

# Circuit Writer

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Blountstown United Methodist Church

## A Year that Whispers Jesus

For author Nancy Tichy, a small holiday gift once sparked big-picture thoughts about Christian living. One December she received a kitchen towel with the message "I want a Christmas that whispers JESUS." That prompted thoughts of what it's like to have an entire year that whispers Jesus.

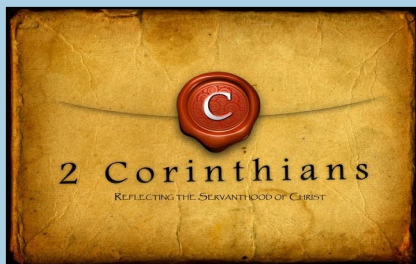
For starters, that involves daily quiet time, devotion and prayer. "Sometimes I wake with the thought of a person on my mind," writes Tichy. "I'm quiet with this impression, interceding for the family member or friend until it has lifted. Could this be a whisper from our Savior?"

Many other daily occurrences are "worthy of [Jesus'] whispered response of love," Tichy points out. That's true whether we're distracted by tasks and troubling thoughts or buoyed by encounters with contentment and joy. "For me," she writes, "whispering is part of intimacy, and that is what I want to make a hallmark of the coming year. I want closeness with our Savior that enables me to hear from him, even when he whispers."



## New Bible Study

Join us on Wednesday, January 10, at 10:00 am as we begin a new Bible study. Rev. John King has selected the book of 2 Corinthians.



Rev. John will be happy to schedule the same study at 7:00 p.m. for those who are unable to meet with us in the morning. Let him know if you would like to participate in the evening Bible study.

## Predictions for the New Year

Author Ronald Wilson, in *Stretching the Soul*, describes being certain that four things will occur in the days ahead.

- Trouble will come. Life is difficult. I must mourn as well as dance.
- In this long journey [of life], I'm not in control. God has reminded us of this.
- Many times I will fail.
- I will find forgiveness and get up and go on. God will wipe up the mess I've made of things, take me by the hand and set me back on the right path.

Praise God for his sure presence during the joys and challenges the new year brings!



## Philippians 3:12-14

<sup>12</sup> I don't mean to say I am perfect. I haven't learned all I should even yet, but I keep working toward that day when I will finally be all that Christ saved me for and wants me to be.

<sup>13</sup> No, dear brothers, I am still not all I should be, but I am bringing all my energies to bear on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead,<sup>14</sup> I strain to reach the end of the race and receive the prize for which God is calling us up to heaven because of what Christ Jesus did for us.



## The Heart of Our Faith

Christianity affirms that as the heart of reality is a Heart, a loving Father who works through history for the salvation of his children. Man cannot save himself, for man is not the measure of all things and humanity is not God. Bound by the chains of his own sin and finiteness, man needs a Savior.

—Martin Luther King Jr.



"Made you New Year's resolutions?" Josie asked? "Don't need to I've got it all together. You know I am perfect," Uncle Mose said with a grin on his face and a twinkle in his eye.

The beginning of a new year is the time we normally think of the passage of time, the coming year and the positive changes we want to make in our lives. The Christian faith is the only religion that promises that our past sins can be wiped out and we can begin the new year with a clean slate and a fresh start.

The new beginning is much more than turning over a new leaf. It is a total transformation of our lives, attitude and behaviors. The Scriptures tell us "if a man is in Christ he becomes a new person altogether—the past is finished and gone, everything has become fresh and new. All this is God's doing" 2 Cor. 5:17 [JB Phillips] Our relationship with Christ is a matter of growth. We do not arrive at maturity overnight. It is a process over time. When Paul wrote to the believers in Philippi, he spoke of his own growth in the faith. "I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me."<sup>13</sup> No, dear brother and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead,<sup>14</sup> I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us." [Phil 3:12-14, Living Bible] When Paul spoke of perfection in these verses, he meant maturity in Christ; coming to a better, more complete understanding of what it means to be a believer in Jesus Christ.

As we approach 2024, join me as we commit ourselves to the disciplines that lead to maturity and growth in Christ. It is not so much about adopting new resolutions as it is regularly doing those things that feed our souls; Bible reading, personal reflection and prayer. There is no short cut for spiritual growth and maturity. When we do these things daily, in December 2024, we will find our lives filled with peace and satisfaction, for God has guided us safely through this year.

Brother John King



## Three Powerful Prayers

Amy Carmichael (1867-1951), an Irish Protestant missionary, served in India for 55 years. Much of her work was with children, especially rescuing them from sexual slavery. Carmichael wrote 35 books and many articles about her mission work. The church of England remembers her on January 18, the anniversary of her death.

The following brief but powerful prayers are attributed to Carmichael:

- ♦ May thy grace, O Lord, make that possible to me which seems impossible to me by nature.
- ♦ Holy Spirit, think through me, till your ideas are my ideas.
- ♦ God, hold us to that which drew us first, when the cross was the attraction, and we wanted nothing else.

## First, Contact

In *Unclean: Meditations on Purity, Hospitality and Mortality*, Richard Beck writes powerfully about Jesus healing a leper in Matthew 8:1-3. “What is intriguing about this story is the sequence. Jesus touches the leper first. Then the command ‘Be clean!’ is offered. That is, Jesus’ first move is into ritual defilement. By first touching the leper, Jesus ... [is] standing in solidarity with the unclean.” Beck finds this “striking” because typically we expect purification before contact. But Jesus’ actions reverse the pattern: “Contact occurs first.”

How fortunate for us, too, that God didn’t wait to reach out to us until he had cleansed us of sin. God didn’t save us from afar and only *then* come to live among us. Rather, “God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8, ESV). And continuously, Jesus loves us, comes to us and touches our hearts, even when we are at our worst — straying from God, trapped in sin, unworthy, unclean, unrighteous. For it’s not *our* righteousness or purity that heals and saves us, but Christ’s.

“Although no one can go back and make a brand new start, anyone can start from now and make a brand new ending.”

— Carl Bard

## Two Ships

The year like a ship in the distance comes over life’s mystical sea.

We know not what change of existence ’tis bringing to you or me. But we wave out the ship that is leaving and we welcome the ship coming in, although it be loaded with grieving, with trouble, or losses, or sin. ...



The new ship comes nearer and nearer, we know not what freight she may hold.

Hope stands at the helm there to steer her;

our hearts are courageous and bold.

Sail in with new joys and new sorrows.

Sail in with new banners unfurled.

Sail in with unwritten tomorrows.

Sail in with new tasks for the world.

-from “New Year,”  
Ella Wheeler Wilcox

# The CIRCUIT WRITER

						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>Communion</b> Beth Herndon  <b>Offering</b> Calhoun Liberty Ministry Center	<b>1</b>  <b>New Year Day</b>  ← Office Closed →	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>  Choir 5:30 pm  ♪Vicky Whitfield	<b>4</b>  ♪Olivia Averett	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>  <b>Epiphany</b>
<b>7</b>  <b>Baptism of the Lord</b>	<b>8</b>  ♪John King	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b> Bible Study 10:00 am Choir 5:30 pm ♥Ken & Joan Sheppard	<b>11</b>  Healthy Living Group 5:00 pm  ♪Perry	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>14</b>  <b>Church Council Noon</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>  <b>UMW 10:00 a.m.</b>  ♥Steve & Vicky Whitfield	<b>17</b>  Bible Study 10:00 am Choir 5:30 pm	<b>18</b>  Healthy Living Group 5:00 pm	<b>19</b>  ♪Nick Hughes	<b>20</b>  ♪Sarah Lynn White
<b>21</b>  ♪Delilah Jordan	<b>22</b>  ♪Jim Jines ♪Ava Rae Haser ♪DellAnne Schruefer	<b>23</b>  ♪Emma Rea Kimbrel	<b>24</b> Bible Study 10:00 am Choir 5:30 pm  ♪Henry McCrone	<b>25</b>  Healthy Living Group 5:00 pm	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>28</b>  ♪Rachel Williams	<b>29</b>  ♪Tyler Cox ♪Laura Williams	<b>30</b>  ♪Briella Kate Whitfield ♥David & Karen Murrell	<b>31</b> Bible Study 10:00 am Choir 5:30 pm	God send you happy. God send you happy. We pray God send you a happy new year.  -"Song of the Old English Caroliers".		<b>Ushers</b> David Murrell Joe Ferguson <b>Stand-by</b> Finlay Corbin

## Our Caring Ministry List

### Short Term Concerns

Rhett Bozeman  
Joel Butler  
Arthur Faurot  
Bonnie Hall  
Kim Johnson  
Isabella Juarez  
Iannn Kollarik  
Heather Leonard

### Intercessory Prayer

Eric Alford  
Connie Carpenter  
Mary Schruefer  
Hannah Stephens  
Sarah Lynn White  
Laura Williams  
Virginia Williams

### Those Battling Cancer

Robert Hughes  
Heather Leonard  
Luke Melvin  
Karen Pilcher

### Our Shut – Ins

Joe Webb  
Ann Weiler

### Our Military

Ukraine soldiers and citizens  
Israel Citizens  
Middle East

Persecuted Christians  
UM Missionaries  
Caregivers

Please contact the office with any updates to this list— Thank You!

Just a reminder names placed on Our Caring Ministry List must be submitted through the church office. Requests can be done by emails, or phone calls.



## The Meaning of Epiphany

Epiphany, which comes from the Greek word *epiphaneia*, means “an appearance” or “a revealing.” Centuries ago, the church set aside January 6, the 12th day after Christmas, to mark the revealing of Jesus as Christ to the wise men, who were Gentiles. Jesus’ first followers were Jewish, so the revelation of the divine Christ to the non-Jewish magi reminds us that Jesus came to the earth to save the whole world.

Symbols of Epiphany include light, a star, a crown (or three crowns) and a globe or stylized portrayal of the world. The color of Epiphany is green to symbolize life, growth, hope and eternity.

On the church calendar, the Epiphany season lasts until Ash Wednesday, which is determined by the date of Easter.

## Flower Calendar



January 07  
January 14  
January 21  
January 28

Mr. & Mrs. Jimmy Cox  
Mr. & Mrs. Glen McClellan  
Mrs. Vance Bateman  
Mrs. Don Stephens



# Blountstown United Methodist Church

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## Family Prayer List

volume 1 • number 1

1. Joe Webb /  
Cherie White Family
2. Doug Whitfield Family /  
Drew Whitfield Family
3. Vicky & Steve Whitfield /  
Laura & Roger Williams
4. Marvin Williams /  
Mary Ann Williams
5. Mary Beth Williams /  
Virginia & Laddie Williams
6. Barbara Wilson /  
Eric Alford
7. Esther Alford /  
Dresa Barfield
8. John Barfield family /  
Wynelle Bateman
9. Vicki Bennett Family /  
Connie & Alton Carpenter
10. Betty Ann Cayson /  
Jane Creamer
11. David Corbin Family /  
Donna & Finlay Corbin
12. Peggy & Jimmy Cox /  
Steve Cox
13. Tracy Stanton-Cox /  
Gina & Tyler Cox
14. Joe Durden Family /  
Debbie & Tommy Edwards
15. Norma Failes /  
Gale & Joe Ferguson
16. Dottie & Bob Fleck /  
Mary Flower
17. Frank Gates /  
Gina Gates Family
18. Holly Gates Family /  
Bill Gaskin
19. Montez Golden /  
Bonnie Hall
20. Peggy Hall /  
Norah Handley
21. Louise & Sonny Harrison /  
Trevor Haser Family
22. Eileen Hatch /  
Brooks Hayes Family
23. Cheri & Quentin Henderson /  
Mark Herndon Family
24. Jackie & David House /  
John David House Family
25. Owen House /  
Nick Hughes Family
26. Laurie James Family /  
Sandra & Jim Jines
27. Seth Jones Family /  
Billy Jordan Family
28. Tiffany Jordan Family /  
Becki Kastli Family
29. Cathy & Glenn Kimbrel /  
Jonathan Kimbrel Kimbrel
30. John King /  
Clay Knight
31. Annie Jo Landers Family /  
Hester Leonard