



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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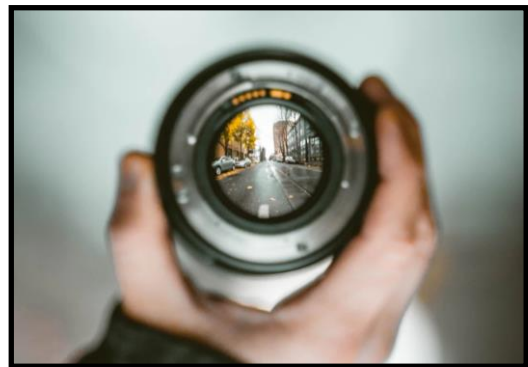
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The God Who Sees You

So she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, 'You are a God of seeing,' for she said, 'Truly here I have seen him who looks after me.'

— Genesis 16:13



The story of Abram, Sarai and Hagar in Genesis 16 isn't one we talk about very often, and when we do, it's usually to make the point that we shouldn't rush God's plans, or the consequences that come when we take matters into our own hands (which are very valid applications of the story). But if we only focus on that part of the story, we miss something beautiful that happens.

If you don't remember the story, let me recap briefly: God has promised the childless Abram and Sarai more descendants than there are stars in the sky (Genesis 15:5-6). But they are very old (86, in fact - Genesis 16:16) and are getting past childbearing years. So Sarai gives her servant Hagar to Abram (a culturally acceptable but very bad idea), and she becomes pregnant. Shockingly, Hagar starts to get a little "uppity" with her mistress (Genesis 16:4). Sarai starts abusing Hagar, so Hagar runs away, deciding it's better to risk crossing the Sinai desert in order to go home to Egypt than stay. Alone, pregnant, with little to no supplies, what must Hagar had been thinking and feeling during those hot days and cold nights? The story doesn't tell us.

But this is what the story does tell us: Hagar is an Egyptian and not a Hebrew. She never once prays to God. As far as we know, she has no faith in the Lord and the thought of appealing to the God of Abram never crosses her mind. She doesn't even appeal to the pagan gods of her ancestors. And yet, "The angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur." (Gen. 16:7) The angel of the Lord tells her to go back and submit to Sarai, but then promises, basically, that the promises made to Abram for his son (who hasn't yet been born or conceived) will be given to Hagar's son's descendants. Her response to this is the verse at the top of the article. Nothing has changed regarding her circumstances, but Hagar is filled with hope and praise.

Why? Because now she knows that she has been seen by the Lord. In the midst of her distress and fear, she realizes that she is not alone. Where she has feared for her future, she realizes that God has been and will continue to look after her. Let me emphasize this again: God does nothing to change her situation, in fact He sends her back to Sarai. And it's likely that Ishmael didn't experience the promised blessings himself (Genesis 16:12), but his descendants would be princes! "Truly here I have seen him who looks after me."

Many times we feel the same as Hagar. Lost in our afflictions, our sufferings, our struggles. We are sure that God does not see or hear us in our distress, and we wonder if He even cares. But if God saw Hagar, lost in the wilderness, then God sees you as well. God is looking after you, even if you don't see it. And while your circumstances may not change (I pray they do!), His promises are still true and sure. He is the God who sees; He is the One who looks after you. Know that you are not alone or forsaken. He is with you, even until the end of the age (Matthew 28:20).

For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. — Romans 8:38–39

Blessings,

Rev. David Garrison

Youth Ministry News & Info

Sunday evenings from 6:30-7:45 pm

All students from 6th-12th grades are invited to join us each Sunday as we explore **The Good Life**.

Do you want to live the good life? Of course you do—we all do! But which version? The traveling influencer? The star athlete? The brilliant artist? Something new and different than what most people think? No matter what version we hope for, many of us are looking for help with figuring out how to find it. In this series, we'll learn how the Holy Spirit helps us to experience more of the life we were created to live. And throughout this series, we may just discover a version of life, and a way to do middle and high school, that is better than we ever could have imagined.

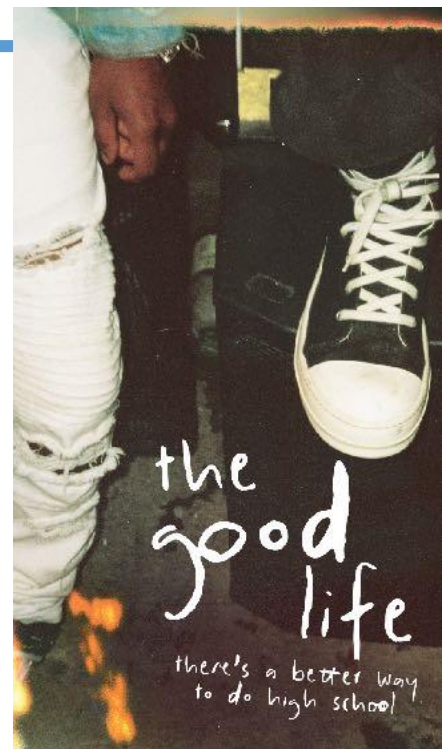
November 6 — Stay in step with the Spirit and be transformed.

November 13 — If you want to live the good life, you have to understand what the good life really is.

November 20 — Following the Spirit leads to experiencing the good life.

November 27 — **No Youth Group**

Join us @ Youth Group, Sundays, 6:30 PM.



Life Together

NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS:

- 1 Linda Sievewright
- 3 Janet Vandall
- 5 Lorraine Ledden
- 9 Christy Sechler
- 15 Anne Wilkins
- 15 Colin Scruggs
- 21 Joel Carnefix
- 22 Sandy Stafford
- 30 Meg Garrison



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

Prayer Requests:



Tim Wright is recovering from shoulder surgery.

Debbie Moore will be having surgery to address a severe case of carpal tunnel syndrome.

Ray Vandall continues to heal from his hip replacement surgery. Praise the Lord, the surgery went well!

Barbara Baker asks for prayers for her niece, **Sheila Layton**, who is recovering from breast cancer surgery. This was to address a recurrence of the cancer after 26 years.

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: **Mary Murray, Arlene Horton, Delores Wright and Peggy Wright.**

NOVEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

20 Ed & Vera Campbell 1965

FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP REPORT

GENERAL FUND

	September	Y-T-D
Income	10,246	93,084
Expenses	<u>10,300</u>	<u>103,296</u>
Balance	-54	-10,212

CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS

Cost: \$6.00 each

Deadline: Sunday, December 4



We are ordering poinsettias to help decorate our church for the Advent-Christmas season. Northminster members and friends are welcome to donate in memory and in honor of loved ones. To participate, please sign your name on the church bulletin board and fill out the form provided for payment. Please contact Liz Boothe if you have questions.

Missions Outreach and Evangelism

Christmas Cheer Boxes –The collection bin is by the front door.

November’s Christmas cheer items are cereal, rice, and pasta. Items such as Rice-a -Roni and Kraft mac and cheese are appreciated because they require few other ingredients to prepare.



MOE Meeting – November 14, at 1:00 p.m.

Gleaning for the World – November 17. Meet at the church parking lot at 8:30 a.m. We will work from 9:00-11:00 a.m. and return by 11:30.

Come and See...Go and Tell (Matthew 28: 5-7)

I am awed by the gift of evangelism. We’ve all witnessed it. The person who can speak persuasively to strangers about Jesus and, if the Spirit is moving, win souls for Christ. I do not have this gift and I suspect neither do most of you reading this.

Evangelism for us takes a different tact. We are witnesses. In a court of law, a witness tells what they saw and heard - no more, no less. This is what “The Great Commission” is like for most of us. Simply telling others what Jesus has done for us.

Our faith is not an umbrella that sheds all of life’s difficulties away from us. Our message isn’t “Come to Jesus and all your troubles disappear. He will fix all of your problems.”

So, what is our message? In Pastor David’s sermon on 1 Peter 3:15 we are admonished, “And if someone asks about your Christian hope, always be ready to explain it.” Peter gives us an explanation for this hope in chapter 2: 24-25. “He personally carried our sins in his body on the cross so that we can be dead to sin and live for what is right. By his wounds you are healed. Once you were like sheep who wandered away. But now you have turned to your Shepherd, the Guardian of your souls.”

We are saved, so shame, guilt, the pursuit of pleasure and power no longer motivate us or have influence over us. We, instead, pursue justice and mercy and walk humbly with God. The fruit of the Spirit - love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control are obvious in our lives. Our lives have purpose.

We will fall short and stumble. We are human and imperfect creatures. Perhaps one of the more powerful forms of witness to an unbelieving world is how quickly we Christians admit error and ask for forgiveness when we fail and fall short. Do our sins define us, or do we accept grace, repent and move forward?

Go and tell is the great commission. We “tell” of Jesus’s love when we demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit and advocate for justice and mercy. These evidences (there is that courtroom analogy again) of God at work in our lives will hopefully lead to a conversation. Don’t worry about having the right words to say. In Mark 13:11 we are told “don’t worry in advance about what so say. Just say what God tells you at that time, for it is not you who will be speaking, but the Holy Spirit.”

The angel at Christ’s tomb invited Mary Magdalene to “come and see” what Christ had accomplished. The same invitation is issued to us. Come and see what Jesus is doing in your life and in our community and then go and tell.

How We Worship -- The Liturgical Year

Hasn't the year 2022 flown by? I am enjoying the beautiful colors, cooler temperatures, and crisp air of the autumn season, and I find it hard to believe there are only two months left before we usher in 2023!

Many denominations in the Christian church also follow a calendar. This church year, also known as a liturgical calendar, is an annual cycle of seasons and days observed in Christian churches in commemoration of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is the first in a series of newsletter articles where we will explore the seasons of the liturgical year.

The liturgical year we are presently in is almost over. The new church year starts in several weeks on Sunday, November 27, the first Sunday of Advent.

Advent, (from Latin *adventus*, "coming"), is the period of preparation for the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ at Christmas, and also of preparation for the Second Coming of Christ. In Western churches, Advent begins on the Sunday nearest to November 30 and is the beginning of the liturgical year.

Practices associated with Advent may include keeping an Advent calendar, lighting an Advent wreath, praying an Advent daily devotional, putting up a Christmas tree or Chrismon tree, and setting up Christmas decorations, a custom sometimes done liturgically through a hanging of the greens ceremony. Since approximately the 13th century, the usual liturgical color for Advent in Western Christianity has been violet (purple); however, in some denominations, blue (a color representing hope) is an alternative liturgical color.


Chrismon? Just what is a Chrismon?

As we start to prepare for the upcoming Advent season, we give thought to ways we use our church to honor the Christ child. One way Northminster demonstrates our commitment to sharing of Christ's story is through our Chrismon tree.

The concept of the Chrismon Tree originated in Danville, VA. In the spring of 1957, Mrs. Francis Spencer, a member of Ascension Lutheran Church, volunteered to decorate the church tree. She didn't want colored balls and lights like every other tree. Mrs. Spencer wanted to keep our Lord at the center of Christmas.

The original ornament designs were based on the Chi Rho of Christ. Just like early Christians used symbols to identify themselves, to inspire and transmit their faith, Mrs. Spencer wanted a tree worthy of being in the Lord's house and would contribute to the spirit of worship.

Chrismon^(tm) – the term is a combination of two words, **CHRIST** and **MONogram**.

Chi Rho  – Greek letters (P and X) superimposed to create symbol/monogram for Christ; represents the connections between the crucifixion and resurrection

Over time the ornaments on Ascension’s tree have increased from 12 Chrismons on the original tree to about 600 (as of this month) and now include not only those based on Chi Rho but other symbols from Christian history relating to biblical interpretations. The tree now includes ornaments sent from all over the world by people inspired by this ministry. Each ornament relates to Jesus Christ and has specific meaning/symbolism.



For Example: One of the most ancient symbols to early believers, the “sign of the fish”, became a universal symbol to identify believers one to the other. The Greek word for fish is IXOYS (Jesus Christ God’s Son Savior).

Mt 4:19 “and I will make you fishers of men”

All Chrismons are a combination of white and gold.

White – the liturgical color for Christmas refers to our Lords purity and perfection

Gold – to his majesty and glory

The use of tiny white lights on the tree points to Christ as the Light of the world.

Ascension Lutheran’s Chrismon tree is available for public viewing annually. The pandemic provided some challenges for them which they overcame. Over a period of several months, they were able to create weatherproof Chrismons for an outdoor tree which has been available for viewing the past two years. In addition to the outside tree, this year their traditional indoor tree will be once again open for public viewing. They harvest live trees and a team of volunteers spend a week decorating with the Chrismons to prepare for the December 11 dedication. Specific dates and times for the inhouse viewing are still being finalized.

References: Sharon Mitchell, Chair, Ascension Lutheran Church Chrismon Ministry

Chrismons: Basic Series. 4th ED, revised. Copyright 1984 by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Ascension, Danville, VA.

(Please note: Through agreement with Ascension Lutheran, they give permission to use their designs and information with the limitation that they not be made for sale.)

Mark your calendars!

Christmas Decorating of the Sanctuary and Church

Saturday, December 3 from 9 a.m. – 12 noon

Please Join Us!



www.facebook.com/npcmh

Website: www.npcmh.com

DAVID GARRISON, Pastor

ELDERS

Ron Reyburn, Clerk of Session,

Liz Boothe, Maggie Brockman

Sharon Bryant, John Lange, Judy Reyburn

Bob Mills, Director of Music

Liz Boothe, Organist

Sharon Bryant, Sunday school

Superintendent

The Women's Book Club – Visit from a Local Author

The Women's Book Club will meet on Thursday, November 17, at 10 a.m. at Mary Wilhelm's house. They will be reading All the Little Hopes by local author Leah Weiss.

We are excited to announce that Leah Weiss will be visiting with us at our November meeting!

Recently, several book club members were fortunate to attend a presentation where she spoke about her works and the writing process. We look forward to meeting with her and hearing her speak more about her books! All women are welcome to attend.

More about our book selection All the Little Hopes:

A Southern story of friendship forged by books and bees, when the timeless troubles of growing up meet the murky shadows of World War II. Deep in the tobacco land of North Carolina, nothing's been the same since the boys shipped off to war and worry took their place. Thirteen-year-old Lucy Brown is precocious and itching for adventure. Then Allie Bert Tucker wanders into town, an outcast with a puzzling past, and Lucy figures the two of them can solve any curious crime they find—just like her hero, Nancy Drew. Their chance comes when a man goes missing, a woman stops speaking, and an eccentric gives the girls a mystery to solve that takes them beyond the ordinary. Their quiet town, seasoned with honeybees and sweet tea, becomes home to a Nazi prisoner-of-war camp. More men go missing. And together, the girls embark on a journey to discover if we ever really know who the enemy is.



More about the author, Leah Weiss:

Leah Weiss is a southern writer born in North Carolina and living in Lynchburg, Virginia. She began writing memoirs about her mother's humble life. In 2015, Leah retired from a 24-year career as the Headmaster's Assistant at Virginia Episcopal School, signed with a New York agent and began her writing career.



Her debut novel If the Creek Don't Rise, released in 2017, was developed from her first national winning short story.

We look forward to meeting Leah in person and hearing more about her story and her writing. Please join us.