



Dear Members & Friends of Union Presbyterian Church,

At some point, every year the shepherds in the nativity story get to me. Sometimes it is when I read about them in the Gospel of Luke, sometimes its when I see a picture or painting of the shepherds, sometimes it's while reading Christmas books to my kids or even watching a children's nativity play. I've actually had to be careful over the years to make sure that I don't preach about the shepherds every Christmas Eve service. There's just something about their story that gets to me.



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December Elders

Jason Cabe
Tim Grigg
Billy Jordan

Joy Program

December 12

Church Christmas

Party

December 18

Session Meeting

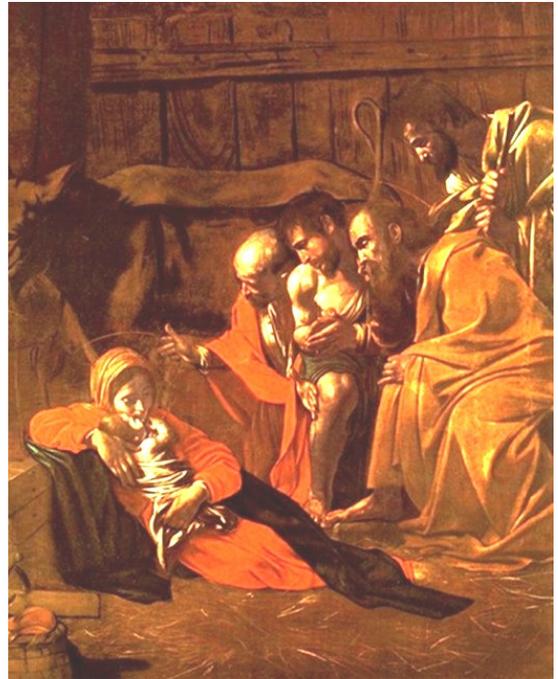
December 19

Church Office Closed

December 24 - 31

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I've thought a little this year about why the shepherd's plight connects to me so vividly to me. Here's my hypothesis.... Many of my experiences with God feel similar to the shepherds experience. It is clear that the shepherds had this incredible experience with angels while out in the fields. A moment so profound that it caused them to race into the Bethlehem to see the Messiah for themselves. Scriptures even say that they went around telling all sorts of people what they saw and what they heard from the angels. But the Gospel of Luke is pretty tight lipped about what everyone really thought about the shepherd's message. Sure, Luke 2: 18 says that people were amazed by what the shepherd's said. But "amazed" is a tricky word. I've been "amazed" at some "big fish" stories that I've heard friends tell me... but that doesn't necessarily mean that I believed those stories.



When I look at my own life, I find that most of my big moments with God have been shepherd moments. God revealed himself to me an incredible and important way. But the revelation is almost always personal. Sometimes it was personal because I was by myself when it happened. Sometimes it is personal because even though others were around... God had that event impact me in a special way other's missed. Afterwards it always sort of feels like the story I share with others about the very profound moment I had with God loses something in the translation. I wonder each Advent if that was how the shepherds felt too. I can imagine the exchange they must have had with many:

Shepherd: "We just saw the Messiah!"

Random guy, "...Sure you did."

Shepherd: "No really, we saw him! This angel said that he would be in a manger!"

Random guy, "The messiah was in a manger?"

Shepherd: "Yeah! And there were all these angels singing about God's Glory!"

Random guy: "... angels singing at a manger?"

Shepherd: "No, I was out in the fields at night... Hey my buddies over here saw it too!!

Random guy: "Ok.... cool.... I got to go now. Talk to you later."

How frustrated would it be to have the kind of Good News that the shepherds had and know exactly how that Good News would be heard by many. And what a great reminder for us. Maybe this Christmas season we shouldn't just keep our eyes open to see the miracles that may be happening in our midst, but we also might want to keep our ears open too. We just might find ourselves amazed by the miracles happening around us that our eyes missed.

Sincerely in Christ,
Pastor James

Worship in December

Continued Advent Sermon Series: Fear Not

December 5: Luke 1: 26-45, "Fear Not... The Fear of Revision"

-2nd Sunday of Advent; Candle of Love

December 12: Matthew 1: 18-25, "Fear Not... The Fear of a Ruined Reputation"

-3rd Sunday of Advent; Candle of Joy

December 19: Matthew 2:1-12, "Fear Not... Fear of Strangers"

-4th Sunday of Advent; Candle of Peace

New Lectionary Series: Early Days of Faith

December 26: Luke 2: 41-52, "Early Days of Faith... My Father's House"

January 6: John 1:1-18, "Early Days of Faith... Secret Agent Man"

-Celebration of the Lord's Supper

Christmas Eve

CANDLELIGHT SERVICE



This year we will have a special “Christingle” Christmas Eve service on **December 24**. The “christingle” is a specially decorated orange and candle combination used in worship to tell the story of Christ’s birth in a special way for all ages.

What Worship Will Look Like

We invite you to drop in the **Fellowship Hall** sometime between **7:30 and 8 PM** to come make your own “christingle” right before worship. Worship will begin at **8 PM** in the **Sanctuary** and there will be traditional candlelight service candles available for those unable to make it before 8 PM. As part of worship there will be an extended time with the children to talk about what all the parts of the “christingle” mean and to light them.

At the end of worship we will use the christingles for our tradition of singing Silent Night and Joy to the World.

Please note that if we run into problems with Covid, our backup plan is to have two Christmas Eve service on the 24th in the Fellowship Hall, with time taken in between the services to disinfect the room.

History of the “Christingle”

(From: <https://www.whychristmas.com/customs/christingles.shtml>)

The idea of the christingle came from a Moravian Church in Germany in 1747. The minister, John de Wetteville, gave children at the service a lighted candle with a red ribbon around it. This represented Jesus being the light of the world and the final prayer of that first service was "Lord Jesus, kindle a flame in these children's hearts, that theirs like Thine become". The custom went around the world with the church. Missionaries brought the Moravian Church to England in the late 1700s. In Moravian churches, the Christingle Service is usually held on the Sunday before Christmas or on [Christmas Eve](#).

The word christingle could have come from several sources. It might be an 'English' version of 'Christkindl' (meaning little Christ child), a person who brings in presents in some European worship services and who represents the baby Jesus. It could be a the putting together of the words 'Christmas' and 'ingle'. Ingle is an old Scots word for fire and so that would make it mean the 'Christ Light'. Since christingles originally came from Germany, the first theory is more likely.





Christmas Joy Program

Please join us as we celebrate the Christ of Christmas on **December 12 at 4 PM**. This will be our Christmas Joy Program with the singing of Christmas carols, our children dramatizing the nativity story, and a time of fellowship with one another to follow! The program will be held outdoors in front the church, so come ready to bundle up! We hope that you will be able to make it. It is at this time we also receive the Joy Christmas Offering. The Christmas Joy Offering has been a cherished Presbyterian tradition since the 1930s. The Offering distributes gifts equally to the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions and to Presbyterian-related schools and colleges. This has been a Presbyterian commitment for nearly 140 years.

Church Family Christmas Party

Saturday, December 18 at 2:30 PM join us as we celebrate with some real Christmas Fun! There will be an ugly sweater contest (with prizes for best store-bought & best home-made) and we will be making a graham cracker nativity scene. Also we will be sharing Christmas cookies and recipes, so bring your favorite cookies, individually wrapped or in zip-lock bags, to share with others and let's enjoy great fun and fellowship!

Santa Mail Box

Do you wish you could send Christmas greetings to your church family but paying for all those stamps seems a little much? You may want to "mail" your Christmas cards to friends here at Union through our internal "Mailbox." The Santa Mailbox is located in the hall beside the Nursery. Also you might consider placing some of the money you would have used on stamps in the container on top of the mailbox (which will be added to our church's Christmas Joy Offering this year).

Angel Tree

If you would like to make Christmas special for some boy/girl or family, there are "Angels" on the Christmas tree in the Gathering Area. Please bring your gifts wrapped or in a gift bag with the angel attached so we can make sure they are distributed properly. We will need these gifts by **Sunday, December 19** in order to make sure they get to the children/families in time.



Women of the Church Christmas Celebrations

The Women of the Church Circles are having some Christmas related fun this month!

- The Golden Girls fellowship will be meeting at Janice Meek's home on **Monday, December 6 at 11 AM**. Please bring items to fill Christmas gift bags for Seniors and bring a \$5 gift for exchange.
- The Soul Sisters are having a PJ Christmas party on **Friday, December 17 at 6 PM**. They are having a pizza supper and invite everybody to bring snacks to munch on while they are partying!

Men's Christmas Celebration

Calling all men! The Men of the Church Christmas Party will be on **Tuesday, December 7 at 6:30 PM** at Jackson's. We will also be voting for Man of the Year and new officers. Come and join the men for some really good food and great fellowship.



Happy Years

The following is an update on the Happy Years Club. Happy Years has not met and had a luncheon since February 2020 due to the COVID pandemic. We are happy to announce that the Happy Years Club will be meeting on **January 12, 2022** for lunch at **12 PM**. The meal will be provided which will be chicken pot pie, fixings, dessert, and drinks. Donations for the meal will be accepted. Safety precautions will be taken, and we ask you wear a mask until seated at your table. Please join us for good food and fun fellowship no matter what age you are. After the meal, a video of Larry and Janice (Currence) Meek's wedding will be shown. Also please contact Kathy Kytle if you plan to attend, so we will know how much food to prepare.

Women of the Church News

- The Women's Council will meet on **Sunday, December 5 after the worship service**. Just a reminder that the WOC will provide hot chocolate and cookies for the Christmas Joy Program on **December 12 at 4 PM**. We are asking the ladies to please bake cookies and place in baggies. Thank you.
- Beginning in **January**, the ladies are asking if you have something you would like to place on the flower stands in the Sanctuary. Please see Rita Jumper or Tammy Biddix.

Men of the Church News

The MOC are meeting immediately after the worship service **Sunday, December 5**.

Congregational Meeting

On **Sunday, December 19** there will be a Congregation meeting following the worship service. The purpose of this meeting is to elect Elders, Trustees and Nominating Committee members for the coming year.

Scholarship Fund

Anyone interested in applying for the Scholarship for the spring semester needs to submit an application to Leslie Harris by **December 31**. Please include fall grades and spring semester schedule with your application. Applications can be found in Leslie's box or she can send them electronically.

2021 Donations

Our Receiving Treasurer, Jason Morrison, is requesting that any 2021 donations be given by **Sunday, December 26** because he is on vacation the following week.

Celebrating the Lord's

Starting January 2 we will begin celebrating the Lord's Supper monthly again! Let's start the new year off right by remembering the sacrifice of our Lord for us in partaking of Communion. The first couple months we plan on using the prepackaged Communion elements. Our hope is to soon transition to individualized but not prepackaged bread and juice.

Supper

Passing the Plate

Starting this December, we will begin passing the offering plate during worship again. If you do not wish to handle the plate please let the ushers know. You can always place your tithes and offerings in the plate on the communion table before or after worship.



FINANCIAL NEWS
October 31, 2021

	<u>October</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
Revenue	\$19,721	\$204,413
Expenses	<u>17,114</u>	<u>209,239</u>
	2,607	- 4,826

Monthly Budget Requirements \$18,958

If you have any questions regarding the financial information of the Church, please feel free to contact Martha Simmons, Disbursing Treasurer, or any member of the Finance Committee. Martha is responsible for disbursements only. Questions regarding your financial giving to the Church should be directed to Jason Morrison, Treasurer.



PRESBYTERY PRAYER CALENDAR & PRAYER CONCERNS

Helen Hall, Clerk of Session at Dulatown Presbyterian Church shared that Reverend Elijah "E.B." Freeman passed away on Sunday, November 14, 2021. Reverend Freeman will remain in the hearts of Dulatown Presbyterian Church members for his years of service as their pastor and for his highly noted leadership in the broader community. He was currently a minister member of Salem Presbytery.

Ruth Elaine Garrison Janes, of Black Mountain, NC, passed away on Tuesday, November 9, 2021, at Givens Highland Farms Healthcare Center in Black Mountain. Ruth was the wife of Reverend Bill Janes, Honorably Retired Minister member of Presbytery

Christian love and sympathy is extended to Drs. Bill and Wanda Neely, Honorably Retired Minister members of Presbytery, in the death of Bill's brother, Reverend Robert "Bob" Willingham Neely of SC.

PWNC extends our heartfelt sympathy to Jerrod Lowry, General Presbyter and Stated Clerk at Coastal Carolina Presbytery, in the death of his beloved wife, Molly. Molly succumbed to the effects of having COVID-19 and the damage that was done as a result of having treatments to fight the virus. Please remember Pastor Jerrod and his children Kerryn, Kaleb, and Kendle. Cards can be sent in care of Coastal Carolina Presbytery, 807 W King Street, Elizabethtown, NC 28337.

Good Hope
P.O. Box 784
Kings Mountain, NC 28086

Grace Covenant
789 Merrimon Avenue
Asheville, NC 28804

Grassy Creek
167 Greenlee Lane
Spruce Pine, NC 28777

Green Mountain
P.O. Box 36
Green Mountain, NC 28740



THANKS BE TO GOD FOR HIS INDESCRIBABLE GIFT!

2 Corinthians 9:15

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
Each Sunday 9AM Sunday School 10 AM Worship			1	2	3	4
5 After Service Women's Council 2:30 PM SOC	6	7 10 AM Bible Study 6 :30 PM Men's Fellowship Jackson's	8	9	10 8AM B & G Garage Clean	11
12 After worship W & C 2:30 PM W & S 4PM Christmas Joy Program	13	14 10 AM Bible Study 6 PM B & G	15	16	17 6 PM Soul Sisters PJ Party	18 AM Called Session Mtg 2:30 PM Church Family Christmas Party
19 2:30 PM Session	20	21 10 AM Bible Study	22	23	24 7:30 PM Christingles 8 PM Christmas Eve Service	25  Merry Christmas
26	27	28	29	30	31 Deadline for Spring Scholarships	
CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED						

Union Presbyterian Church

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www.unionpresbyterianchurch.com

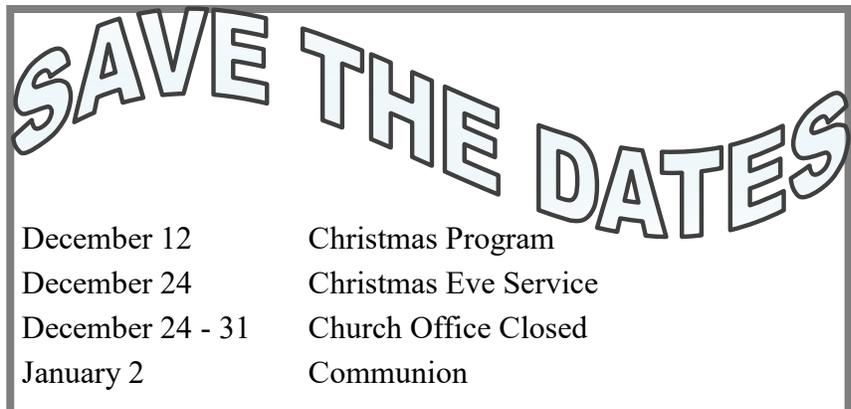
Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Permit No. 8
Return Service Requested

Reverend James Holeman
Pastor

Nancy Newman
Administrative Assistant

Jieeun Ha
Accompanist

Church Hours
9:00 AM—1:00 PM
Tuesday—Friday
Office Closed Monday and Saturday



December 12	Christmas Program
December 24	Christmas Eve Service
December 24 - 31	Church Office Closed
January 2	Communion