



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE HEIGHTS

Northminster Evangelical Presbyterian Church

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

office@npcmh.com

434/929-2713

www.npcmh.com

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The Valley of Death

*Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.*

— Psalm 23:4



The last week of April was bookended with memorial services. I officiated a funeral on Monday and attended my uncle's memorial service on Saturday. Not surprisingly, I've been thinking about "the valley of the shadow of death" quite a bit. Pictured to the right is the Wadi Qelt on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, which is likely the inspiration for the Psalm. Notice the depth of the gorge and the dark shadows toward the bottom. It is a visceral experience of "the valley of the shadow of death."

Often we think of "walking through the valley of the shadow of death" during seasons of grief and loss, such as when a family member or dear friend passes away. That is certainly a time when we are in that valley. In addition to the inevitable sadness, the loss of a loved one is a reminder of our own mortality. As Psalm 103 declares, "As for man, his days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more." (Psa. 103:15–16) Knowing that God is present with us in our grief, actively and proactively comforting us, is a great assurance during these seasons.

There's more to the valley of the shadow of death. As many of you know, my uncle took his own life a month ago. For many, including my uncle, to "walk through the valley of the shadow of death" is to wrestle through seasons of depression and sorrow, where the shadow of death whispers our fears of inadequacy, unworthiness, failures, and brokenness. It offers seemingly sweet promises of relief and peace, the tender lie that one's family and friends would be better off without you. When we are in this valley, it feels as if the darkness of the shadow of death is our only friend; all we can see and hear are our fears. But the Psalm reminds us that even in this valley we are not alone in the shadows. Even when the whispers of the shadow of death speak louder than anything else, we are not alone; we need not be afraid because God is with us.

However, sometimes the valley of the shadow of death comes during seasons of trial and tribulation, when it feels like everyone and everything is attacking us. In Psalm 18, David says, "I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies. The cords of death encompassed me; the torrents of destruction

assailed me.” (Psa. 18:3–4) The shepherd uses his rod and staff not just to guide the sheep along safe paths, but also to beat off wild animals that attack the flock. Even then, God is present with us, protecting us from that which would bring us harm, saving us from our enemies.

The thing, though, is that God’s presence with us in “the shadow of the valley of death” does not necessarily mean that we won’t die while in the valley. That might not seem like much comfort, but that’s only because our faith is so small. We forget where we started, that our bodies are mortal and temporary things. What’s ultimately at stake isn’t our physical bodies, but our eternal souls. God will be present with us, up to and beyond the point of our physical death. This should not fill us with fear or dread either, because of what we talked about last month. Since Christ has been raised from the dead, the power of death is broken. We can rest assured that we too shall be raised with Christ! After we shed our mortal coil, we will then see God face-to-face and He shall wipe every tear from our eye. Death does not, and can not, have the final victory. Praise be to God through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

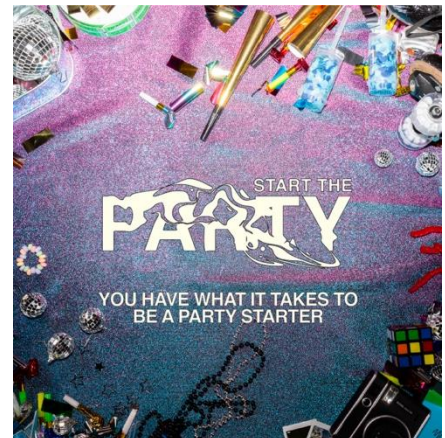
— 1 Peter 1:3–5

Blessings,
Rev. David Garrison

2023 May Youth Ministry News & Info Sundays from 6:30-7:45 pm

Summer Starts in May! Let’s Party!

Have you ever noticed how some people seem to be living more life than others? What makes some people seem so full of life and others to seem so empty? Well, put simply, some people know how to start the party better than others, and no one was better at it than Jesus. From weddings to dinner parties, He had a way of leveraging the energy of a good party to remind all of us of what mattered most. This summer, we will be challenged to see ordinary moments as extraordinary opportunities to bring more life, more joy, more hope, and more energy to their own lives and the world around them. From practically serving other people to fostering a personal vision for a better world, all summer long through stories from Scripture and on-the-ground highlights from story tellers around the globe, we will be inspired to be people who make life a party. Our faith is meant to be fun. Our lives are meant to be loaded with joy. Our mission is to make way for other people to get the most out of every day. By the end of the summer, we will be ready to Start The Party!



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DAVID GARRISON, Pastor
ELDERS

Ron Reyburn (Clerk of Session),
John Lange, Liz Boothe
Sharon Bryant, Judy Reyburn,
Mike Henderson, Anne Wilkins

Bob Mills, Director of Music
Sharon Bryant, Sunday School Superintendent
Mike Henderson & Barbara Baker, Treasurers

Life Together

MAY BIRTHDAYS:

5 Michael Babcock
 10 Jeremy Vandevander
 13 Debbie Moore
 16 John Lange
 19 Jay Vandevander, Jr.
 23 Julie Lerner
 25 Rudy Burnett
 25 Tim Mills



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.

Dot Stinnett is healing from a broken femur. Please pray for comfort and a relief from pain.

Jimmy Wright asks for prayer as the doctors continue diagnosing and treating enlarged ventricles in the brain that are causing dizziness and weakness.

Julie Lerner is recovering from Bell's Palsy and is dealing with a salivary gland infection.

Arlene Horton continues healing from hip surgery. Praise the Lord that she is doing well.

Remember others who cannot be with us in church: **Pat Callahan, Arlene Horton, Mary Murray, Margie Seal, Dot Stinnett, Delores Wright** and **Peggy Wright**.

FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP REPORT **2023 GENERAL FUND**

	March	Y-T-D
Income	11,854	30,399
Expenses	<u>9,804</u>	<u>31,156</u>
Balance	2,050	-757

Lost & Found

In cleaning up for the Presbytery meeting, we have set up a table of Lost & Found items in the fellowship hall. **Please stop by** to make sure none of the items are yours.

Free Table

There are many children's items on the free table. If you, or someone you know, might want them, please take them before they are gone!

MEETING AT NORTHMINSTER

THE
NEW RIVER
PRESBYTERY (EPC)

**Friday, May 5,
and Saturday, May 6**

Great Experience, Great
Opportunity for our church
family and friends!

This coming weekend, the teaching and ruling elders representing approximately 40-45 churches of the New River PRESBYTERY will be here at Northminster! We are hosting with Elon Presbyterian. Our leadership is excited to have this opportunity to share our church with others of the Presbytery.

The meeting runs from Friday morning to Saturday noon. On Friday morning the committees meet and at 1p.m. the general meeting starts. The meeting will adjourn late afternoon and attendees will travel to Elon Presbyterian for dinner and a 7 p.m. worship service. Saturday morning the general meeting will continue at Northminster which includes the examination of candidates for Teaching Elders (new pastors).

Want to volunteer to help us with a variety of jobs that need to be done before and during the meeting? Please contact Anne Wilkins 434-941-3108 or Linda Lange 434-660-4858.

New Phone Directory

The Fellowship committee is working on an updated phone directory.

You will find a form in your bulletin on Sunday morning so that you can give us your phone number and address. Please take a few minutes to fill it out and put it in the collection plate on Sunday or email

ronjudyreyburn@yahoo.com If you can't attend church regularly but want to be included, please e-mail this information to us.

Last Name: _____

First name: _____

Phone # _____

E-mail address: _____

Address: _____

Family Names: _____

Birthdates: _____

Minute 4 Mission Daystar Jr. School



Africa. It is fully registered with the Ministry of Education Sports as a nursery and primary day school.

We all know how important it is to invest in the next generation, and Daystar Junior School is doing just that. This school for children ages 3 to 15 years is located in the slum areas of Kirombe Uganda, East

Founded in 2014, it opened its doors on February 2, 2015, with the vision “Raising children who are good examples.” The school’s mission is “To help our children discover, develop, release and maximize their potentials in God.”

Our contact with the school is Nyanzi Jude, the school’s founder and principal who is a man full of vision and determination. He often sends us pictures of the school and occasionally shows up on our Facebook live worship service, as well as in person to let us know how the school is thriving. Our donations from here in Central Virginia have helped to purchase uniforms for the students and provide materials so that they can build new desks.

We are excited to see the ways that God continues to use Daystar in the lives of these precious children, and we feel privileged to be able to help the school in their vital mission of raising children who “maximize their potentials” for the Kingdom of God.

Hear What God Is Doing With Missions

Sunday School Hour – Missionaries From Uzbekistan

On **Sunday, May 7**, we are excited to welcome **Danie and Delia Odendaal**. Danie and Delia are missionaries to Uzbekistan, sponsored by the New River Presbytery of the EPC. They will be sharing about their work in Uzbekistan during the Sunday school hour as well as a Minute for Mission during the worship service.



Summer Kickoff Potluck – Speaker From Gleaning for the World



Save the date!!! On Sunday, June 11, following worship, we will have a potluck meal to kick off the summer. Bring your favorite foods to share and listen as a guest speaker from Gleaning for the World comes to tell us about this vital ministry right here in our own backyard.



The Women's Book Club

The Women's Book Club will meet on **Thursday, May 18, at 10 a.m.** Liz Boothe's house. They will be reading *Soo/ey* by John Grisham. Follow the story of Samuel Sooleyman from South Sudan, a teen who loves basketball and is granted a scholarship to play in the US. While in America, Samuel discovers that terrible things have happened to his family back home; now he must use his passion for basketball to bring them safely to America. All women are welcome.

When Jesus Shows Up by Christy

During recent years, I've grown to love the forty days between Easter and Ascension Day. While the forty days of Lent are a time of reflection and sorrow, the forty days of Eastertide are, in my mind, a time of joy and anticipation, never knowing when Jesus might appear.

I especially like the story in John's gospel of Peter's unsuccessful fishing trip. After Jesus' resurrection, Peter goes back to doing what he does best—fishing. But that night, in spite of the help from his friends, he catches nothing. Then, as morning dawns, Jesus stands on the shore and works a miracle, giving them so many fish the nets are about to break, but they don't. After Peter and the others join Jesus on shore for a miraculous breakfast, Jesus reinstates Peter, taking away the shame Peter felt when he denied Jesus.

During this Eastertide, maybe you need Jesus to help you with something you thought you could do on your own, but you find that you can't. Or maybe it's an impossible situation and you know that only His miraculous help can save you. Perhaps you have a sin that needs complete healing and forgiveness. Whatever it is, why not spend this season praying for Him to step into your situation? For the disciples, Eastertide 2,000 years ago was a time of miracles, of Jesus walking into their lives unannounced with resurrection power. And for us today, whether He answers our prayers in these few weeks or not, this is the perfect time to draw closer to our risen Lord and live in the joyful anticipation of what He might do next.

