



What's Happening at Bluffton Presbyterian Church

December 2013

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Sunday, December 1 – 1st Day of Advent

3 Cents a Meal Offering

Organ/Piano Duet: Sue Van Eman and Jayne McGarrity

Lay Reader: Helen Hawk

Greeters: Sycks Family

Acolytes: Libby and Morgan McVetta

Sunday, December 8 – 2nd Day of Advent

Food Pantry

Choir

Lay Reader: Jay McCracken

Greeters: Owen and Kay Ziessler

Acolytes: Vanessa Compton and Avery Talavinia

Sunday, December 15 – 3rd Day of Advent

Praise Team

Lay Reader: Phill Talavinia

Greeters: Don and Cathy Carroll

Acolytes: James Freidenberg and Wyatt Marshall

Sunday, December 22 – 4th Day of Advent

Choir

Lay Reader: Diane Winebar

Greeters: Donnas Stone and Bev Begg

Acolytes: Sarah Gillen and Molly McCracken

Sunday, December 24 – Christmas Eve Service

Choir

Greeters: Gillen Family

Acolytes: Will and Tucker Neff

Sunday, December 29

Lay Reader: George Stultz

Greeters: Talavinia Family

Acolytes: Paige McVetta and Avery Talavinia

Sunday, January 5

3 Cents a Meal Offering

Mark Your Calendars!

- December 1 – Youth Group – 5:00 – 7:00 PM
- December 6 – Daily Bread Soup Kitchen – 9:40 AM – Church Parking Lot
- December 7 – Movies at Richland Manor – 12:45 PM
- December 15 – Congregational Meeting – Following Worship
- December 15 – Youth Group Gift Wrapping – 3:00 to 5:00 PM
- December 16 – Joint Session/Deacon's meeting – 7:00 PM
- December 21 – Zuehlke's Open House at the Manse – 1:00 to 3:00 PM
- December 24 – 6:30 PM Instrumental Prelude, 7:00 PM Candlelight Service
- December 29 – Newsletter Deadline – CEGillen@MarathonPetroleum.com
- December 30 – Prayer Luncheon – 11:00 AM



Announcement Procedure

If you have an announcement to present in church during the month of December, get it to the church office by Wednesday morning so it will be announced by our Worship Leader for the month.

December Worship Leader – Tanya Best

Christian Ed Walkers

Christian Ed Walkers are needed for upcoming dates. Please see the posted sign-up.

Small Groups

Tuesday – Church Library at 6:30 PM

Pastor's Letter

We have a lot of different holidays. We have Independence Day, Memorial Day, Thanksgiving, Easter, and each holiday has traditions that go along with it. Everything from what we eat to what we are going to go see. To many children, Easter just isn't Easter until there is a chocolate bunny (in my case, with the ears bitten off by my father). The Fourth of July just can't be done without fireworks. Traditions are how we celebrate the specialness of that day. And no holiday has as many traditions as Christmas.

"For Christmas, we have to go to mom's house for lunch."

"For Christmas, we have to get out the ornaments made by the kids when they were in the fourth grade, even though the kids are forty now."

"For Christmas, we have to sing that one song at least once."

But is Christmas time really a time for traditions?

Remember the birth of John the Baptist. His father Zechariah chose to name his child something besides a name from the family. That was unheard of at that time. Rather, you kept the name of your ancestors by passing it on to children, and children would know who they are by their name. But John was for something else, so his parents broke tradition.

Remember the story of the Magi. Every other time in Jewish history, a new king was anointed and selected by a Jewish prophet. These men weren't prophets, they were scientists, and they didn't anoint, but they brought gifts. Weird and weirder! And worst of all they weren't Jewish, they were foreigners, from another religion. But against all traditions, these foreign scientists, with a different faith, could recognize *this* was the King.

Even remember the Shepherds. For the Jewish faith, you had to be a good man to enter the temple, and a high priest to see the altar. But here, the lowest of the low: stinky, sweaty, probably crude, shepherds were invited in. Here we have the common people, not priests, approaching the most Holy of Holy's.

And we could go on: the manger instead of a palace, a lowly carpenter for a foster father, even a rouge star. Suffice to say, that in almost every way, the first Christmas time was a series of non-traditional events. And you know all of this gives us reason for joy and celebration.

We lose the freshness and the newness of the season when we wait too much for the traditional. We cannot have Christmas just be a knee-jerk reaction to what we did last year. We need to have Christmas have a new effect on us this year. We need to let Christmas be Christmas – however it wants each year.

And again, this gives us reason for joy and celebration. There are many reasons why this openness to the fresh and new nature of Christmas is a source for joy and celebration. For starters, if for some reason the traditions are not working, you don't need to keep doing them. That is to say, any way you bring the Christ child into your life is okay, there isn't the 'right list' of things that you have to do to experience the magic of Christmas. If that means Christmas tacos instead of roast turkey – so be it!

The ability for Christmas to be fresh each year is also an incredible blessing for those who can't celebrate Christmas as they would traditionally. Empty-nesters can have a meaningful Christmas without the kids. Widows/widowers can experience the closeness of God at a time that can feel very alone. And most of all, it means that you always might discover something new about God, something new that you didn't know before.

Remember that no matter what type of relation you have with God, and no matter where you are in life, there is always some way that your relationship can grow. There isn't any need for you to hold your tongue just right. There isn't a need to do just this or just that. But by walking with God, there is always the openness to growth and revelation in that Loving Care. All of this gives us reason for joy and celebration.

May the peace of the Lord be with you,
Rev. Dr. Matthew Zuehlke

Highlights of November Session Meeting

- Following advice from the Stewardship committee, approved that the church's share of the Building Restoration Project (\$30,000) be taken from the following – Marge Triplett Memorial (\$20,000), Jim Warren Memorial (\$2,326), Building Fund (7,374), and money designated for this project (\$300).
- Approved changing the date of the Congregational Meeting from Sunday, December 8 to Sunday, December 15 and add "election of elders, deacons, and nominating committee" as another purpose of that meeting. Walkthroughs of the areas will remain on November 24 and December 1.
- Approved accepting Michelle Zuehlke's resignation as Treasurer at a date yet to be determined, but not to exceed January 22, 2014. An exit interview will be conducted.
- Approved granting vacation to Pastor Matthew from December 5-11. On November 13 Pastor Matthew will be participating in "Coping with Grief" conference - previously approved Continuing Education.
- Accepted Darlene Hey's resignation as Deacon effective December 31, 2013.
- A job description for the Worship Committee was distributed and approved to be added to our Manual of Operations. Susan Meier contacted the Clerk for a copy of our Manual of Operations so that she could share as a reference for other churches as to what should be included.
- Approved changing December's Stated Meeting to Monday, December 16 at 7:00 PM. This will be our annual meeting with Deacons.

Church AD

Christian Education Committee has decided to discontinue Church Ad services. Several alternative services and frequency of meetings were tried, but none garnered enough support to continue.

Congregational Meeting

A Congregational Meeting (originally planned for December 8) has been moved to December 15 following the morning worship service. There are two purposes for this meeting – one is to elect officers (Elders, Deacons, Nominating Committee) and the other is to discuss the proposed Building Restoration Project, share funding information, and vote on this project.

In Memory of a Loved One!!

If you would like to give a gift in memory of a loved one for the Advent and Christmas seasons, the Worship Committee requests that you use the form included in the newsletter or church bulletin to make a monetary donation.

Please place your completed form (with cash or check) in the offering plate or send to the church (P.O. Box 149, Bluffton). Thank you!



Spreading the Joy at Christmas

Once again the Mission Committee and the Youth Group have each chosen to sponsor a family through Bluffton's Community Assistance Program. Beginning December 1, we will be collecting items for "adopted families". If you would like to help brighten the Christmas for a local family, please choose items from the poster board wish lists in the back of the sanctuary to donate.

It is helpful if you attach the sticky note to the items when you bring the items back to church. If you are purchasing clothing items, please include a gift receipt in case the size is not correct. We are requesting that all items be brought to the church by **December 15**. The Youth Group will meet that day to sort and wrap any gifts.

“More Than Enough”

Our Season of Stewardship:

Giving across Human Divisions

“The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work. As it is written, ‘He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.’” ~ 2 Corinthians 9:6-9, NRSV

In this writing, Paul shares about giving in general, but the context is giving to help meet a particular need. Paul is writing to Christians in Corinth, part of the Greek province of Achaia, about the need to collect money for the church in Jerusalem. In Acts 4:32-35 we read about the “mother church” in Jerusalem as a community where “no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common,” so that “there was not a needy person among them,” as they “distributed to each as any had need.”

The New Testament offers no evidence that this pattern of common life was adopted in other Christian communities outside Jerusalem. However, since the New Testament period, various groups of Christians have tried to live this ideal. We don’t know what happened to that communal pattern of life in Jerusalem, but by the time Paul wrote this letter twenty-some years later, the Christian church in Jerusalem was in need. Paul is appealing to other churches, specifically churches in Gentile cities—like Corinth in Achaia (southern Greece) and Philippi in Macedonia (northern Greece)—to contribute to an offering for the church in Jerusalem.

This appeal crosses traditional divisions. Paul had fought hard for the Jewish Christians, among whom the church had started, to welcome Gentiles (non-Jewish people) without requiring them to become Jews. Here Paul is asking mainly Gentile

Christians to turn around and to help mainly Jewish Christians. And they are helping people who live hundred miles away, not in their neighborhood.

Christian concern and giving have always crossed traditional divisions. How do our lives today live up to this tradition of sharing across divisions?

Questions

- *What traditional divisions do your church’s life and budget cross?*
- *Do they touch people far away?*
- *Do they touch racial and ethnic groups different from your own?*
- *Do they cross divisions of social standing?*

Prayer:

God of the whole creation and of all people, show us where you want us to cross barriers and divisions with our giving, so that the richness of your life may be reflected in the life of that corner of your church of which we are privileged to be a part. Amen.

Stewardship News

Our current church treasurer, Michelle Zuehlke, has decided to not continue permanently in the treasurer position. Michelle has made significant accomplishments in a short amount of time, most notably converting the church’s financial books to a comprehensive software package. Session and Stewardship appreciate Michelle’s hard work and diligence and thank her for her contributions. Michelle will assist during the upcoming time of transition.



October Financial Report

Beginning Balance	\$19,529.94
Receipts	9,526.93
Expenses	(8,619.90)
Balance	\$20,436.97

2014 Commitments

Thank you for your prayerful 2014 commitments to the church. The procession to collect pledge cards during the November 17 Stewardship Sunday service was truly a moving symbol of God's gifts. If you were unable to attend worship on Stewardship Sunday, please place your commitment card in a collection plate on an upcoming Sunday or mail the card to the church office at your earliest convenience. Your pledges allow us to make plans for the upcoming year to ensure the church's limited resources are used as wisely as possible, and please remember commitments are adjustable for changes in your personal situation. Your generous gifts of skills, time, and funds are appreciated and allow us to continue our Christian work and life as a congregation!

Youth Group Meetings

The youth group will be meeting on December 1 for our monthly meeting. We will meet from 5:00 to 7:00 PM, please note this is a time change from the past couple of months. We will begin with a meal and then have our meeting and Bible Study.

The youth group will be meeting on December 15 from 3:00 to 5:00 PM to organize and wrap gifts for the Adopted Families.



Praise Team participates in worship one Sunday per month, with a short rehearsal the Wednesday before (7:30 to 8:00 PM) and another (9:50 to 10:05 PM) on that Sunday. If you are interested in singing or playing an instrument, please see Jayne McGarrity.

Fall Schedule:

December 15 (rehearse 11)

Nursery Care

The church has hired Lynsee Lawler and Kori Phipps to provide child care during Sunday School and Worship. This will create a more consistent environment for the toddlers and allow all families to participate in worship. We will no longer be asking for volunteers for the nursery.

Coffee Talk with Pastor Matthew

Coffee talk with Pastor Matthew at McDonalds on Monday at 8:00 AM.

Christmas Progressive Dinner

Saturday, date to be announced, at 5:30 PM. We will be sharing our Christmas spirit while enjoying a few homes and great food. Everyone will meet for appetizers at one house, and then go to an assigned home for dinner and dessert. Contact Betsey Angus at 419-643-8000 or Cathy Carroll at 419-477-5266 for more information.

Zuehlke's Open House

The Zuehlke's will host a Christmas Open House again this year, on December 21 starting at 1:00 PM. Please feel free to drop in and share in food and fellowship on this afternoon.



PDA Update – Typhoon Haiyan

As I am sure we all know by now, a devastating storm hit the central Philippines the weekend of November 8. It has been identified as one of the strongest in recorded history, stronger than Hurricane Katrina and Superstorm Sandy combined, with winds between 150 – 200 mph when it struck. At least 1200 people have died according to the Philippine Red Cross, but unconfirmed sources place the death toll closer to 10,000. Hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced.

There has been severe destruction, with damaged roads cutting off access to affected areas, downed telephone and telecommunications lines, and flattened and flooded towns and villages. Only one airport in the area is still in operation at this point. The areas hit are already poverty-stricken and have suffered from “successive and simultaneous emergencies.”

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance is working in collaboration with its mission partner, the National Council of Churches Philippines (NCCP) and other members of the ACT Alliance to respond to this crisis. PDA will respond with One Great Hour of Sharing and designated funds as assessments are completed and most urgent needs are identified. Initial responses include provision of non-food items, drinking water, emergency shelter kits and cash-for-work programs.

If you would like to help, you may give by designating gifts to DR000012-Philippines in several different ways: through our local congregation (make check payable to Bluffton Presbyterian with the above designation on the memo line); online through www.pcusa.org; or by mailing a check to Presbyterian Church (USA), P.O. Box 643700, Pittsburgh, PA 15264-3700. You may also text “PDA” to 20222 to make a \$10 donation to disaster response.

And as always, please pray that the people and communities impacted by this terrible storm, and those offering assistance, will be strengthened, have their needs met, and be reminded of the hope and compassion that are found in Christ.

BFR Shoe Drive

BFR Sports & Fitness is introducing a used shoe collection drive November 13 through December 15 to raise operating funds, while also benefiting microenterprise ventures in developing nations and keeping old shoes out of local landfills. Individuals can help by dropping off used shoes at the BFR facility located at 215 Snider Road in Bluffton.

“Our goal is to collect a total of 7500 pairs of shoes by February 14, 2014. Our first benchmark is to collect 3000 pairs by December 15. We are inviting everyone in the area, to gather unwanted, gently worn shoes and bring them to our facility.

In the US alone, approximately 630 million pairs of shoes are thrown away per year. The materials used to manufacture a pair of shoes are created from chemical compounds, the kind that will create health hazards if left to disintegrate openly or in landfills. By donating gently worn shoes to BFR, what would have gone into landfills will be given a second chance to make a difference. All donated shoes will be redistributed through microenterprise partners and used in developing nations for impoverished people to start, maintain and grow a business to feed, clothe, and house their families.

Any size and type of shoe (athletic, work, dress) in any condition may be donated, as long as there is a matching pair. Those donating will be offered as an incentive, a ticket toward a drawing for a \$100 gift certificate and \$50 gift certificate (good for any BFR program or service); the drawing will be held on Friday, February 14, 2014.

The used shoe drive is a program through Fund2orgs.com. If you would like to participate in the local shoe drive, you may contact BFR by phone at 419-358-4150 or email bfr@wcoil.com.

Carol will also have a box at church to collect the shoes.



Our Daily Bread Soup Kitchen

The next opportunity to serve at Our Daily Bread Soup Kitchen is Thursday, December 5. Volunteers interested in carpooling, meet at the church parking lot at 9:40 AM. Please contact Shirley Kisor (419) 358-0085, if you are able to participate.



Samaritan House Gift Wrapping Fundraiser

The annual Samaritan House Gift Wrapping Booth will once again be at DeHaven Home and Garden Showplace (775 Shawnee Rd in Lima).

When?

December 14-24 (10-7 Monday through Saturday, 12-5 Sunday, 9-1 Christmas Eve)

How can you make a difference?

- **Volunteer** your time to wrap gifts (www.samaritanhouselima.com or call 419-222-4663)
- **Donate** gift wrapping supplies: (contact Shirley Kisor 419-358-0085 and she will drop them off)
- **Bring your holiday gifts** and allow Samaritan House volunteers to wrap them for you. The gift wrapping is free, although donations are gladly accepted.

"Wrap up" your holidays and support the Samaritan House!



BPC Church Congregation,

I wanted to say thank you for thinking and praying for Tayler and me, and for the help you have provided.

Lynn Nowak-Sneary

Dear Friends in Christ,

As we approach the fall, I want to pass along my gratitude once again for your generous gifts to the Christmas Joy Offering totaling \$1,310 last year.

Because of your generous gifts, the Presbyterian Mission Agency was able to help provide brighter educational opportunities for students at historically Presbyterian racial ethnic schools and colleges, a longstanding tradition of the church. Gifts to the offerings also support the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions, a fund that stands in the gap to assist retired church leaders and their survivors in difficult times. Together, they make the Christmas Joy Offering a tribute to the leaders of our church – past and present.

Over the course of the next year, with your help, this outstanding work can continue, benefiting more lives and creating more opportunities.

I look forward to your continued support. If the Special Offering team can be of service to you, please let us know.

All the best,
Sam Locke
Director, Special Offerings

PS: Take a moment to explore some new and innovative ways to support the Offerings with our new Presbyterian Giving Catalog and Christmas card program. Learn more at presbyteriangifts.org

Thank you to Joel Kimmel for donating a snow blower to the church.

Owen Ziessler



Prayers of Sympathy with the Herrmann and Amstutz families.

Prayers of Sympathy with Avis Marshall and family at the death of Avis' sister.

Prayers with the people in the Philippines.

Prayers for Peace in our lives and in our World.

Prayers for our members and friends serving in the armed forces: especially Lucas Woodward, and Andrew Warner.

Prayers of Healing for Bob and Jean Braden, Karen Long, Dusty Klingler, Gordan Diller, Min Lindsey, Larry and Penny Sterling, Brenda Anderson, Judy Surgent, Stella Tomlin, Curtis Champion, Jill Burkholder, Hayley Anthofer, and Michael Lee Bucher.

Great News....
Min Lindsey is now home!!



BPC Prayer Chain

If you have a prayer request, please contact Diane Winebar (419-957-4046 or dwinebar711@gmail.com), or call the church office (419-358-5806) with your prayer request, and they will pass along the information.

If you would like to be part of the chain or would like more information, please contact Diane or another deacon.

Address Change:

Ben and Judy Miracle
831 Fox Run Rd. – Unit 10
Findlay, OH 45840

Journeying through Grief

If you have experienced the loss of a loved one in the past year, a series of short books, *Journeying through Grief*, is now available. Each book describes the issues and feelings that people tend to encounter at various points during their grief and offers suggestions on how to handle them. The Deacons have a number of copies available, so please contact your Care Deacon or Pastor Matthew at any time if this series may be of help to you.

Happy Birthday!!



December	4	Marilyn Edwards
		Jim Enneking
	5	Arian Zuehlke
	9	Tenna Rhonemus
		Jack Henry Neff
	11	Jeanie Nichols
		Cheryl DeWitt
	15	Sarah Gillen
	17	Ben Miracle
	21	Linda Sycks
	22	Samuel Neff
January	29	Billy Marshall
	31	Darlene Hey
	3	Dave Sycks
		Chad Carroll
	7	Dwight Nichols
		Barb Fett

Gourd Harvest



Bluffton Presbyterian Church
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419-358-5806

Pastor: Rev. Dr. Matthew Zuehlke
Email: revdrmz@gmail.com
Cell Phone: 567-825-3973
Office Hours: Mon-Thurs 9:30-1:00

Secretary: Cathy Carroll
Email: bpcbluff@wcoil.com
Office Hours: Tues & Wed 9:00-12:30
Website: blufftonpc.org

Sunday School Programs: 9:00 AM
Sunday Worship Service: 10:15 AM

2013 Church Officers

Session

Clerk of Session – Lori Schmidt
Buildings & Grounds – Owen Ziessler
Christian Education – Jay McCracken
Finance – Clair Winebar
Mission – Beth Buist
Nominating – Kay Ziessler and Tom Edwards
Personnel – Kay Ziessler
Presbytery Commissioner – Darlene Hey
Worship – Jeanette Warren
Members at Large – Tom Edwards, Rhonda Moor, and Donnas Stone

Board of Deacons

Moderator: Shirley Kisor
Members: Don Carroll, Laura From, Darlene Hey, Lin Rumer, and Diane Winebar.