

# THE CHALLENGE

## Bethlehem Methodist Church

Volume 13

Issue 12

December 2025



### Bethlehem Methodist Church

*Our Mission at Bethlehem Church  
is to share the love and spirit of  
Christ, be a welcoming fellowship  
for all, nurture followers of Jesus  
and send them, as servants, into  
the world in need of God's Grace.*

As we begin our first Advent journey together, allow me to offer an Advent poem by J. Todd Jenkins.

#### Twas the Beginning of Advent

'Twas the beginning of Advent and all through the Church  
Our hope was all dying-- we'd given up on the search.  
It wasn't so much that Christ wasn't invited,  
But after 2,000 plus years we were no longer excited.

Oh, we knew what was coming-- no doubt about that.  
And that was the trouble-- it was all "old hat."  
November brought the first of an unending series of pains  
With carefully orchestrated advertising campaigns.

There were gadgets and dolls and all sorts of toys.  
Enough to seduce even the most devout girls and boys.  
Unfortunately, it seemed, no one was completely exempt  
From this seasonal virus that did all of us tempt.

The priests and prophets and certainly the kings  
Were all so consumed with the desire for "things!"  
It was rare, if at all, that you'd hear of the reason  
For the origin of this whole holy-day season.

A baby, it seems, once had been born  
In the mid-east somewhere on that first holy-day morn.  
But what does that mean for folks like us,  
Who've lost ourselves in the hoopla and fuss?

Can we re-learn the art of wondering and waiting,  
Of hoping and praying, and anticipating?  
Can we let go of all the things and the stuff?  
Can we open our hands and our hearts long enough?

Can we open our eyes and open our ears?  
Can we find him again after all of these years?  
Will this year be different from all the rest?  
Will we be able to offer him all of our best?

So many questions, unanswered thus far,  
As wisemen seeking the home of the star.  
Where do we begin-- how do we start  
To make for the child a place in our heart?

con't on pg 2

#### Preacher

Rev. Bobby Lorton  
540-320-3876

#### Church Office

Margot Horney  
336-674-0155  
[bethlehem1825methodist  
church@gmail.com](mailto:bethlehem1825methodistchurch@gmail.com)

#### Choir Director

Gloria Austin

#### Pianist

Laura Cranfill

#### Youth Director

Layne Downing

#### Childcare Director

Erica Shanahan  
336-674-9879

#### Custodian

Ovido Sorbito

#### Webmaster

Kylie Russell



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# STEWARDSHIP REPORT-October 2025

## Budget – Revenues & Expenses

\$642,863.62 Total Budget's Fund Balance as of October 1, 2025

+ 29,005.41 Money Received in October

- 28,635.74 Money Spent in October

\$643,233.29 Budget's Fund Balance as of October 31, 2025

For the month of October, 2025, the Church Budget received 369.67 more than it spent. For the year, the Church Budget received \$56,126.54 more than it spent.

## Designated Gifts

**Major Maintenance & Repair Fund** – this designated money will be used to pay for major maintenance or repair projects to the Church building, parsonage or parking lot. The Board of Trustees must recommend all expenditures from this fund to the Church Council, and the Church Council must approve all expenditures from this fund. This is a perpetual fund and a minimum balance of \$2,500.00 shall be maintained at all times. This fund was created by a vote of the church council on October 13, 2011, and was established with \$12,000.00.

\$65,620.55 MM&RF Money Available October 31, 2025

**Other Designated Gifts** – occurs when the Church receives money for a designated purpose and the Church shall only spend this money for the purpose that it was given.

Camp Tekoa	\$ 781.88	Arbor Fund	\$ 3,237.84
Food Pantry	\$ 1,279.68	Handbells	\$ 160.52
Discretionary Fund	\$ 2,370.40	Scholarship-Religion Ed	\$ 1,983.22
Records & History	\$ 581.56	Missions-Undesignated	\$ 11,966.50
Alpha & Omega Youth	\$22,391.86	Cemetery Fund-Maint.	\$ 37,642.93
Children & Family Ministries	\$ 4,079.47	Choir Fund	\$ 286.26
Helen Grady Endow.	\$ 512.84	Brunswick Stew	\$ 11,077.20
(\$512.84 History)		Flowers (Vet Wreath)	\$ 100.00

Total Other Designated Gifts \$98,452.16

Total Designated Gifts Collective Fund Balance as of October 31, 2025 \$164,072.71

## Trust Funds

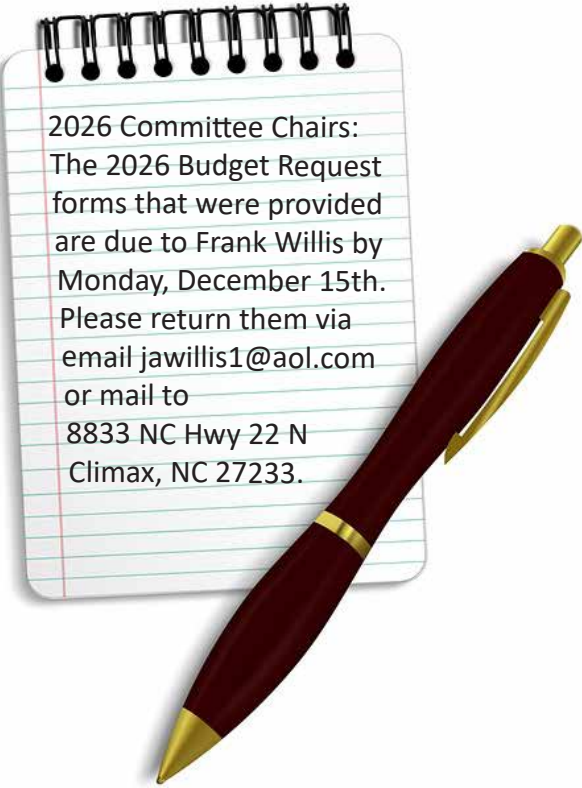
### **\$101,800.00 Perpetual Care Cemetery Fund**

In order to plan and provide the necessary funds for the care and upkeep of our cemetery, a Perpetual Care Cemetery Fund was created. This fund was a non-expendable trust fund in which the principle (donations) cannot be spent but the interest earned on the principle can be spent for the care and upkeep of the cemetery. The Perpetual Care Cemetery Fund was capped as of October 17, 2016 by the Church Council and is no longer taking donations.

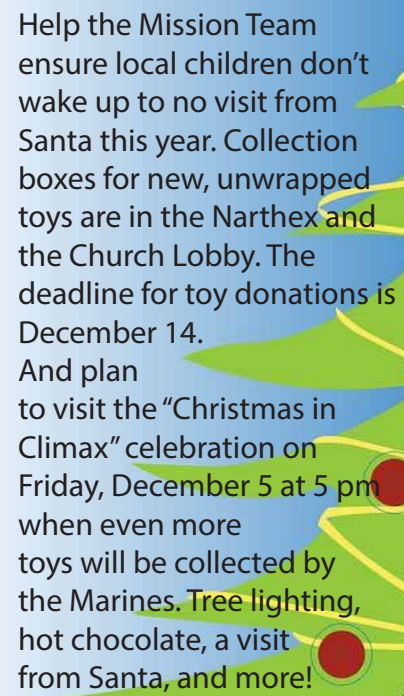
### **\$69,491.86 Helen Grady Endowment Fund**

The money was donated to our church from the estate of Helen Grady in 2007 to be used for improvements to the church, community, or the development of an individual. The money is at the United Methodist Foundation of WNC, Inc. and the amount that can be spent annually is 5% of the last three (3) years average end-of-year balance.


Frank Willis, Stewardship Ministry Chair



2026 Committee Chairs:  
The 2026 Budget Request forms that were provided are due to Frank Willis by Monday, December 15th. Please return them via email [jawillis1@aol.com](mailto:jawillis1@aol.com) or mail to 8833 NC Hwy 22 N Climax, NC 27233.




Help the Mission Team ensure local children don't wake up to no visit from Santa this year. Collection boxes for new, unwrapped toys are in the Narthex and the Church Lobby. The deadline for toy donations is December 14. And plan to visit the "Christmas in Climax" celebration on Friday, December 5 at 5 pm when even more toys will be collected by the Marines. Tree lighting, hot chocolate, a visit from Santa, and more!




The Church Office will be closed Christmas Day.  
Child Care will be closed Christmas Day and Dec 26.  
The Church office and Child Care will also be closed January 1. (Child Care will be open January 2.)



**TOYS FOR TOTS**



Jump on Santa's sleigh  
for Wonderful  
Wednesday 12/24



Christmas Eve  
Candlelight Service  
6:00 pm  
Wednesday, December 24

## Memorials & Honorariums

*Since the last newsletter publication, the following gifts have been made in memory or honor as listed. Bethlehem Church gratefully acknowledges each gift received.*

### Memorials

In Memory of all our **Veterans**  
by Phala Garrett

In Memory of **Earl Fields**  
by Denny and Julie Spencer

In Memory of **Ernest Spencer**  
by Denny and Julie Spencer

In Memory of **Jodi Weatherly**  
by Bob Weatherly (x4)

In Memory of **Clem Royal**  
by Margaret Royal

In Memory of **Dicky and Keith Parks**  
by Margaret Royal  
by Evonne Parks

### Honorariums

In Appreciation to **Denny Spencer**  
for all you do  
by Alice B Jones

In Honor of **Phyllis and Joe Garrett**  
by Jerry and Karon Monnett

In Honor of **David and Ronda Robb**  
by Margaret Royal

In Honor of the **SPRC**  
by Phyllis Dahl

In Honor of **My Family**  
by Phala Garrett

In Welcome to **Bobby and Paula Lorton**  
by Alice B Jones

In Honor of all **Veterans**  
by Wes and Lisa Taylor

In Honor of **Shannon Wicker**  
by Darlene Coble

### Bethlehem Post Office

Our Christmas Card post office is open  
in the conference room. Bring  
your Christmas Cards (alphabetized would  
be helpful) to the Conference Room anytime  
between now and Sunday, December 21.

Our elves will have those filed  
in your mail folders in the blink of an eye,  
ready for you to stop by and pick up your mail!



## Up-coming Christmas Events Mark Your Calendars!

11/23 - 12/21: Bethlehem Post Office Open in the Conference Room.

12/5: Christmas in Climax. Marine Corps will be accepting Toys for Tots

12/6: Young-at-Heart Christmas Party

12/11: Deadline to order **Poinsettias**

12/11: Adult Fellowship Class Party

12/14: Children and Youth Christmas Presentation  
5:00 pm, reception in Fellowship Hall to follow

12/14: Deadline for Toys for Tots Contributions

12/21: Christmas Cantata "An Old Fashioned Christmas"  
Sunday Worship Service, 10:00 am

12/24: Christmas Eve Candlelight Service, 6:00 pm



*Preacher Bobby and Paula invite  
you to an Open House at the  
Parsonage, Saturday, Dec 13  
noon - 3:00 pm*

**HELEN GRADY ENDOWMENT FUND-** This year, the fund has approximately \$2,000.00 available. It will be awarded by the committee in early 2026. Applications are available from the church office or the Narthex. Completed applications are due back to the office no later than **4:00 pm Monday, December 8.**

Thank you for all the support for the Blessing Box. At this time, we have plenty of paper products. Please watch the bulletins for current needs.



## Cemetery News

While working in the cemetery placing the Veterans' Flags, the group realized that many of the tombstone flowers need attention or replacement. They are asking that you check your tombstone occasionally and be sure to put the name on the back of the arrangement so it can be returned to its correct place if the wind blows it off. Also, if you or someone you know would like to put flowers on the grave, and you are physically unable to do it, call Margot at 336-674-0155 to arrange to bring your flowers to the church and we will be happy to put them on the tombstone for you. Please, do not leave flowers unattended on the porch.

**DEADLINES:**  
**January Newsletter:**  
**December 16**

**Weekly Bulletin:**  
**Noon each**  
**Wednesday**  
*Thanks!*

# Happy Birthday

## December

12/5 Gene Flinchum  
12/9 Cory Fields  
Luke Hinshaw  
12/10 Holley Wicker  
12/11 Erin Edwards  
Dawn McCrea  
12/13 Wayne Alley  
Karon Monnett  
12/15 Jerry Monnett  
12/17 Nelle Haywood  
Jane Chamelin  
12/19 Grant Allen  
12/21 David Fields  
12/23 Braylynn Adams  
12/26 Amber Cook  
Cindy Franklin  
Leah Fields  
12/27 Joy Cranfill  
Logan Royal  
12/28 Cindy Duncan  
12/30 Andrew Coward  
12/31 David Allen

## January

1/1 Stephanie Garrett  
1/3 Clark Hinshaw  
Lois Snow  
1/5 Dottie Tew  
1/6 Phyllis Wicker  
1/7 Sharon Welborn  
Kimberly Garrett  
1/8 Ron Bazhaw  
Sally Sipes  
1/10 Todd Garrett  
1/12 Bryson Windsor  
1/14 Ronnie Grimes  
Stacy (C.S.) McClintock  
Beth Coble Pulliam  
1/15 Eddie Sipes  
1/16 Krista Neelley  
1/18 Melanie Robb  
1/21 Alice Jones  
Lisa Taylor  
1/22 Pat Waugh  
1/23 Linsey Fields  
Linda Grimes  
1/24 Angie Routh  
Jane Snead  
1/26 Gale Bowman Berke  
1/29 Judy Norris  
1/31 Sharon Good



Perhaps we begin by letting go  
Of our limits on hope, and of the stuff that we know.  
Let go of the shopping, of the chaos and fuss,  
Let go of the searching, let Christmas find us.

We open our hearts, our hands and our eyes,  
To see the king coming in our own neighbors' cries.  
We look without seeking what we think we've earned,  
But rather we're looking for relationships spurned.

With him he brings wholeness and newness of life  
For brother and sister, for husband and wife.  
The Christ-child comes not by our skill,  
But rather he comes by his own Father's will.

We can't make him come with parties and bright trees,  
But only by getting down on our knees.  
He'll come if we wait amidst our affliction,  
Coming in spite of, not by our restriction.

His coming will happen-- of this there's no doubt.  
The question is whether we'll be in or out.  
"Behold, I stand at the door and knock."  
Do you have the courage to peer through the lock?

A basket on your porch, a child in your reach.  
A baby to love, to feed and to teach.  
He'll grow in wisdom as God's only Son.  
How far will we follow this radical one?

He'll lead us to challenge the way that things are.  
He'll lead us to follow a single bright star.  
But that will come later if we're still around.  
The question for now: Is the child to be found?

Can we block out commercials, the hype and the malls?  
Can we find solitude in our holy halls?  
Can we keep alert, keep hope, stay awake?  
Can we receive the child for ours and God's sake?

From on high with the caroling host as he sees us,  
He yearns to read on our lips the prayer: Come Lord Jesus!  
As Advent begins all these questions make plea.  
The only true answer: We will see, we will see.

*J. Todd Jenkins*



*MERRY CHRISTMAS, WITH LOVE from Bobby and Paula*

Friendly Club will meet Tuesday, December 9th at 11am in the Fellowship Hall. Please join us for this year's Christmas celebration with good food and fellowship. We also ask that everyone attending bring a wrapped \$10 gift to be exchanged along with a covered dish to share.



*All are welcome  
to join us!*

We invite you to provide **Poinsettias** to decorate our sanctuary on Sunday, December 21st and on Christmas Eve. Please allow your flower to adorn the sanctuary during these special services by waiting until after worship on Christmas Eve to take it home. Poinsettias can be ordered through the church office for \$19 each.

\*Deadline for ordering is Thursday, December 11th by 1PM. Order forms are available from the Church Office. Flowers cannot be ordered without payment.

Bethlehem Children and Youth Present

## TWAS THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS

*Jesus Edition*

Come celebrate the true meaning of Christmas and join us after for refreshments and fellowship.

14 DEC | 5:00 PM



OPERATION  
CHRISTMAS CHILD  
was a tremendous  
success. Thank you  
to everyone who  
participated!

Youth Ministry  
collected 52 boxes.