



Pastor's Note

As we welcome the New Year 2025, we find ourselves reflecting on a year that tested, stretched, and ultimately shaped us in profound ways. The year 2024 brought its share of challenges, triumphs, and opportunities for growth both as individuals and as a church. Now with a new year, we look forward with hearts full of hope, grounded in faith and determination. The words of Proverbs 3:5-6 resonate deeply: *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight.”* These verses remind us that even when we cannot see the full picture, God’s plan is always at work!

Therefore, the new year always provides an opportunity for a new beginning. In a sense, God is saying, “I want you to have a new beginning, I want to do something new in your life. I want Bethel UMC & Plank Chapel UMC to have a new beginning.” Aren’t you glad that God wants to do something new and exciting in your life and in the life of His church? Doesn’t it make you excited to know that God desires to give us a fresh start? The prophet Isaiah offers a powerful promise: *“See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.”* (Isaiah 43:19) This verse is a beacon of hope for the new year, reminding us that God is always working to bring renewal and transformation.

God is birthing something new into your life. God is birthing something new to His church such “Dinner Church” at Bethel UMC, and “The Gathering” and “Journey” at Plank Chapel UMC. And they are fresh and alive with possibilities. God is doing something incredible that we’re just starting to see. It may not look the same as before but this "becoming church" will be rich in the life of the Kingdom— reaching out to new and diverse people, making disciples of Jesus Christ and transforming the community and beyond.

Beginning January 12th, I’m starting a new 7-week sermon series entitled: “The Power to Change”. God doesn’t simply want to save us, He wants to radically change us! This Sunday is also the Baptism of the Lord and therefore, we will have a “Reaffirmation of Our Baptismal Covenant” during the worship services. I hope that beginning 2025, you will make a renewed commitment to join us for worship every Sunday at Bethel UMC and Plank Chapel UMC.

As we bid farewell to 2024, let us carry forward its lessons while embracing the promise of 2025. This new year is an opportunity to grow in faith, love, and purpose. Let us step into it boldly, knowing that God walks with us every step of the way. Apostle Paul reminds us to press on: *“Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”* (Philippians 3:13-14)

May 2025 be a year of renewal, generosity, and abundant blessings for you and for His church. Together, let us make it a year of spiritual renewal and revival, grounded in faith and driven by hope.



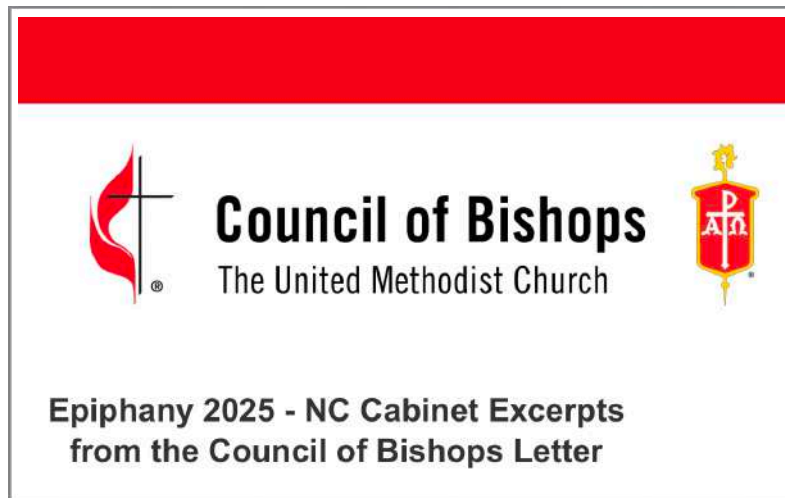
We are immensely blessed and grateful to our Awesome God for the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ!

We cannot thank you enough for the many Christmas cards and greetings we received this season including food, Sabbath rest and monetary gifts from Bethel & Plank Chapel UMC family. With gratitude for each one of you and for our shared life together.

May the hope, peace, love and joy of Jesus Christ fill your home and every day of your life.

From our family to yours, Merry Christmas & a Happy New Year!

Pastor Edgar, Judy, Kristina & Elaine



Jesus said, “When you welcome the stranger, you welcome me....” Matthew 25:35

At no time has the church in the US had a greater opportunity to welcome Jesus among us as he journeys with migrants, immigrants, and refugees than today. We, your bishops, are clear that the situation these beloved of God face threatens their humanity, livelihood, and basic human rights.

For decades, a broken immigration system in the U.S. has kept migrants, immigrants and refugees in this country living in the shadows of society in a state of perpetual fear. They have come to the U.S. under forced circumstances fleeing extreme poverty, hunger, political and religious persecution, war, cartel and gang violence, and the severe impact of climate change. Some are actively recruited by large U.S. companies who need their labor. Yet migrants, immigrants and refugees help to sustain the U.S. economy, serve our families caring for our children and our elderly, cleaning our homes, landscaping our properties, building our roads and the houses we live in, and cultivating and picking the crops that feed our families. They are our neighbors, our friends, and members and pastors of our churches. Racist, xenophobic, nationalistic, and anti-migrant hate speech has become standard rhetoric. We are living in a dark time that more than ever calls us to be the light of Christ, people of faith who take our baptismal vow to “resist evil in all its forms,” with utmost seriousness.

As United Methodists, we have firmly declared through our Social Principles that we are called to actively welcome the migrant, immigrant, and refugee among us.

- Affirming the dignity, worth, and rights of migrants, immigrants, and refugees.
- Recognizing that displaced people are particularly vulnerable as their in-between status often provides them with few protections and benefits, leaving them open to exploitation, violence, and abuse.
- Urging one another to welcome migrants, refugees, and immigrants into our congregations, providing concrete support, to them including help with navigating restrictive and often lengthy immigration policies, and assistance with securing food, housing, education, employment and other kinds of support.
- Opposing all laws and policies that attempt to criminalize, dehumanize, or punish displaced individuals and families based on their status as migrants, immigrants, or refugees.
- Decrying attempts to detain displaced people and hold them in inhumane and unsanitary conditions.
- Challenging policies that call for the separation of families, especially parents and minor children.
- Opposing the existence of for-profit detention centers that are used for the purpose of detaining migrants, immigrants, and refugees including minor children.

(Social Principles of The United Methodist Church, The Political Community Basic Rights and Freedoms, Section G. Migrants, Immigrants and Refugees)

We, your bishops, call upon the people of The United Methodist Church to pray for migrants, immigrants, and refugees among us and to welcome them with the fullness of Christian love, remembering that as we welcome these, our brothers and sisters, we welcome Jesus our Lord.

Bishop Connie Mitchell Shelton
Raleigh Episcopal Area
North Carolina Conference
The United Methodist Church

Bishop Tracy S. Malone
President - Council of Bishops
The United Methodist Church



PLANK CHAPEL UMC CHOIR

Plank Chapel UMC Choir meets for practice on the following dates and time. If you are musically inclined and willing to offer your gifts and talents, we would love to have you join the choir! Here are the practice dates:

[**January 8th, 3:00pm**](#)

(tentative)

[**January 22nd, 3:00pm**](#)

[**February 5, 3:00pm**](#)

[**February 19, 3:00pm**](#)

BLESSING BOX MINISTRY

Plank Chapel UMC saw a great need in the community for those vulnerable to have access to the food they cannot always afford. And so, we launched the Blessing Box Ministry in 2022 and encouraged church members as well as the community to help keep the box stocked with non-perishable food items for those in need. Also, please check your book shelves so that we can offer children and adult books as a lending library. We give thanks to God for your generous gifts and support for this outreach ministry.

Online Learning Opportunities

The NC Conference Media Center gathers upcoming online learning opportunities from the NC Conference and our partner organizations into one [calendar](#). It includes webinars, events, discussions, and classes that can all be completed online. Visit the website for each event to register.

In 2025, subscribers to Media Center emails will begin receiving this list of online learning opportunities at the end of each month. If you do not wish to receive emails from the NC Conference Media Center, you may update your preferences using the link at the bottom of this email.

January 2025

Faith Talks (United Women in Faith)

January 2, 2025

Faith Talks are monthly conversations with United Women in Faith hosted by Jennifer R. Farmer, Spotlight PR. Each conversation explores themes and resources that empower us to put faith, hope and love into action.

Leadership and Church Administration: Tables are Open with Dennis Peay (Center for Leadership Excellence)

January 7, 2025

Join us for the “Tables are Open” Zoom webinar with Conference Statistician Dennis Peay, designed to provide essential guidance and learning on completing your NCCUMC Statistical Tables Reporting.

KOFFEE KORNER

"Koffee Korner"-- a Fresh Expressions women's group that meets every first Wednesday of the month. We will meet on January 8th, 10:00am in the Fellowship Hall. For more information, please contact Nancy Gustafson @ [203-232-1145](tel:203-232-1145).

"STRONGER TOGETHER" EXERCISE CLASS

The "Stronger Together" Exercise Class meets every Monday & Thursday @ 6:00-7:00pm. Open to everyone. We will resume on Monday, January 6th. For more information, please contact Debra Newman @ [252-915-7005](tel:252-915-7005).

CHANGE BUCKET

In the light of the rebuilding efforts in the Western North Carolina, the January-February 2025 Change Bucket has been designated for UMCOR US Disaster Response - Hurricane Helene.

This session will focus on understanding and accurately reporting local church data in Table 1 (Membership), Table 2 (Financial Expenses), and Table 3 (Stewardship & Giving).

This session will focus on understanding and accurately reporting local church data in Table 1 (Membership), Table 2 (Financial Expenses), and Table 3 (Stewardship & Giving). Whether you're new to the process or seeking a refresher, we'll dive into how to track and submit your data for membership participation, financial operations, and income resources. This webinar will ensure you are prepared to enter and submit your reports by the January 31, 2025, deadline. Let's work together to ensure accuracy and transparency in your church's reporting!

Saving Grace: A Guide to Financial Well-Being
(United Methodist Foundation)

January 7 @ 11:00 am – 12:30 pm

WINTER 2025 | January 7 – February 18 (11:00 AM – 12:30 PM) Saving Grace is an introductory session plus six sessions. Based on Wesleyan values, each session provides participants with the text and tools needed to address the topics of saving, earning, and giving. Saving Grace, or one of the approved financial courses, is required

for the UMF Clergy Loan Program recipients. We are pleased to offer this online course to clergy for free. Space is limited.

There are many classes to choose from. Just click on the link

<https://nccumc.org/media-center/events/list/>

UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH

The United Women in Faith are composed of women who are "powerful, fearless force" driven by God's love and united in sisterhood. With a focus on women, children and youth, we act for justice and transform communities. Our next regular meeting will be on Sunday, January 19th, 3:00pm. All women are invited!

UNITED METHODIST MEN

We give thanks to God for everyone who joined the Pancake Breakfast Appreciation Fellowship last December 15th. The United Methodist Men will resume its regular monthly Breakfast Fellowship on January 19th from 8:00am-9:00am. All men are invited!

SENIOR CIRCLE

Senior Circle is a wonderful way to meet new friends, build relationships and have fun among fellow Christians! We meet every third Wednesday of the month with a program and light lunch @ Plank Chapel UMC Fellowship Hall. Our first gathering in 2025 will be on January 15th, 10:00am. All are invited!



Journey children and youth had an active fourth Sunday of Advent, Dec. 22, at Plank Chapel United Methodist Church.

At the 11 a.m. worship service, Journey presented a live Nativity scene as the special Christmas music. The children and youth walked up the center aisle to form the scene in front of the altar while Cameron Nugent set the tempo on a snare drum to "The Little Drummer Boy," accompanied by vocalist Nancy Gustafson of the Journey leadership team.

The youngsters participating in the Nativity presentation were: Charli Rowland, Jathan Huerta, Alexandria Huerta, Isabella Hernandez, Christina Hernandez-Norwood, Scarlytt Miller, Ava Burnette, Sapphire Burnette, Brooklyn Nugent, Delylah Brinkley, Payton Heinze, David Tart and Tate Carver.

Following the presentation, the Journey kids handed out wrapped Christmas candy to everyone in attendance in a show of appreciation for the support given to the youth organization by the church.

The monthly gathering of Journey took place at 4 p.m. the same day in the fellowship hall with a Christmas celebration as the theme. Leadership team member Wayne Young opened with a prayer and then the youngsters made construction paper "kindness chains" as an art project. The kids had to print an act of kindness on each chain link and were instructed to focus on carrying out those actions in the coming weeks. Leadership members Lora and Wayne Young and Ron Gustafson were assisted by Beth Heaton in distributing art supplies and lending a hand as the youngsters built their chains.

The kids then played a hook a candy cane game before opening gifts in a fun-filled episode of silly Santa

Prayer Requests

Tim Smith, Frances Beckham, Faye Moss, Ricky Satterwhite, Sammy Burgess, Bessie Newman, Fawn Westmoreland, Jeanette Mullen, Rose Marshall, Alston Monroe, Bob Kemp, Ronnie Currin, Brooklyn Nugent, Jeanette Weaver, Olly Johnson, Skip Brown, Alice Ferguson, Luz De Jesus, and communities affected by poverty, war and violence. Shut-Ins: John Rogers, Martha Rowland, Kay Deans, Ben & Jackie Brown, Virgie Eaves, Freddie McGhee & Frances Roberts. (For prayer request, please call [919-418-0682](tel:919-418-0682) or email Pastor Edgar @ edejesus@nccumc.org)

Journey leadership prepared a meal for those in attendance, with the food purchased through donations from church members. Pastor Edgar DeJesus offered the blessing prior to the dinner with Nancy Gustafson reading a Christmas devotional while the youngsters ate.

The event ended with the group singing Christmas carols and the children and youth each received a gift bag when leaving.

The next monthly meeting of Journey will be at 4 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 26.

Journey is a safe and caring space where children and youth can encounter the love of Christ Jesus through "becoming, belonging and believing."

For more information, contact Ron Gustafson at 203-641-2889 or visit the Journey website at plankchapel.org

January Birthdays

John Rogers – January 4th
 Austyn Abbott - January 11th
 Bob Kemp - January 18th
 Danielle Nugent - January 22nd
 Joyce Edwards - January 23rd
 Jamie Abbott - January 24th
 Freddie Ottinger - January 26th
 Freddie McGhee - January 27th
 Tomas Hernandez - January 28th



Anniversaries

Kasey and DJ Pegram - January 13th
 Mike and Darlene Ranes - January 20th





Center for Leadership Excellence

North Carolina Conference

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Church members who serve on a local church committee are invited to attend a leadership training event to learn more about the roles and responsibilities of your committee.

Learn more about the in-person and virtual options below.

In-Person Training

The following districts will offer in-person training opportunities. The dates and locations are below each district name. If you are not in one of these districts, please see the virtual option below.

Heritage District

January 12, 2025, at 3 pm

Louisburg UMC

<https://nccumc.org/leadership-training/>

Local Church Leadership Q&A

Heritage District

January 12, 2025, at 3 pm

The training will be held at **Louisburg UMC**. Please arrive at 2:45 for check-in.

Training for:

- Church Council
- Finance
- Nominations
- Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations
- Trustees

[Register Now](#)

CHRISTMAS CAROLING

We give praise and glory to God for sharing God's love and generosity to our homebound during Christmas Caroling last December 8th. We sang Christmas Carols to John Rogers, Tim Smith, Virgie Eaves, Roxie Kerney, Ben & Jackie Brown.

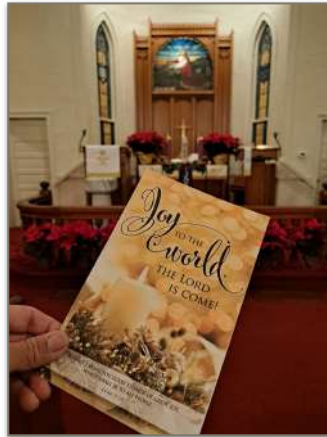
AWAKENINGS

Renew, fresh and revive your spirit as we worship our Awesome God at "Awakenings" every Sunday, 8:00am-9:00am (except third Sunday of the month). "Awakenings" offers contemporary music, come-as-you-are setting, relevant Bible-based conversation and a good cup of coffee! The "Awakenings" will meet on January 5th, 12th and 26th.

GIVING FLOWERS IN HONOR OR IN MEMORY OF LOVED ONES

You are invited to generously give flowers on Sunday Worship Services for God's glory and in honor or in memory of your loved ones. Please contact Judy Wilson @ Judith9563@gmail.com or (252) 492-0624.

Christmas Eve Communion and Candelight Service



Senior Circle December 2024

December is the month when we celebrate Christ's love for us with family and friends, but many are not so fortunate. Darryl Jones, manager of the Men's Shelter at City Road Center for Hope, was the Senior Circle's guest speaker. He spoke to us of ways we can help the homeless in our community. As one of the "success stories" of the shelter's programs, he explained how he went from homelessness to both hopefulness and independence by taking advantage of the educational programs, job opportunities and transitional housing offered by the shelter. He answered many questions and explained future hopes and goals of the Center for Hope. We received brochures and pamphlets that further explained reasons why a well run shelter for the homeless is an investment for the community as well as for the individual who chooses to participate.



Alice Braswell and Susan Sears, are regular volunteers who fix meals at the shelter. Mr. Jones says they are "bright lights".

Thanks, Janet, for the gift bags and the diamond art door prizes.



Happy Birthday, Betty!

After his presentation we celebrated Betty Stanton's 90th birthday. We followed a THIS IS YOUR LIFE FORMAT, and asked her many questions about various stages of her life, from where she was born to the present day. We learned Betty is active in the choir and is the chief cole slaw maker at the Cruise in for Christ's community fundraisers. She works with Grace Ministries where everyone calls her Mama. And in her spare time she is an expert quilter. In addition to being a wife, mother, grandmother and great grandmom, she has been a basketball coach, school bus driver, secretary for the tobacco market and other businesses and she and Roxie Kearney went to business school after graduating. She also worked with Sue Beal at Roses. After she blew out the candles on her cake, it was time for door prizes and Christmas treats for everyone courtesy of Janet Bobbitt, and we closed the program with Christmas carols and a festive lunch.







Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
29	30	31	1	2	3	4
Awakenings	Birthday: Chase Thompsc	Pastor Edgar@Bethel UMC		Pastor Edgar @ Plank Chapel UMC		
Awakenings	Pastor Edgar's Day Off	Pastor Edgar@Bethel UMC		Pastor Edgar @ Plank Chapel UMC		
Sunday School	Pastor Edgar's Day Off		Coffee Corner			Birthdays: John Rogers
Sunday School			Coffee Corner			The Gathering
2 more			2 more			The Gathering
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Awakenings	Pastor Edgar's Day Off	Pastor Edgar@Bethel UMC		Pastor Edgar @ Plank Chapel UMC		
Awakenings	Pastor Edgar's Day Off	Pastor Edgar@Bethel UMC		Pastor Edgar @ Plank Chapel UMC		
Sunday School	Stronger Together-Exerci		Choir Rehearsal	Stronger Together-Exerci		Birthdays: Austyn Abbo
Sunday School	Stronger Together-Exerci		Choir Rehearsal	Stronger Together-Exerci		
2 more			2 more			
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Awakenings	Anniversary: Kasey and D	Pastor Edgar@Bethel UMC		Pastor Edgar @ Plank Chapel UMC		
Awakenings	Pastor Edgar's Day Off	Pastor Edgar@Bethel UMC		Pastor Edgar @ Plank Chapel UMC		
Sunday School	Pastor Edgar's Day Off		Senior Circle	Stronger Together-Exerci		Birthdays: Bob Kemp
Sunday School	Stronger Together-Exerci		Senior Circle	Stronger Together-Exerci		
2 more	Stronger Together-Exerci		2 more			
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
Awakenings	Anniversary: Mike and Da	Pastor Edgar@Bethel UMC		Pastor Edgar @ Plank Chapel UMC		
UMM Breakfast Fellowsh	Pastor Edgar's Day Off	Pastor Edgar@Bethel UMC		Pastor Edgar @ Plank Chapel UMC		
Awakenings	Pastor Edgar's Day Off	Birthdays: Danielle Nuger	Birthdays: Joyce Edwards	Stronger Together Exerci	Birthdays: Jamie Abbott	
UMM Breakfast Fellowsh	Stronger Together Exerci		Choir Rehearsal	Stronger Together Exerci		
6 more	Stronger Together Exerci		3 more			
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
Birthdays: Freddie Oottin	Birthday: Freddie McGhee	Pastor Edgar@Bethel UMC		Pastor Edgar @ Plank Chapel UMC		
Awakenings	Pastor Edgar's Day Off	Pastor Edgar@Bethel UMC		Pastor Edgar @ Plank Chapel UMC		
Awakenings	Pastor Edgar's Day Off	Birthdays: Tomas Hernan	Prayer Group Zoom Meeti	Stronger Together Exerci		The Gathering
Sunday School	Stronger Together Exerci		Prayer Group Zoom Meeti	Stronger Together Exerci		The Gathering
5 more	Stronger Together Exerci					
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Birthdays: BW (Ben) Brov	Birthdays: Amy Smith Wa	Pastor Edgar@Bethel UMC		Pastor Edgar @ Plank Chapel UMC		
Awakenings	Pastor Edgar's Day Off	Pastor Edgar@Bethel UMC		Pastor Edgar @ Plank Chapel UMC		
Awakenings	Pastor Edgar's Day Off		Coffee Corner	Stronger Together-Exerci		
Sunday School	Stronger Together Exerci		Coffee Corner	Stronger Together-Exerci		
3 more	3 more		2 more			

