

Newsletter September 2025



Bremen-Bethel Presbyterian Church
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Pastor: Rev. Larry Hoffmann; Clerk: Corey Riley



FROM THE PASTOR: Rev. Larry Hoffmann

Remember the last century? It was predicted that it would be the century when all religions would die out. However, it came to be a century when all the world's religions were rejuvenated. In America, it was a century that saw the decline of Christianity and the growth of America's "public religion." The term comes from Benjamin Franklin who, among others, was concerned about the power of any particular religious viewpoint in the new nation's political life. Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and others did see a value in "public religion" in providing a positive influence of morality and mutual respect that would benefit society. However, "public religion" is not necessarily Christianity. At the time of the nation's founding, various forms of Protestantism and the Catholic faith were a part of our nation's religious life. Non-Christian religions had a large presence as well. For example, Judaism, Universalism, and Deism were a part of our budding national life. There was a small Muslim (called Mohamedan at the time). The concern of the Founders was freedom for all to worship and practice their faith. But today Christianity is on the decline within our own nation.

Some people who hold a strong "end times" viewpoint see this decline as a clear sign that the end is near. Admittedly, I am not of this particular theological persuasion. It has a tendency to be highly American, or Western in its orientation. The last century saw an explosion of Christianity in Africa, Latin America, and Asia that continues in its energy and vitality today. The church is alive, well, and growing among the world's largest populations. Perhaps our call as Christians living in America today is to figure out why. Why is the Spirit of God bringing about a revival of the teachings of Jesus around the world that we in America and Europe are clearly not a part of? To begin with, could it be we are not familiar with what Jesus has to say, outside of a few popular verses we have memorized?

As we worship and study together, I invite you to explore what many are missing in America today. Who knows, maybe God is preparing an explosion of the Spirit within our own community, nation, and western society as well.

God's grace and peace to you,

Larry

FROM THE CLERK EMERITUS: D. Dee Mowry

There are many churches within the village corporation, six at last count, five active churches and one non meeting church. Near-by, but outside the village, there are about four churches. With this many choices why Bremen-Bethel Presbyterian? All churches basically worship one entity, Jesus Christ. What is different about the Presbyterian Church? Mainly in church government. The Presbyterian denomination is a form of Christianity democratically organized to worship Christ which is common to all Christians. The Presbyterian Church government is probably the epitome of 'horizontal integration'. The opposite of this form of government is 'vertical integration' where one person sits at the 'top' of the structure. A prime example of this would be the Roman Catholic Church where the Pope is the 'head of the church.'

Presbyterian polity is very clear on this subject which says that there will be two 'officers' of the church, the moderator and the clerk, following the Calvinistic concept. In a writing from a prominent Presbyterian "Presbyterians go to great lengths to avoid 'ostentatious titles' ". As a result, you will not hear of any Presbyterian Bishops, Cardinals etc. A prime example of the is where a few years ago the Presbyterian Church and another denomination wanted to explore the possibility of an ecumenical relationship. We were instructed to send our bishop to meet with theirs, obviously this idea went nowhere

The Presbyterian laity and clergy are mainly on a 'equal footing', that is, a lay person may be the moderator of the various layers of adjudication, presbytery, synod and general assembly. The only place where an ordained Presbyterian minister is required to preside is at the local level, the session. This is a wise decision as the moderator, a Presbyterian minister, must be very aware of the provisions in our governing documents, The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and The Book of Order. The moderator, along with the clerk, then assures that the church operates within the parameters of the Presbyterian Church. All ordained ministers must pass a polity examination as part of the ordination process. At the presbytery, synod and general assembly levels the moderator may be laity or clergy. The Book of Order states that the clergy has no power with-out the session and the session has no power without the clergy. This is an excellent example of checks and balances.

Looking at the government at various levels, that is, town councils, state legislatures and the congress of the U. S. A., the organization is exactly the same as the Presbyterian Church. This is probably due to the formation of our country. During the early days of our country, the colonists were very unhappy with England, sometimes very heavy handed, with ruling 'the colonies'. The early founders of the U. S. A. drew up the Declaration of Independence. About 30% of the signers were Presbyterian, so much so that the English referred to it as that 'damned Presbyterian rebellion'. The John Hancock that we hear so much about, was one of the original signers of the Declaration, was also the first stated clerk of the (Presbyterian) General Assembly.

Presbyterians have much to be proud of especially our form of government.

FROM THE TREASURER: Kathy Mowry

There are currently 12 households participating in our Kroger Community Rewards. For the quarter of May through July, we received \$27.23. The session has designated the income to the **Breakfast to Go** program.

Calendar of Events

Sep 1st – Labor Day!

Sep 7th - Worship time returns to 10:30 am

Sep 14th - ZETA ALPHA will meet at 9:30 am in the church basement. The new Bible study is “Finding Resilience, Joy, and Our Identity in Jesus Christ”. All women are welcome to attend.

Sep 14th - Please join us as we celebrate Rev. Hoffmann's 40 years of ministry. A luncheon will be served after the worship service. If you are planning to attend, **please RSVP on or before Monday, September 8, 2025.**

Sep 28th – Session Meeting after the worship service

Birthdays and Anniversaries

Sep 7th – Dee and Kathy Mowry

Sep 8th – Ezri Mowry

Sep 9th – Nathaniel McCandlish

Sep 19th – Kerry Boyd

Sep 24th – Judith Ackerman

Sep 24th – Larry Hoffmann

Sep 26th – Cinda Keller

Sep 26th – Linda Shreyer

Sep 29th – Savannah Collis

Lay Readers, Communion Servers and Ushers:

Sep 7th – Sharon Ankrom: Lay Reader, Communion Server & Usher
Tom Ankrom: Communion Server & Usher

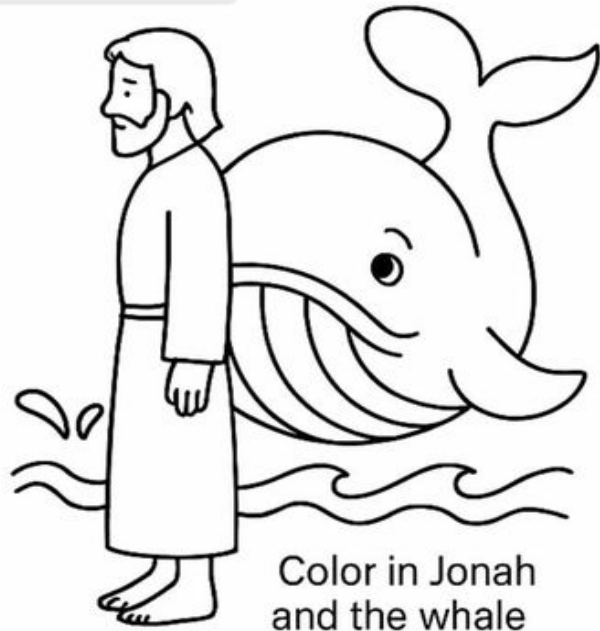
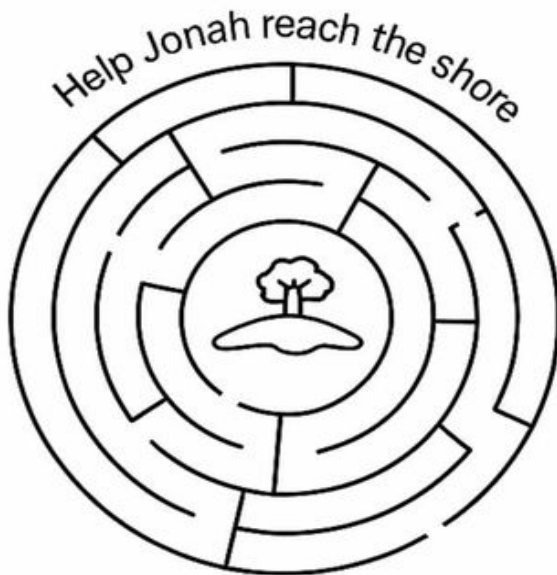
Sep 14th – Cinda Keller: Lay Reader
Gene McCandlish & Andrew McCandlish: Ushers

Sep 21st – Judy Turner: Lay Reader & Usher
Jane Griffith: Usher

Sep 28th – Brenda Winegardner: Lay Reader
Kerry Boyd & Savannah Collis: Ushers

THE STORY OF JONAH

JONAH 1 - 4



"The LORD provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of fish three days and three nights."

Jonah 1:17

DOWN

1. The vessel Jonah was on before the storm
2. A strong wind and rain that troubled the ship
4. The giant sea animal that swallowed Jonah

ACROSS

3. The man who was swallowed by a big sea creature
5. The act of talking to God, as Jonah later did

