



# 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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## IS ANYONE LISTENING?

“What is the word that Jesus has for your church?” I looked at my spiritual director a little befuddled, mostly because I wasn’t expecting the question. “Do you believe that Jesus has a word for your church today?” Well, of course I do. “So are you listening for it?” That’s really the question isn’t it? Am I listening for Jesus’ word to Northminster? To me? Just how does Jesus speak to us today? I fully believe that Jesus can speak to us in any form he chooses — directly, through someone else, a nudge of the conscience, the gift of a beautiful sunset, so on and so forth. The primary way He speaks to us is through His Word, the Bible. When we read the Bible, we’re usually pretty aware that we are reading, in some respects, a conversation between God and other people. We easily forget that God’s Word is just as much a conversation between us and God as well. Is anyone listening?



### **Tuning In**

Much like tuning our car radio (does anyone even do that anymore?) to get the best reception of our favorite radio station, we will hear that for which we’re listening. When we step outside on a spring or summer day, at first the world sounds quiet. As we listen, as we “tune in,” we begin to hear the birds chirping and the wind rustling the leaves. When we listen more attentively, we begin to pick out different kinds of birds singing to each other. Eventually we can even locate particular birds in the trees and to whom they’re singing. We might not think Jesus is speaking to us, but He is, and we need to make sure we’re tuning in. Are we listening?

*I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet saying, “Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.” (Rev. 1:10–11)*

During the season of Epiphany (all of January and February this year), we’re going to focus on “tuning in” to hear what Jesus is saying to us by listening in on what He said to the seven churches in Revelation. In the Bible, the number seven denotes fullness, totality and comprehensiveness. The letters to these seven historical churches represent the church universal. The Word that Jesus had for these seven churches is also the word He has for us individually, for Northminster, and the Church (capital “C” means the universal

church, all churches in all times and all places) today. We will use these seven letters to help us tune in to what Jesus is saying to us right now. Once we get tuned in, we can start listening.

### The Word That Speaks

Jesus isn't just speaking to us through the seven letters of Revelation, though. We believe that every page of the Bible is the inspired Word of God, but most of us have never read through the entire Bible. How can we say we're listening to Jesus if we don't know what His Word says? Beginning on Ash Wednesday, we will embark on a journey to listen to the Word of God itself, the entire counsel of Scripture. In the 90 days from Ash Wednesday through Pentecost, we will read the entire Bible together. I know that sounds kind of daunting, but it works out to just 12 pages a day. Look at it like "binge reading" the entire Bible. Now that many shows and TV series are available to stream, you can watch an entire series in a weekend. "LOST" makes a lot more sense when you binge it (although it's still really confusing). We're going to do the same thing with the Bible. The sermons on Sundays will follow along with the weekly readings and we'll provide tools and other things to help us all stay on track together. We'll share more details about how this is going to work in next month's newsletter.

The Session and I have been talking and praying about this for many months, and we're really excited about what God will reveal to us — as individuals and as a church — when we tune in and start listening for His word to us. In 2020, let's make sure we're tuned in to Him and listening together.

*For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Heb. 4:12)*

Blessings, *Rev. David Garrison*



THE JOURNEY BEGINS

**2.26.2020**

**JANUARY BIRTHDAYS**

- 2 Virginia Carnefix
- 3 Andrea Sievewright
- 4 Jack Thomasson
- 7 Betty Reed,  
Rob Sievewright
- 12 Mason Brine
- 15 Barbara Baker
- 16 IvyElizabeth Mann
- 18 Mandy (Rucker) Newsome
- 19 Mary Wilhelm
- 30 Cheryl Bray
- 31 Karen Aspengren



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



**Prayer Requests:**

**Virginia Carnefix** has improved and been able to come to church.

**Bonnie Wine**

**Ron Reyburn** has been diagnosed with prostate cancer. He is consulting with his doctor about the proper treatment.

**Mary Wilhelm's son, Stan**, continues treatments for an immune deficiency. He is showing some improvement.

**Sue Burnett** has started another round of chemotherapy for lung cancer.

**Bobbie Garrett** has numerous health problems. Also pray for Albert as Bobbie's main caretaker.

**All active servicemen and women.**

**Law enforcement personnel, first responders.**

*Remember others who cannot be with us in church:*

**John and Dick Collins, Dot Stinnett, Leonard Rowe, Margaret Watts, Dot Rucker, and Betty Reed.**



**JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES:**

- 16 Mandy & Christopher Newsome 2016



**JANUARY ATTENDANTS**

- 5 Sharon & Gerald Bryant
- 12 Maggie Brockman & Anne Wilkins
- 19 Sandy Stafford & Vonnie Rucker
- 26 Ernie & Barbara Baker

*Sympathy & Understanding*

We send sympathy and Christian love to the family of **Doris Eden**, who passed away on November 26, 2019. Doris and family had been members of Northminster since 1959. Condolences can be sent to her daughter, Janice Gripp, 132 Jane Terrace, Madison Heights, VA 24572.

**PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN**

**Morning Circle:**

The morning circle will meet Tuesday, January 7 at 10 am Their Bible Study is "Busyness—Finding God in the Whirlwind." Pick up the study materials from June Hedrick.

**Evening Circle:**

The evening circle will meet Monday, January 6 at 7 pm in the Youth Group room. They will continue their Bible study of the book of John with Margaret Feinberg's DVD presentation, *Pursuing God*. Maggie Brockman will lead the study from Session 10.

**SACRAMENT OF COMMUNION**

**January 5**

We observe the Sacrament of Communion on the first Sunday of each month.



**FROM THE FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE**

The Fellowship Committee decided at their November meeting that we would have a *Souper Bowl* celebration the Sunday before the Super Bowl game. This would be January 26. Details to follow!

Also coming in early 2020, in response to your feedback from our September Interests Survey, we are pleased to announce that there are exciting events scheduled for the new year. We have your Valentine plans taken care of too!

It's gonna be a great year with lots of fun in store, so watch the monthly newsletter for further details!

**CHURCH CANCELLATION -- IN CASE OF INCLEMENT WEATHER****Sunday Services:**

When Sunday services are questionable due to bad weather, we will follow this procedure:

- A decision will be made by 7:30 a.m. Sunday morning by 2 or 3 designated people in the congregation
- A telephone message will be sent out to everyone using the church's OneCall Now telephone service.
- We will post the cancellation on the church web-site [www.npcmh.com](http://www.npcmh.com)

**Programs other than Sunday morning:**

Cancellations regarding events other than Sunday morning will be decided as soon as reasonably possible. The group taking part in the program being canceled will receive a call using the church's One-Call Now telephone service.

**IS IT POSSIBLE TO FIT INTO 2 MOLDS SIMULTANEOUSLY?**

If John 3:16 is the "life verse" for the yet-unsaved, then the "life verse" for the saved must surely be Romans 8:29, where God plainly says that His goal is to conform believers into "the image of His Son." In 2020, we can cooperate with that goal, or resist it, depending greatly upon what we set our affections. What do I mean by that? Keep Reading...

No matter our age, there are lots of things that attract our attention (and affection), and subtly begin to shape us: athletes, TV stars, careers, hobbies, societal trends, etc. Even if we don't realize it's happening, it's easy to find an appealing image and try to become like it. Writer Chris Tiegreen (*God With Us* – Tyndale Momentum Publishing) says, "We enthusiastically become like the people or ideals on which we set our affections. When we want to, we conform easily."

Even Christians can find that it's a struggle to keep becoming more Christlike. The newness and excitement that we first experienced as Christians can grow stale as other influences such as new interests and new

societal trends get our attention and cause our focus to drift. Those things \*can\* subtly become our focus and goals, and equally subtly Jesus goes from being the object of our affection to simply an obligation.

Chris Tiegreen goes on to say that, “...*other passions pull us in other directions, often making conflicting demands on our character. Godly character cannot thrive in that environment. Our spirits will not (indeed, cannot) fit into 2 molds simultaneously.*”

Equally interesting and challenging is a quote from Francis de Sales: “*We cannot help conforming ourselves to what we love.*”

If 2020 is like all the years we have experienced in the past, no doubt we will find godliness a continuous struggle, due to the many things that will be available to grab our attention and focus away from our Savior. That’s not to say that everything we will experience and be exposed to is evil, and that we should isolate ourselves from the world (it’s REALLY hard to follow the biblical goal of being Salt & Light in isolation, isn’t it). But it does mean we need to regularly examine our desires and our influences.

What do we expose ourselves to, and how frequently? What things do we invite into our lives through our lifestyles, viewing/listening habits, social media involvement, etc.? How much time do we devote to those things compared to the time we spend in conversation with our Lord, and in learning about Him, and in working to build and further His Kingdom? What changes in priority might I need to make in order to make Christ (and loving Him and finding ways to serve Him) my goals at the beginning of each day, instead of just an afterthought as I review “what happened today” at the end of the day?

If becoming more Christlike is becoming a struggle, or if it’s not even on my “to-do list”, what things need to change in 2020 regarding:

- ✓ My alone time in “conversation” with the Lord...(prayer)
- ✓ Learning more about who He is, what He says is good to avoid, what He says is good to strive for.....(time in the Bible, personally and perhaps listening to others teach about Him)
- ✓ Fellowshiping with other believers...(yes, they will be imperfect and flawed like I am, but we are all in the process of becoming more and more Christ-shaped; Hallelujah!)

Chris Tiegreen concludes with these thoughts:

*“Is your growth toward godliness a difficult struggle? Examine your desires. How do you envision yourself? How would you like others to perceive you? What image do you aim for? If you find any image other than Jesus shaping your soul, abandon it. It will hinder your growth. Find your identity entirely in Him.”*

With love from your brother in Christ – Harry Rucker

P.S.

Here’s a shameless plug.....if you are looking for a new devotional for 2020, I HIGHLY RECOMMEND Chris Tiegreen’s devotionals. Two of his that I own (and read and re-read...) are: ***The One Year God with Us Devotional*** and ***Worship the King*** (Tyndale Momentum Publishing). I am also excited about his newly-released “***One Year Salt & Light Devotional***” (also from Tyndale).

<b><u>PC USA DISMISSAL DEBT UPDATE</u></b>	
Nov. 2015, Original amount:	\$ 89,600
Paid:	39,600
Held in savings as of Dec. 31:	<u>49,605</u>
Balance needed:	\$ 395

**STEWARDSHIP COMMITMENT FOR 2020**

Thank you for your pledges to the church's operating expenses for 2020. Your support has been overwhelmingly encouraging as we go forward.

Above is an update on the funding of the PC USA Dismissal Debt. Many of you have been very dedicated to giving toward this debt so that we would have all the funds collected by January 2020. As you see, we are very close.

<b>FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP REPORT</b>				
	<u>General Operating Fund</u>		<u>Campaign/PC USA Debt</u>	
	<u>Nov</u>	<u>Y-T-D</u>	<u>Nov</u>	<u>Total</u>
Income	12,534	114,563	992	58,900
Expenses	<u>12,005</u>	<u>129,198</u>		
Balance	+ 529	-14,635		

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 Website: [www.npcmh.com](http://www.npcmh.com)

DAVID GARRISON, *Pastor*  
**ELDERS**  
 Ron Reyburn, *Clerk of Session*,  
 Michael Babcock, George Brine,  
 John Lange, Sharon Bryant, Anne Wilkins

Bob Mills, *Director of Music*  
 Liz Boothe, *Organist*  
 Sharon Bryant, *Superintendent*  
*of Sunday School*  
 Vonnie Rucker, *Treasurer*