



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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Christmas Tradition

*"The tradition I handed on to you in the first place,
a tradition which I had myself received..."*

— 1 Cor. 15:3

Of all the seasons of our lives, the one most rooted and grounded in tradition is Christmastime. Every family does the Christmas season differently, and every family is convinced their way is the right way! There's the right time to put the tree up, the right way to do the decorations, the right way to hang the lights, the proper time for Christmas dinner, and, of course, the correct way to open the stockings and the presents. For many of us, it just doesn't feel like Christmas unless the traditions are maintained and practiced correctly. And there's absolutely nothing wrong with that!



In fact, "tradition" plays an important role in our lives, beyond just Christmas. Traditions help ground us in our lives, they provide a way to make sense of how the world works and where we fit into the world. Sociologists call this a metanarrative, a "big story." That "big story" becomes explicit during the holidays, but is always there, whether we're intentionally thinking about it or not. In fact, the Bible is very clear that the traditions of our faith are very important tools for helping us understand our faith, how to live out our faith, and how to pass our faith to others. The traditions aren't the end in and of themselves, they are there to help us see the deeper life of faith to which Christ is inviting and calling us, signposts that remind us of what God has done in the past, is doing in the present and what He has yet to do in the future.

Over the course of Advent this year, we'll be looking at the various parts of our Christmas Tradition. While the details are different for everyone, in general we all have particular traditions to help us prepare for the season, to get into the spirit of the season, lights that brighten the season for us, songs that carry the season into our hearts, ways of celebrating and rejoicing in the season, and the joy of presents given and received. All of these traditions help us delight in all that Christmas offers, but they are also meant to point us past the holiday itself in order to remind us that, just as Jesus Christ took on human flesh 2,000 years ago in his first

advent, He will just as surely return for his Second. Celebrate how the world and history changed 2,000 years ago. But don't lose sight of that for which we all deeply long: His imminent and certain return.

"I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star." The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price. — Rev. 22:16–17

Blessings,
Rev. David Garrison

Youth Ministry News & Info

December 2022

Sundays, 6:30-7:45pm

All students from 6th-12th grades are invited to join us each Sunday as we look at a **Messy Christmas**.

"Joy to the world" is a catchy lyric, but can seem totally impossible when life feels messy. When we think "Christmas" we think "joyful celebration," but what happens when the holiday season doesn't match what's actually happening around us? Know this: When life is hard, joy is still possible. When life is messy, joy is available. Why? Because when humanity was hurting, Jesus brought joy. In this 3-week Christmas series, we're going to find a way to say "joy to the world anyway."



December 4 — You're not alone when life gets messy.

December 11 — You weren't meant to be the one who keeps it all together.

December 18 — Caroling & Christmas Party — Jesus shows up in the middle of the mess.

December 25 — **No Youth Group**

January 1 — **No Youth Group**

Join us @ Youth Group, Sundays, 6:30 p.m.



The Women's Book Club

The Women's Book Club will meet on **Thursday, December 15, at 10 a.m.** We will be going out for lunch. Stay tuned for more information! Each lady is asked to share something about her favorite Christmas short story, poem, or book. All women are welcome!

Life Together

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS:

- 3 Karey Garrison
- 3 Jackson Moore
- 5 Joan Porter
- 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:

Several members have asked for prayers for needs that they'd prefer not to share publicly. Please lift up these prayers, knowing that God knows for whom you pray and just what they need.

After a long labor and c-section, **Graham & Larisa Neilson** welcomed their son, George Harwood Neilson, II on Monday, November 28. Mom and baby are healthy and doing well.

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**. She just had her final surgery on November 22 and is doing well.

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: **Sue Burnett, Arlene Horton, Mary Murray, Margie Seal, Dot Stinnett, Delores Wright and Peggy Wright.**

FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP REPORT

GENERAL FUND

| | October | Y-T-D |
|----------|---------------|----------------|
| Income | 11,245 | 104,330 |
| Expenses | <u>11,946</u> | <u>115,260</u> |
| Balance | -719 | -10,930 |

CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS

Cost: \$6.00 each

Deadline: Sunday, December 11

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 – We will be packing the Christmas Cheer Boxes on Friday, December 16, at Amelon United Methodist Church from 9:00-11:00 a.m.

MOE Meeting – No meeting this month!

Gleaning for the World – December 21. 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.



Home Makeover for NEPC

Perhaps you have one too. You know, that relative who ruins every holiday, that coworker who can't pass up an opportunity to ridicule another employee. Why can't people be kind? Why can't they change? I have discovered something about God and me. Every time I want someone else to change, God is wanting me to change. Every time I want my circumstances to change—inflation, health problems, family dysfunction, concerns for the future—God wants me to change!

We've been reading a book together about this topic of change; *Canoeing the Mountains* is about changing the church. Similar to the programs on HGTV about home makeovers, *Canoeing the Mountains* is about refreshing and transforming our church to please God and be more effective to His calling for us as a community of faith.

They use tools on HGTV to transform a home. God uses tools too. He has placed several handy tools at our disposal. Perhaps you are familiar with some of God's transformative tools. He uses fellowship among believers. He uses worship. He uses service—both within our church and to our community. God even has a couple of power tools. If you are hoping for dramatic change quickly, reach for the power tools. God's power tools are prayer and Bible study.

Now these power tools are a bit different from the other tools in the toolbox. Fellowship, worship, and service must be done in connection with others to be most effective. Prayer and Bible study are most effective when first used individually. To see dramatic change quickly I must first pray and study my Bible at home and then come together with other believers for corporate prayer and study. It is similar to being on a sports team. Some training and conditioning is done individually in the gym, but then there is team practice also. Both are essential for success.

Perhaps individual prayer and Bible study aren't a part of your daily routine, but you would like for them to be. A strategy for successful change in my life has been to start small and set myself up for success. A reasonable goal would be to read scripture or devotional materials for ten minutes and pray for five minutes three times a week. There are many devotional or study aids adapted to this model. There are materials available at NEPC and online. Your church leaders would be glad to make recommendations.

Set prayer and Bible study as a priority. Before you watch the news on tv, read the good news of the gospel. Before engaging with social media, engage with God in prayer. You will find that three times a week grows to four, then five. Fifteen minutes grows to twenty, then thirty. God will do this in you. Spending time with Him will become a habit you look forward to, one that enriches your life, not an obligation or a chore. This "make-over" of the spirit is evidence of God's transformative power in our lives. If we want NEPC to change, the change begins within us, and God has equipped us with a toolbox.

Advent Carols?

By Bob Mills

Advent is a season of anticipation and preparation. In this 40-day period before Christmas, the Church prepares to celebrate the First Advent of Jesus Christ, which took place in Bethlehem. We simultaneously anticipate Jesus' Second Advent, when he will come again in glory to rule the earth. Our corporate worship reflects these emphases. The paraments are changed to purple, the color of royalty, fit for a coming king. Candles and a tree covered with Chrismons decorate the sanctuary. And we sing songs we haven't sung for a whole year.



But which songs should we sing during Advent? I've never done a survey asking church members that question. If I ever did, I suspect the overwhelming response would be "Christmas carols, of course." There might, however, be a couple outliers among the respondents who would answer, "Advent carols." Advent carols?

Yes! Our hymnal has several well-known examples. All have deep roots in Christian history. One is "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" (#133), with its plaintive melody and haunting minor chords. The text dates back to the 1100s. The tune was in use even earlier. You might be surprised to learn that this hymn has seven verses. Most hymnals use only three. Our hymnal, to its credit, has five.

The text of "Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence" (#167) can be traced back to the 4th-century Liturgy of St. James. Today, this hymn is most often sung in unison, supported by the wonderful harmonization of the renowned 20th-century British composer Ralph Vaughn Williams.

Finally, "Of the Father's Love Begotten" (#145) combines a fourth century text with a twelfth-century melody. That melody is in a style known as Gregorian Chant, which was the music of the Church throughout the medieval era. Most hymnals, ours included, retain the free-flowing, unmetred rhythm of the original chant.

That style may not be immediately appreciated today. But as we sing these Advent hymns, we're reminded of our enduring connection with saints who lived more than a thousand years before us.

Happy caroling

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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

Northminster Christmas Celebrations Calendar



Saturday, December 3 from 9 a.m.-noon – Hanging of the Greens

Christmas is such a special time of year—a time of celebration, family, and the birth of Jesus. We also delight in decorating the house of our Lord. With this in mind, you are invited to join us as we prepare our church to celebrate His birth.

We will put up beautiful trees with Chrismons, Advent candles, wreaths, and banners as we enjoy light brunch refreshments (provided by our Fellowship Committee), Christmas music playing in the background, and above all, each other's company. Members and friends of all ages and all decorating skill levels are welcome. See you there!



Sunday, December 11 after the worship service – Christ Cake

One of our beloved traditions is to celebrate Jesus' birthday with the Christ cake. Please join us after the service with friends and family as we celebrate the coming of our King!



Friday, December 16 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 16, we'll join our partner churches to pack those boxes! We'll meet at Amelon United Methodist Church at 9 a.m. Help us spread some Christmas cheer this season!

Sunday, December 18 from 4-6:30 p.m. – Christmas Caroling

Join us for our annual tradition of going caroling to our homebound members. We'll meet at the church and carpool together as we enjoy fellowship and make a joyful noise singing our favorite Christmas tunes. This is a great opportunity for folks of all ages to come together as we spread some Christmas cheer!



Sunday, December 18 from 4-8 p.m. – Youth Group Caroling & Christmas Party

After caroling, all 6th-12th grade students are invited to join us for our Christmas Party! More information about this coming later this month.

Saturday, 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.



Sunday, December 25, 11 a.m. – Christmas Day Service

Let us rejoice together in the birth of our Savior on Christmas Day. We will not have Sunday school, only the service.

Northminster's Chrismon™ Journey

The earliest creation of Chrismons at Northminster was coordinated by Joanne Ricketts with the Women of the Church (WOC) in the early 80's. The patterns based on Ascension Lutherans Chrismon ministry were copied on old mimeographed church newsletters and cut out to create the patterns. After cutting the designs from white Styrofoam meat trays, using lots of glue, and gold glitter we had Chrismons. (This was a very low budget project.)

In the mid 80's, Glennie Britt, after seeing Chrismons another local church was making, took Northminster's Chrismons to the next level. Glennie guided the WOC to make more complex ornaments, cutting thick Styrofoam, shaping and molding with the hands, threading wire and beads to create the symbolic shapes. More glue, more glitter, tiny flowers, sequins, stick pins, beads, gold paper and mesh all white and gold were used to be consistent. The ladies met at the church or in their homes to make the Chrismons. Many of these "vintage" ornaments are still placed on Northminster tree each year. Styrofoam ornaments are fragile compared to those made with beads and wire. Some have not been able to be repaired as the materials are no longer available or are just beyond repair.

The Chrismons were hung on a live cedar tree harvested from a church member's farm and placed on the left front of the chancel until 2003. (Several of us remember the treks in the woods for those trees.) In the early years, Leonard Rowe always placed the white lights on the tree. After the sanctuary renovations, an artificial pre-lit pine tree was obtained and relocated to the right front of the sanctuary.

~2006 The Worship committee identified need for additional, updated Chrismons. Members of the congregation turned up their glitter/glue/paint creativity and provided additional white wooden, white seashells, ceramic, cross-stitched and beaded ornaments.

~2010 The Worship committee had small group of volunteers work on making additional beaded ornament that varied in size from small to large ornaments. This series of ornaments included many different types of crosses (including but not limited to the Calvary cross, Celtic cross, Easter crown cross, Latin cross, Resurrection cross, Shepard's crook Cross), angels, and butterfly. See if you can find any of these on our tree this year. Efforts continue on a smaller scale to have a new ornament every year or so.

Thankfully, many of our ornaments have survived the test of time because of the care given them in the early years and which currently continues. They are wrapped in acid free tissue paper and stored in an area without extremes of temperature or humidity which help avoid discoloration and deterioration of the glue and components of the ornament.

Unfortunately, parts of our history are vague and incomplete. Please advise the Worship committee if you can correct, clarify, or provide more details regarding our Chrismons. The earliest reference to Chrismon found in our church history was 1982.

Thanks to June Hedrick and Mary Wilhelm for sharing memories about our Chrismons. Photo courtesy of June Hedrick. Article written by Linda Lange.



Please Note: Follow-up to last month's article on the Chrismon ministry at Ascension Lutheran Church in Danville. The indoor Chrismon tree may be viewed **December 11-24.**

Times: **Thursday, Friday, Saturday—7 p.m.-9 p.m.; Sundays—3 p.m.-5 p.m. & 7 p.m.-9 p.m.**