift my eyes toward the mountains, Where will my help come from? **My help comes from the Lord**, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not allow your foot to slip; your Protector will not slumber.”

**Practical Application for Your Life:** Why were the mountains important in this Psalm? When the Jews were on the way to Jerusalem for their annual feast days they would come through the Jordan Valley. When they looked toward the mountains they would be looking to Jerusalem were they were to worship their God. Their help, and ours, comes from Jehovah. So no matter how clever we think we are sooner or later we reach a point where we reach out for help. Our God is so powerful. He created everything. He is not going to fail you. He will not let evil overwhelm you, He will not let you fall! Our God is a 24/7 God; although our friends may not always be there for us when we need them; our God is. He never sleeps!

Isaiah 12:2~~“Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for **the Lord God is my strength** and my song, and he has become my salvation.”

**Practical Application for Your Life:** Over 2700 years ago, the prophet Isaiah spoke these words when political instability surrounded him and his people. **BEHOLD**—or we might say—**LISTEN UP. . . I MEAN BUSINESS.** Did I get your attention? He was speaking to the people of Isaiah and is speaking to you, too! Who is not afraid?—the one who puts his faith in God. It is amazing how praising God can alleviate your fear. I know personally (Nancy speaking)—that when I poorly sing, **Because He Lives. . .**

Because He lives, I can face tomorrow  
Because He lives, all fear is gone;  
Because I know He holds the future  
And life is worth the living  
Just because He lives!

I feel that He and I can truly face whatever tomorrow brings. When you and I praise God for His Love, His power, His concern. . . all our fears vanish. Doesn’t fear usually strike when we are alone or in the dark of night? When fear or trouble comes, isn’t it wonderful to know that someone, our God, is standing with you. He is my, and your, salvation.

I will not fear the past. . .for Jesus has blotted out my past. I will not fear the present. . .for the Lord is in control—my life is in His hand and nothing happens but He allows. I will not fear the future. . .wars, catastrophes, economic troubles or even the virus . . .for He is in full control.

Joshua 1:9~~“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened and do not be dismayed, for **the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.**”

**Practical Application for Your Life:** Joshua was commanded (yes, commanded) to be strong and courageous; his strength was not dependent on his own strength or brains, but from God. Joshua and his people would never have conquered the Promise Land based on their own abilities. We, too, have to read God’s word, pray, trust in Him, and to following the demands of God. When we are weak our God is with us and will overcome that weakness. The promises made to Joshua are also made to us—God will be with us no matter what difficulty or problem we face. We like Joshua, have to trust the Word of God and act upon it. You do not need to be afraid for no matter where you are God is with you—you are never alone. We need to be strong in the Lord and to rely on Him for all the problems we face in life.

Proverbs 3:5-6~~“Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do and **he will show you which path to take.**”

**Practical Application for Your Life:** For the most part Proverbs offers a simplistic view of life with few grey areas: life lived according to the rules brings reward, life in violation of them is certain to bring disaster. Proverbs accomplishes something no other biblical book does: it simply compiles numerous short instructions for living an effective life on earth.

Your ways will be directed if you follow these three conditions:

**Trust in the Lord with all thine heart**~~ This means there must be total (body, soul and spirit) commitment to the Lord, trusting that He alone can lead and guide you through your life.

**Lean not unto thine own understanding**~~This simply means we must DISTRUST ourselves. Many times we have experienced miserable defeats in all parts of our lives because we relied on ourselves and not on the Lord.

**In all thy ways acknowledge Him**~~ Every decision we make, whether large or small, must be committed to Him. When we do that, we acknowledge that He alone knows what is best for us. That’s when we say, “Thy will be done.”

How will He guide you? By scripture, by Godly counseling, by receiving an inner peace from the Holy Spirit or He may choose to use a combination of all of these things.

Psalms 55:22~~“Cast your burden on the Lord, and **he will sustain you**; he will never allow the righteous to be shaken.”

**Practical Application for Your Life:** When David wrote this Psalm, he was faced with troubles just as we do today. David had faced betrayal by one of his best friends, he was oppressed by wicked men and was threatened by evil enemies. He was overwhelmed, broken-hearted and in deep emotional distress.

But David gives us the key to Christian living. He (and we) need to turn our eyes to the Lord and cast every burden we have upon Him. No matter what the difficulty He (and we) face, David knew that God would sustain him (and us). No matter what the difficult is that we face, God will never allow the righteous to be shaken. No matter where we go, our God is with us and we are told to cast **all** our cares upon Him—for He cares for each of us.

Please pray the following prayer each day for the month of August; not just when you are overwhelmed with worry but each and every day.

*Dear Jesus,*

*You are the Prince of Peace. You came to give us your peace. It’s nothing like the world gives. It is peace born in the freedom we have in you, a gift to all God’s children—to guard our hearts and minds.*

*I can’t escape the troubles of this world. I may face financial difficulties, relationship breakdowns, a health crisis—so many scary challenges. But you tell me to “take heart,” to be encouraged, because you have overcome the world. You have overcome all the things that would discourage and defeat us. I am grateful for your peace that is beyond all my circumstances. In Jesus name I pray. Amen.*

Sharing this message, from the hearts of all of the Bethany Presbyterian Women~~

Nancy Ollinger-Thiess, Moderator

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**TO:** Or Current Resident



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You have probably looked at the Bethany Book Stall a few times and wondered "what is this for" and "how does it work?" Well these are a collection, of books that we believe are beneficial to our members. There are books on theology, Christian life, raising children, finances, marriage, and many other topics. Most are for sale, although a few are free. It's easy to buy one, here's how it works:

Step One - choose a book and find the price tag inside.

Step Two - place the price tag and the money in one of the envelopes on the desk by the office door.

Step Three - drop the envelope into the mail slot on the wall above the desk.

It's that easy. Thanks for shopping at the Bethany Book Stall.