



# HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE HEIGHTS

Northminster Evangelical Presbyterian Church

*Experiencing and sharing God's love to transform our homes, community and world.*

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## Heavy Holidays

The disappointment, brokenness, suffering, and pain that characterize life in this present world is held in dynamic tension with the promise of future glory that is yet to come. In that Advent tension, the church lives its life.

— Fleming Rutledge, *Advent* (pp. 7-8).



I don't think this is the holiday season most of us were expecting this year. After the challenges and difficulties we faced together over the past year and a half, most of us were looking forward to a holiday season flavored particularly with joy, gratitude and delight. After all, we anticipated, the pandemic would be mostly behind us and life would have returned to normal. For some, that is indeed the case, and that is a wonderful thing.

But I don't think that's the case for most. Rather than coming out of the darkness feeling relief, delight, joy, gratitude and whatnot, many are finding that the darkness has dimmed the radiance of the light. I'm hearing and seeing more stories this year than most in recent memory that speak of pain, hurt, and loss. I hear stories of much-loved family members leaving this mortal coil and entering the Kingdom triumphant during this holiday season. Stories of families reaching their breaking point and falling apart. Stories of bodies and minds breaking down in unexpected ways. In the midst of all of this, how are we to find the hope and joy that this season is meant to bring?

That is the plaintive cry of *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*. "Emmanuel" means "God with us." We know, of course, that God is with us all the time, right? Well, we at least know it in our minds. But do our hearts not doubt and wonder? Is God really with me when my spouse is dying? Is God really with me when my marriage is falling apart? Is God really with me when my health is failing? Is God really with me when I lost my job? With the psalmists and the prophets of old, we do cry, with all of our might, "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel." Come, be with us, 'God with us,' for how else can we bear it?

Which brings us to the unique hope of the Advent season. God is, in fact, with us. When God came the first time, He was born into the midst of the noise, chaos and mess of life — in a stable behind an inn, surrounded by animals and shepherds and outsiders. God doesn't call us out of the mess of life, He comes into the mess with us. God "with us" more deeply and profoundly than we ever could have imagined or expected. But more than that. Because Advent doesn't look back so much as it looks forward. Forward to when Christ will return in glory, might

and power. When everything broken will be made whole. When everything sad will come untrue. Advent reminds us that God is with us in the midst of the present messiness of life and our lives, but that one day, God will be with us in fullness and in truth and the mess will be no more.

If you are finding this Advent and holiday season to be particularly heavy and difficult, you are not alone. Instead of trying to ignore or drown out the heaviness and hardness of the season, cry out to Emmanuel to come and find you in the mess. It's what He does best. Cry out for Emmanuel to fix the pain, the hurt, the brokenness of this world once and for all, because this is not the way it is supposed to be. Let Emmanuel be your hope for the present, and for the future.

*"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.'" (Rev. 21:1-4)*

Blessings,  
Rev.David Garrison

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## December Youth Ministry News & Info

**Sundays from 6:30-7:45 p.m.**

Anticipation fills the air! And we start using words we never use. What even is figgy pudding and who is Yuletide Carol? This season is also filled with other words that seem to be a little more special this time of year. Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love appear everywhere as we countdown to the birth of a Savior—a Savior who promises that even in this imperfect world we can experience and embody hope, peace, joy, and love; even here and now in the chaos of life. Join us for this Advent series as it reminds us Christmas is just the start of better things.

November 28: Where there is not hope, bring it.

December 5: Where there is not peace, bring it.

December 12: Where there is not joy, bring it.

December 19: Caroling & Not So Silent Night Christmas Party! (Note time change!)

**Note: No Youth Group on 12/26 or 1/2! Have a merry Christmas & a happy New Year!**



## Life Together

### DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS:

3 Karey Garrison  
 Jackson Moore  
 5 Joan Porter  
 10 John Seal  
 12 George O'Brien  
 16 Bonnie Wine  
 20 Dolores Wright  
 24 Matt Brine  
 27 Gerald Bryant

### DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

1 Ron & Judy Reyburn, 1962

*I sought the Lord, and He answered me; He delivered me from all my fears. Psalm 34:4 NIV*

### Prayer Requests:



**Tim Wright** has been diagnosed with stage 3 kidney failure. Tests are being done to determine the best course of treatment.

**Margie Seal** is at Fairmont Crossing healing from surgery to fix a broken hip.

**Clellan Vandevander** suffered 2<sup>nd</sup> degree burns in an accident just before Thanksgiving. He is at home healing, but still in a lot of pain.

**Ernie Baker** is healing well following shoulder surgery last month.

**Delores Wright** continues healing from a fall in November. While nothing was broken, she is going through physical therapy.

**Caiti & Carlos Vera** need prayer as Caiti serves at the University of Pennsylvania.

**All medical personnel who have continued serving those with coronavirus in spite of the possibility of getting infected themselves.**

Remember others who cannot be with us in church: **Dot Stinnett, Leonard Rowe, and Margaret Watts.**



Our sincere love and deepest sympathy are extended to Joel Carnefix and his family on the Homegoing of Virginia on Thanksgiving Day. While we all grieve for her passing, we rejoice that she is safe with her Savior.

## The Women's Book Club

The Women's Book Club will meet December 9, at 10 a.m. at Vonnie Rucker's home. They will discuss *The Christmas Train*. This lighthearted book was also a Hallmark movie. Although predictable, it will warm your heart and get you into the Christmas spirit – if you're not in it already. The "Cookie Exchange" originally scheduled for this date has been postponed.

Please let Vonnie know if you will be attending.





## Missions, Outreach, and Evangelism Update



### Christmas Cheer Baskets

Northminster has contributed \$200 towards perishable items for the food baskets, as well as the many nonperishable items collected over the past five months. Thank you for your faithful support each month!

### Packing Day – Friday, December 17 at 9 a.m.

If you would like to see the final result of your generous giving, please come to Amelon United Methodist Church on Friday, December 17, at 9 a.m. and help sort the donations for distribution. It only takes a couple of hours, and it's a great opportunity to learn what God is doing in our community.

### Warm Streets

Warm Streets is a local ministry that provides socks for the homeless. With the arrival of cold weather we have donated \$200 to help provide warmth and comfort for those in need.

### Roads to Recovery

Roads to Recovery, a local organization that helps individuals with drug and alcohol addiction, is opening a new home for women. They need everything! If you have any **gently used** kitchen items, lamps, end tables, or coffee tables to donate, you can place them in the New Song classroom at church. Another way to participate is by providing **new** twin sheets or **new** bath towels. The church will be open Monday- Thursday from 10:00 to 12:00. You can also leave your items on the "front porch" if no one is there when you drop off. We will be collecting through December 2, 2021. We may be a small church, but we serve a mighty God. Thank you for your continuing support of the missions, outreach and evangelism program at NEPC.

## You're Invited to a Birthday Party!

**When:** Sunday, December 19 following the worship service

**Where:** Northminster Evangelical Presbyterian Church

**Why:** To celebrate the most important birthday in history

**For Who:** Jesus!

Please bring your favorite finger foods and wear an ugly sweater!  
Cake will be provided, and Jesus already bought the gifts!



Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift! ~ II Cor. 9:15

# Christmas Celebrations Calendar

## Thursday, December 9 at 10 a.m. – Women’s Book Club

The Women’s Book Club will meet December 9, at 10 a.m. at Vonnie Rucker’s home. They will discuss *The Christmas Train*. Please let Vonnie know if you will be attending.



## Friday, December 17 at 9 a.m. – Christmas Cheer Box Packing

For the past several months, we’ve been collecting items for the Christmas Cheer Boxes, and on Friday, December 17, we’ll join our partner churches to pack those boxes! We’ll meet at Amelon United Methodist Church at 9 a.m. The Christmas Cheer Boxes will be delivered on Saturday the 18th. Help us spread some Christmas cheer this season!



## Sunday, December 19 after worship – A Birthday Party for Jesus

One of our beloved traditions is to celebrate Jesus’ birthday with a party and cake. Please join us after the service with friends and family as we celebrate the coming of our King! Wear an ugly sweater, and bring your favorite finger food to eat! Birthday cake and beverage will be provided.



## Sunday, December 19 from 4:30-7 p.m. – Christmas Caroling

Join us for our annual tradition of going caroling in our neighborhoods and visiting our homebound members. We’ll divide up into groups, then come back to church and warm up with some delightful hot chocolate and wonderful fellowship. This is a great opportunity for folks of all ages to come together as we spread some Christmas cheer!



## Sunday, December 19 from 7-8 p.m. – SNL & Youth Group Not So Silent Night Christmas Party

After caroling, all 4th-12th grade students are invited to join us for the SNL/Youth Group Not So Silent Night Christmas Party! More information about this coming later this month.



## Friday, December 24, 7 p.m. – Christmas Eve Service

On Christmas Eve, we invite you to join us for a family-friendly candlelight service celebrating the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. This service of song, carol, and Scripture provides a wonderful opportunity to get a sense of how eager the Hebrews were for the coming of the Messiah so long ago, and reminds us how eager we are for His return. We look forward to seeing you there!



O come let us adore Him



## A Table Laid for the Grinch

*Let us rejoice and exult and give Him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come...And the angel said to me,  
"Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb."  
~Revelation 19:7 & 9*



This Thanksgiving, my youngest son and I settled down to watch the latest Grinch movie. We like it because it's funny and in this version, the dog is absolutely adorable. Together we watched the Grinch in all his "grinchiness" go to so much trouble to steal something he could never steal in the first place, but of course that's not how it ends. Those wonderful Whos remember that Christmas is "so much more," and their singing and kindness, their willingness to look beyond the Grinch's actions to see the loneliness in his heart, enable the Grinch to become a kinder person as well. At the end of the movie we smiled happily as the Grinch and his long-suffering dog happily sit down with Cindy Lou and all the other Whos to enjoy the Christmas feast.

When the movie was over, I couldn't help thinking about the truth behind the story, because as much as I'd like to think of myself as one of those well-meaning and resilient Whos, I know that I'm actually the Grinch. In fact, we all are. We're all born, not just with a heart "two sizes too small" but with a heart that has been corrupted and corroded by sin. With hearts like that, we are more than happy to spend our days working hard to take happiness away from others if that will make us feel good. We think that we deserve to be happy, and if life won't give us that happiness we must take it for ourselves. Like the Grinch, we think all of our efforts will give us the joy we want. And like the Grinch we find ourselves severely disappointed. That, of course, is the blessed news of Christmas—Jesus came for grinchers; He came for sinners. God the Father knew that we could never find true happiness or love apart from Him. He knew we would be forever separated from all that is good and beautiful and our too-small hearts needed to be reborn. And so He sent Jesus, to live in a world full of grinchers, to die on the cross for sinners.

In the final scene of the movie, a repentant Grinch, dressed in a Christmas tie, shyly knocks on the door of Cindy Lou's house. At the sound of his knock, the door is flung open and he is joyfully welcomed inside. He's greeted warmly; no mention is made of his sins or past misdeeds. And most important of all he has a seat at the table where he can feast with his new friends and fill his heart with the goodness and joy that are an inherent part of the Christmas season. How much more eagerly does our Heavenly Father wait for us all to accept His invitation? When we do, we find the door of Heaven flung open and a joyful welcome into the Kingdom of God.

As I watched this beautiful ending play out I thought about Jesus and how He, through His death and resurrection, purchased a place at the table for us. Right now on earth, that table is a place with other believers, joined in the common joy of His mercy and striving to love each other as best we can through His grace. But one day, that seat will be at a heavenly table where we will feast with Jesus Himself at the great Marriage Supper of the Lamb. As I read that verse in Revelation 19 it almost seems impossible that I am invited to this grand feast, and yet it's true because of what Jesus has done for me. What a day that will be when redeemed grinchers from around the world will joyfully sit down with the One who came at Christmas to prepare a table before us, a table of blessing, joy, and peace where every Grinch has been redeemed and every sinner has been given an eternal home.

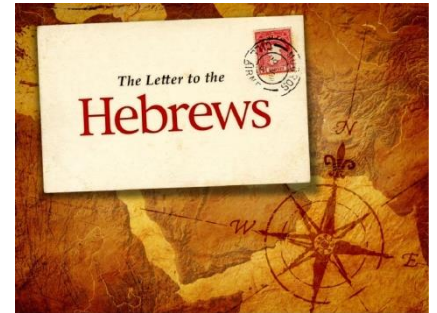
Merry Christmas! Christy



## Pastor's Midweek Bible Study

Wednesdays at 10:30 a.m.

Join us in person or online for a midweek Bible study with Pastor David as we focus on learning to study the Bible ourselves and apply it to our daily lives. We are currently studying the Book of Hebrews and would love to have you join us. Sign up at <https://npcmh.churchcenter.com/groups/small-groups>



### Check Out the Library DVDs!

The church library has several newly added DVDs. If you have little ones you'll be seeing over the holidays, you may be interested in borrowing **Veggie Tales The Toy That Saved Christmas**, or Max Lucado's heart-warming tale, **The Crippled Lamb**, about a lamb who sees Jesus.

We have also added some more fiction books, so please stop by and check one (or more!) out to read during the chilly winter days.



### FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP REPORT 2021

	OCTOBER	Y-T-D
Income*	11,788	178,939
Expenses	<u>11,420</u>	<u>107,998</u>
Balance	368	70,941

\*Tatman 588.65



*Thanks be to God for  
His indescribable gift.  
2 Corinthians 9:15*

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DAVID GARRISON, *Pastor*

#### ELDERS

Ron Reyburn, *Clerk of Session,*

Michael Babcock, George Brine, Maggie Brockman

Sharon Bryant, John Lange, Judy Reyburn

Bob Mills, *Director of Music*

Liz Boothe, *Organist*

Sharon Bryant, *Superintendent  
of Sunday School*

Vonnie Rucker, *Treasurer*