

BETHANY BEACON

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

A monthly newsletter of Bethany United Methodist Church, Summerville, South Carolina

December 2026 Volume 12

A Christmas Message from the Staff

As we celebrate this special season, may we never lose sight of the true meaning of Christmas: the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ, and the incredible gift of God's love. Amid the holiday gatherings, traditions, and celebrations, may we make room in our hearts for the hope, peace, and joy that Christ brings, remembering that the greatest gift of all was given to us in a manger.

As another year comes to a close, we are reminded how blessed we are to be part of such a wonderful church family. We are truly thankful for your giving hearts, loving spirits, generosity, and continued support of Bethany. Your faithfulness and willingness to serve make our church a special place to worship, grow, and share God's love with our community.

From all of us on the Bethany staff, we wish you and your families a very Merry Christmas and a happy, healthy New Year! May your holidays be filled with love, laughter, and treasured moments, and may the year ahead bring you many blessings.

With love and gratitude,
Your Bethany UMC Staff

In This Issue...

Advent/Christmas Services	pg. 2
Living Christmas Story	pg. 3
Bethany NOW	pg. 4
Blue Christmas	pg. 4
Creche Festival	pg. 5
Music Ministries	pg. 6
Children's Ministries	pg. 7
Happy Hearts	pg. 7
KidsCare	pg. 8
CDC	pg. 8
Student Ministries	pg. 9
Missions	pg. 10
College Ministry	pg. 11





Bethany United Methodist Church joyfully invites you to celebrate the birth of our Messiah with three meaningful worship services. A nursery will be available for the 5 pm and 7:30 pm services. Communion will be shared at each service. We encourage you to invite a friend and bring your loved ones to join us for one of these beautiful services as we reflect on the true meaning of Christmas.





Advent

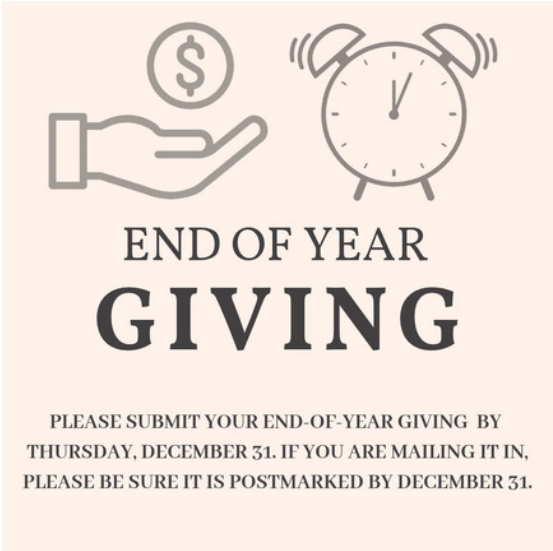
As we prepare our hearts for the celebration of Christ's birth, the Advent season offers us a sacred time to reflect on the hope, peace, joy, and love that Jesus brings into our lives. Advent is a season of anticipation, a time to pause amidst the busyness and focus on the true meaning of Christmas.

We warmly invite you to join us for Advent Worship Services on **Wednesdays (December 2 & 9) at 6:15 pm in Spell Chapel**.

These midweek services provide a meaningful opportunity to reconnect with God, center your heart, and embrace the beauty of this holy season.
Bring your family and friends, and let's journey together through Advent as we await the light of Christ's arrival.
We look forward to worshiping with you!

Planning to Give Stock for Your 2026 Pledge or Offering?

If you're planning to contribute stock toward your 2026 pledge or offering, please allow up to two weeks for the church to process and receive the funds. Thank you for your generosity and thoughtful planning!



The Living Christmas Story

BY EMILY VICK

The Christmas Story Comes to Life – We Need Your Help!

In just a few short days, the Christmas story will come to life right here in Bethany's parking lot! Sets are taking shape, costumes are being prepared, and our cast is coming together. There is still time to get involved, and we need your help to make this special Bethany tradition a success!

Whether you enjoy working behind the scenes, helping with setup, or being part of the cast, there is a place for everyone. Here are a few ways you can help:

Set Assembly & Final Preparations

Monday, November 30-Thursday, December 3

Join us as we put the finishing touches on the Living Christmas Story! We will be dressing the scenes, finalizing lighting and decorations, and making sure everything is ready. There is plenty to do, and many hands make light work!

Cleanup & Take-Down

Saturday, December 5

Once the last cast members have exited to set, we will need help taking things down inside and getting Bethany ready for Sunday worship. Meet in the Fellowship Hall at 7:45 PM. We will be putting away costumes, putting up tables and chairs, and arranging the chairs for Sunday's Word & Table service. Your help will make a big difference!

Sunday, December 6

We will provide lunch for everyone who helps! After lunch, we will work together to pack up props, break down sets, blow away the pine straw, and get everything put away until next year. We will need lots of helping hands to get the parking lot back in shape, so please plan to stay and lend a hand if you can!



Casting- We Still Need You!

There are still a few opportunities to be part of the cast! If you haven't signed up yet, it's not too late. We would love to have you join us! Knowing who will be participating helps us finalize plans, so please sign up as soon as possible by using the QR code.

Food Donations – Help Feed the Cast & Crew

Every night, we will feed over 200 cast members and crew who are working hard to bring the Christmas story to life. You can help by donating sandwiches, chips, drinks, and desserts. We need your contributions to keep everyone energized as we work long hours. Please sign up for one or more nights to provide food. Sign up in Sunday School rooms or on the boards downstairs.

Thank You for Your Support!

The Living Christmas Story takes many hands and willing hearts. Thank you for being part of this wonderful ministry and helping Bethany share the story of Jesus' birth with our community. We can't wait to see it all come together!

Bethany NOW
Nurture • Outreach • Worship



BY EMILY VICK

Bethany NOW in December: A Time for Celebration, Fellowship, and Reflection

This December is a special time at Bethany NOW as we gather for fellowship, good food, and opportunities to reflect on the meaning of Christmas. During this busy holiday season, we invite you to slow down, share a meal, and prepare your hearts for Christmas through our special Wednesday evening gatherings.

Here's what's happening in December:

Wednesday, December 2 –
Sausage Casseroles & More
Join us for a delicious meal of sausage casseroles, pancakes, fruit, biscuits, and dessert! The Searchers Sunday School Class will host the evening and welcome everyone to enjoy a time of food and fellowship.
At 6:15 pm, adults and youth are invited to join us in Spell Chapel for Advent worship led by Rev. Rick Rogers-Berry. At the conclusion of worship, we will gather at the manger for communion. The children's choirs will be singing at this service.

Wednesday, December 9 –
Join us for Bethany NOW dinner (meal details to be announced). It's another opportunity to enjoy fellowship around the table before gathering for Advent worship at 6:15 pm in Spell Chapel, led by Rev. Isaac Dusenbury. Children will have their regular activities.



Wednesday, December 16 – Blue Christmas Worship
The holidays aren't always an easy or joyful time for everyone. For those experiencing grief, loss, loneliness, or difficult circumstances, Bethany will offer a special Blue Christmas Worship Service at 6 pm in Spell Chapel, led by Rev. Michael Ritter.

This service provides a quiet and meaningful opportunity for prayer, reflection, and comfort, reminding us that God's light shines even in the midst of difficult seasons. Bethany NOW is a wonderful opportunity to connect with one another and make room for fellowship and spiritual renewal during the Christmas season. We hope you'll make Wednesday evenings at Bethany part of your December!



Celebrate the Christmas Story at the Crèche Festival!
December 10–13
12–5 pm Daily

The Christmas season is a wonderful time to reflect on the birth of Christ, and Bethany's annual Crèche Festival offers a special opportunity to do just that. We invite everyone to participate by sharing a nativity set or volunteering to welcome visitors and help make this event a wonderful experience for our community.

Sharing Your Crèche

We would love for you to share your special nativity sets. Please complete an information form for each crèche prior to drop-off. This helps us know what sets to expect and prepare for the display.

When completing the form, please include a little information about your set, such as the materials it is made from, where it came from, the story behind it, or any family traditions associated with it. Visitors especially enjoy learning the stories behind each nativity, so please share what makes yours special!

Use this QR code to fill out a form online, or see Karen Howard to submit a form in person.

Bring your crèche to the Welcome Desk downstairs on either of these dates:

- **Sunday, December 6 | 9:30 am–12 pm**
- **Monday, December 7 | 9:30 am–12 pm**

Crèche Pickup:

- **Sunday, December 13 | 5:30–7 pm**
- **Monday, December 14 | 9–11 am**

Volunteers Needed

We still need volunteers to welcome visitors, answer questions, and help direct people throughout the festival. This is an easy and meaningful way to be part of this special outreach to our community.

If you can help, please sign up on the volunteer forms located downstairs by the stairs. Whether you share a treasured nativity, volunteer your time, or simply invite a friend to visit, you are helping make this celebration of Christ's birth possible. Thank you for being part of this beautiful Bethany tradition!





Music Ministries

BY REAGAN LORD

Celebrate the Joy of the Season: Festival of Carols

Bethany UMC's Music Ministries invites you to experience the wonder and beauty of the Christmas season.
Join us on **Sunday, December 20 at the 8:30 am** worship services in the Sanctuary.
We will proclaim the story of Christ's birth through song, scripture and timeless carols.
Bring your friends and join us for this glorious celebration of the season.



A Prayer for 2027

Heavenly Father, as we welcome a new year, guide our hearts, strengthen our faith, and fill our days with Your love and grace. May we walk together in faith, serve others with joyful hearts, and seek Your will in all that we do. Bless our church family and the year ahead, that we may continue to be the hands and feet of Christ in our community. May 2027 be a year filled with hope, peace, and countless blessings.
In Jesus' name, Amen.

Children's Ministries

BY NIKKI BRANTLEY

A heartfelt thank-you to the wonderful volunteers who stepped up to support our Children's Ministry! Your willingness to serve makes a meaningful difference in the lives of our children, and we are so grateful for your support.

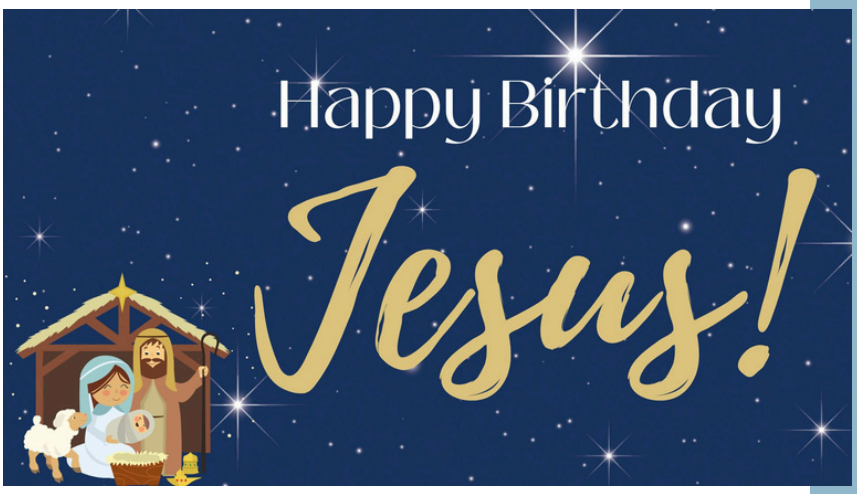
We are still looking for two parents to assist with Word & Table Children's Church, along with at least two additional preschool and elementary Sunday School teachers to join our teaching rotation.

We are also excited to introduce Sprouts, a new class for 3- and 4-year-olds who do not meet the September 1 age requirement to participate in our Crafts and Choir activities. During BNOW, Sprouts will give these little ones an opportunity to enjoy age-appropriate crafts, games, and a brief time of Bible learning in a fun and welcoming environment.
To get Sprouts started, we need a couple of volunteers to help lead this new class! If your child is interested in participating in Sprouts or you would like to volunteer in our Children's Ministry, please contact Nikki Brantley at nbrantley@bethany-umc.com for more information. Thank you for helping us plant seeds of faith and nurture the next generation of God's children!

Birthday party for Jesus

Sunday, December 13 in Room 213

Join us during the Sunday School hour for a joyful celebration of Jesus' birthday! Children will enjoy fun activities while learning about the true meaning of Christmas. Parents are welcome to join in the fun as we share in this special time of learning, laughter, and celebration!



Happy Hearts Luncheon

BY CATHY WILBER

Happy Hearts Luncheon Friday , December 18
Meal Reservations Due by Sunday, December 13

Please note the date change for our December Happy Hearts gathering due to the Christmas holiday!
Join us on Thursday, December 18, for a special Christmas celebration featuring beautiful holiday music performed by the Charleston Southern University Choir. A delicious lunch of pork loin, buttered noodles, broccoli casserole, rolls, pumpkin pie, and tea will be served for $10. Doors open at 11:30 am for fellowship, lunch begins promptly at noon, and the concert begins at 12:30 pm.

Meal reservations are due by December 13. To reserve your meal, please contact Dot at 843.343.5450 or email dmprevatte@yahoo.com. All ages are welcome, so bring a friend and join us for a wonderful time of food, fellowship, and Christmas music!

KidsCare

BY MAKALA BOCZKOWSKI

As December arrives, we find ourselves caught up in the wonderful hustle and bustle of Christmas! Between school and church performances, holiday crafts, Christmas shopping, and opportunities to serve others, our days are filled with activity, excitement, and joy.

Yet, amid all the busyness, Christmas invites us to slow down and remember what truly matters.

What a blessing it is to watch our KidsCare children grow in faith, share kindness, and discover the joy of serving others. Through simple acts of love and generosity, they remind us that Christmas is about so much more than presents and decorations. It is about giving, serving, and sharing the hope of Jesus with those around us.

As we search for the perfect gifts for those we love, may we remember the greatest gift ever given Jesus Christ. Born in a humble manger, He came into this world as part of God's incredible plan of love and salvation. Jesus is the REASON for the season, and His birth is a beautiful reminder of just how deeply God loves each and every one of us. What an incredible gift it is to know that our Heavenly Father loves us enough to send His Son into the world!

Upcoming Holiday Camps

KidsCare is excited to offer camp opportunities during the Christmas break!

Christmas Camp: December 21–23

New Year's Camp: December 28–30

We look forward to sharing more holiday fun, fellowship, and memories with our KidsCare children!

As we celebrate this beautiful season, may we never lose sight of the extraordinary gift of God's grace, love, and salvation.

On behalf of our entire KidsCare team, we pray that you and your family experience the peace, hope, and joy that only Jesus can bring.

CDC

BY TONI PINKARD

Christmas time is truly the most wonderful time of the year at Bethany CDC! We cannot wait to share all the joy of the Christmas season with our students! The children will learn about the birth of Jesus and visit the animals and sets of the Living Christmas Story. They'll sing Christmas carols and make sweet gifts for their families. Our kindergarten class will visit the Timrod Library for Christmas story time.

The CDC Christmas programs will be held on December 17 and 18 at 9:30 am in the sanctuary. The children have been working hard to prepare for the program and they are excited to share their special songs with family and friends. The love and joy in their little voices is more precious than any gift under the tree.

Online registration for the 2027/2028 school year will begin in January. Current CDC families and members of Bethany United Methodist Church have priority during the CDC registration process. If you have any questions, we would be happy to talk with you! Please call the CDC office at 843.821.1946.









Student Ministries

BY KYLE BOCZKOWSKI

A Season of Gratitude, Service, and Celebration

As we enter the Advent season and prepare to celebrate the birth of our Savior, I find myself reflecting on just how blessed we are here at Bethany. One of the greatest privileges of serving in Student Ministries is watching our young people grow in their faith, build meaningful relationships, and discover what it means to be the hands and feet of Christ in our church and community. The past several weeks have been a wonderful reminder that Student Ministries is about so much more than what happens on Sunday evenings. Our students continue to demonstrate that their faith is something to be lived out, not simply talked about.

A Season of Thanksgiving and Service

November gave us some wonderful opportunities to put our faith into action. Our students gathered to help pack Thanksgiving bags for families in need before sharing a special Friendsgiving meal with one another and some of the adults who have played important roles in their lives and in the ministries of our church. Friendsgiving has become one of my favorite traditions. There is something special about sitting around a table, sharing a meal, laughing together, and recognizing the many blessings God has placed in our lives. I am particularly grateful to my wife, Makala, for her efforts in helping organize this year's dinner and to the families who contributed to making the evening so special. Our students also participated in packing Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes, another opportunity to share Christ's love with children beyond our own community.

The Living Christmas Story – A Bethany Tradition

December brings one of the most special traditions in the life of Bethany United Methodist Church: The Living Christmas Story. For many in our community, this ministry has become an important part of their Christmas celebration. What visitors may not always recognize is the incredible amount of work that takes place behind the scenes to make it possible. Our students have been encouraged to participate in the workdays leading up to the event, helping with setup and preparations. These opportunities are about more than moving equipment, building scenery, or completing a project. They teach our young people that being part of a church family means taking responsibility for the ministries that make a difference in the lives of others. I am proud of the willingness of our students to serve, and I hope they come to recognize that their contributions, no matter how small they may seem, are an important part of something much bigger than themselves.

Celebrating Christmas Together

December will also provide opportunities for fun, fellowship, and celebration. Following The Living Christmas Story, we will gather for an ASCEND Game Night on December 6. On December 13, we will celebrate with our annual Christmas Pajama Party in the Youth House. Our students will also have an opportunity to participate in the Summerville Christmas Parade on December 13, another wonderful way to share the joy of the season with our community.

The Greatest Gift

As we move through Advent, I hope our students, and all of us, will remember that Christmas is ultimately a story about God's extraordinary love for ordinary people. In a world that seems increasingly busy, divided, and distracted, the message of Christmas remains remarkably simple: God loved us enough to send His Son into the world. John 1:14 reminds us, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." That is the miracle we celebrate. God came to be with us. My hope is that our students will continue to discover that the greatest way to celebrate Christmas is not simply through the gifts we exchange, but through the love we demonstrate, the kindness we extend, and the ways we serve others.

Thank You, Bethany

As another calendar year comes to a close, I want to express my sincere gratitude to the parents, volunteers, small group leaders, Youth Council members, and countless members of our congregation who support Student Ministries throughout the year. We have so much to be thankful for, and I am excited about what God has in store for our students in the coming year. From all of us in Bethany Student Ministries, I wish you and your family a blessed Advent season, a very Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year.

Missions



Bring joy to a child this Christmas by participating in the Bethany Angel Tree. Simply scan the QR code to select a child's wish and help make their holiday special.

Gifts can be dropped off at the Bethany Business Office from now until December 6. If the office is closed, you may leave gifts outside the door.

The deadline for all drop-offs is December 6.

For questions or additional information, please contact Linda Guess Bock at 843.303.0132.
Thank you for sharing the spirit of Christmas!



Gift & Gourmet Market:

Thank You for Making a Difference!

What an incredible Gift & Gourmet Market! A heartfelt thank-you to everyone who gave their time, talents, creativity, and support to make this year's market such a success. From those who crafted, baked, cooked, donated, set up, worked shifts, and helped spread the word to everyone who came out to shop, your efforts made a difference!

Because of your generosity and hard work, we have $34,000 to distribute to organizations serving those in need throughout our community! What a wonderful impact we can make together. Every item sold, every hour volunteered, and every contribution helped make this possible.

As we celebrate this year's success, it's also time to start thinking about next year! We would love to shake things up a bit in the crafting department and introduce some fresh, new items to feature in the market. If you have a creative idea, a favorite craft, or something new you'd like to try, start thinking about it now. We'd love to see some new faces, new ideas, and new creations!

Thank you again for making the Gift & Gourmet Market more than just a fundraiser. Together, we are making a difference in the lives of people right here in our community. We couldn't do it without you!

Katie's Krops Desserts Needed!

We are in need of individually wrapped homemade desserts to be paired with Katie's Krops meals on **December 10** for the hungry in the local area.
Please deliver to the Business Office by Thursday, December 10 no later than 11 am.

To sign up for a spot, please scan the QR code.
Thank you for your help with this ministry.

KATIE'S KROPS

Thank you to our AMAZING Volunteers!

We want to extend a heartfelt thank you to all our hardworking and dedicated volunteers. Your faithful service and commitment are the backbone of our church, helping everything run smoothly and allowing our ministry to flourish. We are truly grateful for each of you and the difference you make in our Bethany family!

Help Us Prepare for 2027 – Send Your Dates!

It's time to start putting together Bethany's 2027 calendar! If your committee, circle, ministry team, Sunday School class, or group has events, meetings, or activities planned for 2027, please send your dates and times by email. Even if it is a regularly scheduled meeting or activity, we need every date for the entire year so we can make sure everything is included on the calendar. Please send your information to Emily Vick at evick@bethany-umc.com. Thank you for helping us keep everyone informed and organized for the year ahead!





College Connections Ministry

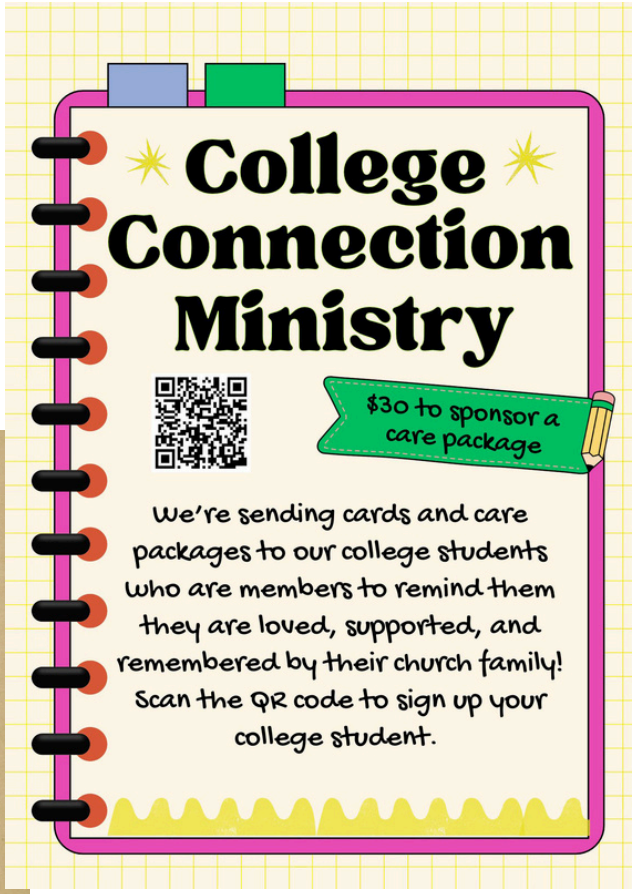
It is often said that the two greatest gifts adults can give children are roots and wings. Many BUMC young adults are off at college, spreading their wings, and because faith is an integral part of their roots, our church wants them to continue to feel our love and encouragement while they're away. Our mission is to send heartfelt cards and care packages to our college student church members to serve as reminders that they are being prayed for and have a church family who is cheering for their success.

If you have a college student who would enjoy receiving cards and care packages, please scan the QR code to complete the form.

You can also sponsor a care package for $30. Make checks payable to Bethany and note "College Connections Ministry" on your payment.

The College Connections team plans to send the first round of care packages at the beginning of next semester, so the deadline to submit student information and monetary donations is January 15th.

For more information, contact Jordi Graffis at jmgraffis@gmail.com.



Bethany United Methodist Church
118 West 3rd South Street
Summerville, SC
29483 - 5997

US POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT #25
NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
Summerville
29483

The Bethany Beacon is published monthly by Bethany United Methodist Church.
Articles, story ideas, questions, comments, news or photos may be sent to Communications at mkilliri@bethany-umc.com.
Please email your address changes or if you would like to be removed from the Bethany Beacon Newsletter mailing list. Submissions are due the 15th of each month.

www.bethany-umc.com
www.facebook.com/BethanySummerville
www.facebook.com/bumcchildrensministries
www.facebook.com/BethanyUMCYouth
twitter.com/BethanyUMC **Instagram/@umcbethany**



Office Hours:
Mon.-Thurs. 8:30 AM to 5 PM
Friday 8:30 AM to Noon

Church Office: 843.873.1230 Office Fax: 843.873.1937
Gym Office: 843.873.7261 Child Development Center: 843.821.1946
Emergency Number: If you have an emergency for which you need pastoral care at night, on weekends, or holidays, call 843.425.1069.