

Pastor’s Note

Warm Epiphany greetings!

We are still in the season of Epiphany which began on the first week of the year through Tuesday before Ash Wednesday. The gospel stories (lectionary) of this season describe various events that manifest the divinity of Jesus. The coming of the Magi is celebrated on the Epiphany. The Baptism of our Lord is observed on the Sunday after Epiphany. The gospels for the other Sundays of the Epiphany season describe the wedding at Cana, the calling of the disciples, and various miracles and teachings of Jesus. The Last Sunday after the Epiphany is always devoted to the Transfiguration. Jesus' identity as the Son of God is dramatically revealed in the Transfiguration gospel, as well as the gospel of the baptism of Christ.

The word “epiphany” comes from the Greek noun “*epiphaneia*” meaning manifestation or revelation, and we use it to focus attention on the manifestation of God to the world in the person of Jesus Christ. In many ways the season of Epiphany is a continuation and extension of our Christmas celebration of the incarnation – of the Word made flesh. This helps us understand why the Season of Epiphany follows the Season of Advent. The Messiah has come, and we now find ourselves in the season of God’s presence.

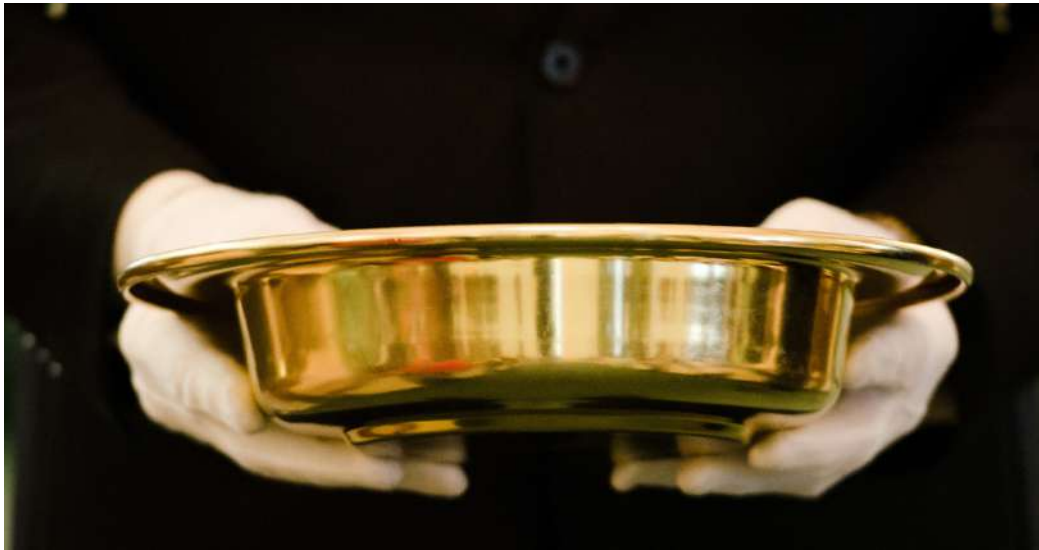
Therefore, where do you see God at work in your life today? I ask this question often during our Sunday worship service to constantly remind us of our “epiphany” moments— that God is at work in our lives every day.

In our churches, we have experienced our own epiphanies. At Bethel UMC, we have the Dinner Church that welcomes new, young and diverse people who are not usually attending the Sunday worship services. And we have an active and growing youth ministry who are involved in mission and ministries of the church. While at Plank Chapel UMC, we have the “Journey” and “The Gathering” with a growing number of attendees, reminding us of the longing for God and community that resides within each heart. In a world that often feels secular and distant from the sacred, this outpouring of faithfulness and generosity is a powerful message that God is continually breathing life into the church. People are searching for belonging and connection. Let us not underestimate the importance of our role in fostering this beloved community.

Individually and collectively, we are called to arise and awaken spiritually from the slumber of complacency and business-as-usual attitude. We are called to open our eyes to God’s truth, His presence, and His guidance, lifting our eyes to see and experience the glory of the Lord. Much like the Magi, we are invited to follow the guiding Light—moments of inspiration, encounters with wisdom, and signs of grace. We are invited on a spiritual journey, to offer our best talents, resources, time, and, most importantly, our hearts to God.

This season of Epiphany, I invite each of you to reflect on your own “epiphany” moments—those times when you have felt God’s presence most strongly in your life. How can these experiences inspire us to deepen our faith and strengthen our commitment to God and His church?

Let us pray...Lord Jesus, thank You for revealing Yourself to us. We shout for joy and worship You with gladness. We come before with joyful songs and join with the angels as they say, “Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth to men.” We receive Your peace and comfort. As we continue into the new year, we ask that we remember Your divinity and revel in Your identity. You are a miracle-working God, and so we ask You to do a mighty work of transformation in our lives. Change us to be more like You. Let our words and the meditation of our hearts be pleasing to You. Just as the Magi followed the star, so we commit to following You. Lead and guide us. Comfort and heal us. Let our hearts be set on You as You reveal more and more of Yourself to us. We adore you and give You glory. In Jesus’ Name. Amen.



PASSING OF THE OFFERING PLATES

Beginning February 2nd, Plank Chapel UMC will resume again the "passing of the offering plates" during the 11am Sunday Worship Service. We will also resume recruiting ushers to serve.

As you know, many churches including Plank Chapel UMC stopped the practice of "passing the offering plates" during the global pandemic to follow CDC guidelines regarding safety and public health.

With the passing of the offering plates, we are continually keeping offering central to worship. They are a tangible expression of our love of God. We are also giving every worshipper the opportunity to give to God as an expression of our worship and thanksgiving. And when we give in the context of communal worship, we are modeling generosity and serve as a form of witness.

Please note that we will continue to practice other methods of sending your tithes and offerings such as direct mailing and online giving.



In this new year 2025, we would like to invite the Church Council and all church members of Plank Chapel UMC for a "Conversation & Visioning" on Wednesday, February 5th, 6:00pm in the Fellowship Hall.

We are glad to welcome the Heritage District Superintendent, Rev. Dr. David Joyner, who will lead the process.

The main goal of the February 5th gathering is to provide a space for the lay leadership and the congregation to learn about the current realities of the church and develop short-term strategic plans for 2025-2026.

In preparation, here are the conversation questions based from Bishop Shelton's video during the 2024 Charge Conference:

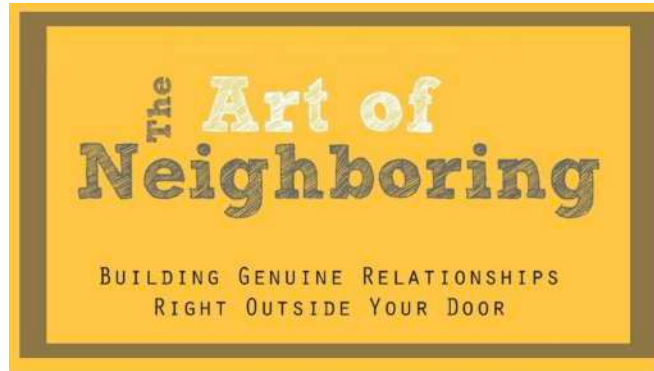
1. Why does our local church (Plank Chapel UMC) exist?
2. Reflect on the current realities of the church. Name where we are "stuck" and what it is that we need to "release"?
3. What are the new things that God is doing right now in the church? And how would you participate in those new things?
4. Looking at the church statistics in the last 10 years, what is one thing that the church can do in 2025 to be a "healthy and thriving congregation"?

Finally, after the visioning process, Mike and I agreed that the Church Council will meet every other month to serve as a space for prayerful discernment, active listening and continuing conversation on how we can effectively "be the church".

Please keep the February 5th gathering in your prayers.

Grace & Peace,

Pastor Edgar



The Evangelism and Discipleship Committee and the Center for Leadership Excellence present a workshop with Dave Runyon...

February 18 @ 10:00 am – 2:00 pm
Doors open at 9:30 am
\$15 includes lunch

About the Day

What if Jesus meant that we should love our actual neighbors? This is a question posed in the book *The Art of Neighboring* and it's a question that every Christian needs to wrestle with. Neighborhoods are much more than a collection of houses, or apartments, brick and mortar... they are a collection of people and potential life-giving relationships. We all have a need for genuine community, and nothing beats the frequency, availability, and spontaneity of connecting with others who live near us. Can you imagine the impact of the Christians in each neighborhood around our city and county taking up the challenge to shine the light of Christ in their neighborhood? We will be tackling this very challenge as we offer practical teaching on the art of neighboring.

Register now for a free book! We will be giving the first 50 registrants for this workshop a copy of Dave's book, *The Art of Neighboring: Building Genuine Relationships Right Outside Your Door*. Books will be available to pick up at the event.

<https://nccumc.org/leadership/event/the-art-of-neighboring/>



Dave Runyon helps faith, business, and government leaders unite around common causes in the Denver metro area. He serves as the Executive Director of CityUnite and as a consultant for businesses who have a desire to make a positive impact in their communities.



PLANK CHAPEL UMC CHOIR

If you are musically inclined and willing to offer your gifts and talents, we would love to have you join the choir! Please note that there will be no regular Choir Practice during the month of February. We will resume in March.

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.

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.

Dave helped to start a neighboring movement that has now spread to over 2,500 churches around the country. This experience prompted him to co-author "The Art of Neighboring," which was published by Baker Books and has sold over 150,000 copies. He speaks locally and nationally encouraging leaders to collaborate for the good of their cities. Before founding CityUnite, Dave served as a pastor for ten years at Foothills Community Church and The Next Level Church. He graduated from Colorado State University where he studied history, economics, and education. Dave and his wife, Lauren, have four kids and do not plan to have any more.

STRONGER TOGETHER" EXERCISE CLASS

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



Center for Leadership Excellence

North Carolina Conference

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Laity,

We are emailing you because you are serving as a 2025 lay leader, committee member, or committee chair in your church.

We appreciate your dedication and are committed to equipping you and your team with the resources you need for a successful year.

Join Us for a Live Q&A Session Related to Your Leadership Role

In recent years, we have offered virtual trainings for committees. This year, we invite you and your team to view last year's recorded training and then register for our virtual Q&A sessions designed to clarify key points, provide updates, and answer your specific questions.

Live Q&A Schedule – February 23, 2025 (Zoom)

- 1-1:45 pm – Trustees with Gray Southern
- 2-2:45 pm – Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations with Beth Hood
- 3-3:45 pm – Finance with Christine Dodson
- 4-4:45 pm – Church Council with Laura Stern
- 5-5:45 pm – Lay Leaders with John Hall
- 7-7:45 pm – Nominations with Donna Banks

How to Prepare for the Q&A Session:

These Q&A sessions are intended as follow-ups to the [recorded trainings](#) for each committee or leadership role already available online. Each Q&A session will begin with 5-10 minutes of content, followed by ample time for your questions.

We recommend hosting a watch party with your team to watch the recorded video of last year's training together. However you choose to watch the training, we hope you'll join us for the live Q&A session with your questions!

Prefer In-Person Training? Some districts are providing in-person training options.

In-Person Training

The following districts will offer in-person training opportunities. The dates and locations are below each district name. If you prefer not to join in person, [view the Virtual Training options](#).

If you are not in one of the three districts but want to join in person, [contact the AADS of that district to see if there is space available](#).

Recorded Trainings for each committee or leadership Role.

Resources and Training Videos
Visit these resource pages to find the training video and other helpful resources for your committee.

- [Church Council](#)
- [Finance](#)
- [Lay Leader](#)
- [Nominations](#)
- [Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations](#)
- [Trustees](#)

Each committee listed is a link. Just click on the one needed and you will be taken to the training.

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](#)

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

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdvshoteZybd-VLSr69UsU1RopF4bdmqMXs6LmuzyFI00Phcw/viewform>.

Link to the Google Doc to be filled out if attending in person at Louisburg UMC

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, February 16th, 3:00pm. All women are invited!



UNITED METHODIST MEN

The United Methodist Men will have its regular monthly Breakfast Fellowship on February 16h 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 next meeting is February 19th, 10:00am. All are invited!



The Gathering



AWAKENINGS

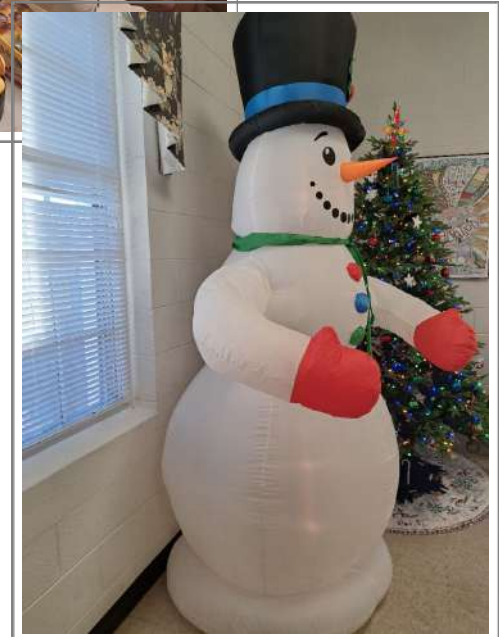
Renew, fresh and revive your spirit as we worship our Awesome God at "Awakenings" every Sunday, 8:00am-9:00am (except third Sunday of the month). "Awakenings" offers contemporary music, come-as-you-are setting, relevant Bible-based conversation and a good cup of coffee! The "Awakenings" will meet on February 2nd, 9th & 23rd.

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.

KOFFEE KORNER

"Koffee Korner"-- a Fresh Expressions women's group that meets every first Wednesday of the month. We will meet on February 5th, 10:00am in the Fellowship Hall. For more information, please contact Nancy Gustafson @ [203-232-1145](tel:203-232-1145).



February Birthdays

Ben Brown - February 2nd
Amy Smith Ward - February 3rd
Kristi Brown - February 3rd
Sally Coghill - February 11th
Ann Finch - February 14th
Jodi Beckham - February 15th
Lori Litton - February 20th
Frances Beckham - February 23rd



Anniversaries

Tracey and Rachel Knapp February 23rd



WEDNESDAY ONLINE PRAYER MEETING

Prayer Warriors are invited to join the Wednesday Online Prayer Meeting every week from 7:00pm-7:30pm. We will meet on February 12th, 19th & 26th. There will be no Online Prayer Meeting on February 5th due the church-wide "Conversation & Visioning".

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, Skip Brown, Alice Ferguson, John Rogers, Families of Johnny McGhee & Buck Lane, and people of California impacted by the devastating wildfires. 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



Jan. Journey gathering

Journey children and youth met on Sunday, Jan. 26, in the church Fellowship Hall for a variety of arts and crafts, game time as well as a meal.

Leadership team member Wayne Young opened with comments related to making New Year's resolutions and asked the youngsters if they had committed to personal pledges. He followed with the opening prayer.

Scott Ritchey, registration coordinator, briefly outlined the updated Journey registration form for 2025, which includes email and texting options for better communication between the leadership and parents/guardians.

Ron Gustafson was assisted by two of the children as he presented a science demonstration: a golf ball surfacing in a jar of rice. Nancy Gustafson followed with a devotional highlighting a few Bible verses.

The kids then spent time doing crafts coordinated by leadership team members Lora Young and Natalie Gonzalez. Projects included a Jesus Loves Me to Pieces! heart filled with pieces of colored tissue paper to replicate stained glass, assembling a LED candle in a decorated glass cup and writing a self-esteem letter.

Pastor Edgar DeJesus offered a blessing before those in attendance enjoyed macaroni and cheese, potato chips and beverages provided by Debra and Bruce Newman. Fruit, veggies, S'mores and hot dogs were also served.

Anyone wishing to provide a meal for Journey may contact Lora Young at (336) 504-7247.

The next meeting of Journey children and youth will be at 4 p.m., Sunday, Feb.23.

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.





◀ Search 4:57 PM Wed Jan 29

February Today Schedule Day Week Month

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
Awakenings	Pastor Edgar's Day Off	Pastor Edgar@Bethel UMC	Pastor Edgar@Bethel UMC	Pastor Edgar @ Plank Chapel UMC		
Awakenings	Pastor Edgar's Day Off	Pastor Edgar@Bethel UMC	Pastor Edgar@Bethel UMC	Pastor Edgar @ Plank Chapel UMC		
Sunday School	Stronger Together-Exerci		Prayer Group Zoom Meeti	Stronger Together Exercis		The Gathering
Sunday School	Stronger Together-Exerci		Prayer Group Zoom Meeti	Stronger Together Exercis		The Gathering
5 more						
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Awakenings	Pastor Edgar's Day Off	Pastor Edgar@Bethel UMC	Pastor Edgar@Bethel UMC	Pastor Edgar @ Plank Chapel UMC		
Awakenings	Pastor Edgar's Day Off	Pastor Edgar@Bethel UMC	Pastor Edgar@Bethel UMC	Pastor Edgar @ Plank Chapel UMC		
Sunday School	Stronger Together-Exerci	Cedar Cross Financials	Coffee Corner	Stronger Together-Exerci		
Sunday School	Stronger Together-Exerci		Coffee Corner	Stronger Together-Exerci		
2 more			4 more			
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Awakenings	Pastor Edgar's Day Off	Pastor Edgar@Bethel UMC	Pastor Edgar@Bethel UMC	Pastor Edgar @ Plank Chapel UMC		
Awakenings	Pastor Edgar's Day Off	Pastor Edgar@Bethel UMC	Pastor Edgar@Bethel UMC	Pastor Edgar @ Plank Chapel UMC		
Sunday School	Stronger Together-Exerci		Choir Rehearsal	Stronger Together-Exerci		
Sunday School	Stronger Together-Exerci		Choir Rehearsal	Stronger Together-Exerci		
2 more			2 more			
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
Awakenings	Pastor Edgar's Day Off	Pastor Edgar@Bethel UMC	Pastor Edgar@Bethel UMC	Pastor Edgar @ Plank Chapel UMC		
UMM Breakfast Fellowsh	Pastor Edgar's Day Off	Pastor Edgar@Bethel UMC	Pastor Edgar@Bethel UMC	Pastor Edgar @ Plank Chapel UMC		
Awakenings	Stronger Together-Exerci		Senior Circle	Stronger Together-Exerci		
UMM Breakfast Fellowsh	Stronger Together-Exerci		Senior Circle	Stronger Together-Exerci		
6 more			2 more			
23	24	25	26	27	28	1
Awakenings	Pastor Edgar's Day Off	Pastor Edgar@Bethel UMC	Pastor Edgar@Bethel UMC	Pastor Edgar @ Plank Chapel UMC		
Awakenings	Pastor Edgar's Day Off	Pastor Edgar@Bethel UMC	Pastor Edgar@Bethel UMC	Pastor Edgar @ Plank Chapel UMC		
Sunday School	Stronger Together-Exerci		Choir Rehearsal	Stronger Together-Exerci		The Gathering
Sunday School	Stronger Together-Exerci		Choir Rehearsal	Stronger Together-Exerci		The Gathering
4 more			2 more			
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Awakenings	Pastor Edgar's Day Off	Pastor Edgar@Bethel UMC	Pastor Edgar@Bethel UMC	Pastor Edgar @ Plank Chapel UMC		
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Sunday School	Stronger Together-Exerci	Cedar Cross Financials	Coffee Corner	Stronger Together-Exerci		
Sunday School	Stronger Together-Exerci		Coffee Corner	Stronger Together-Exerci		
2 more			2 more			