



# HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE HEIGHTS

**NORTHMINSTER EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

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

**OCTOBER 2023**

Volume 41, Issue 10



## Uniquely Christian

*"For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?"*

— Matt. 5:46-47

There's a prayer that pops up in my daily devotional ([Seeking God's Face](#) by Philip Reinders, if you're interested) every few days: "for God to equip us to serve in uniquely Christian ways in the public arena." Praying for God to help us to serve in "uniquely Christian ways" seems such an obvious and unnecessary thing, doesn't it? And yet, over the past several months, this particular prayer has needled away at the back of my mind.

The hard truth most of us probably don't want to admit is that there is very little that is "uniquely Christian" in how we go about our daily lives. When it comes to living as a Christian, as long as we're generally nice to others, basically good in most respects, and overall relatively happy and content in our lives, we figure we're doing pretty well. And there's nothing wrong with any of those things. Most every person should attempt to live that way. But that's just the thing. Most every person does live that way. And again, there is nothing wrong with that, but there's nothing uniquely Christian about it either. If that's the extent of our witness, of how we represent the hope and joy of the Christian life to others, it's not all that surprising that people aren't interested in learning more about the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

It's pretty clear from Scripture that there is supposed to be *something* about how we live our lives that is fundamentally and uniquely different from how the rest of the world lives. Consider what Paul writes: "*Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds*" (Eph. 4:17). For the Hebrews, there were only two kinds of people: Hebrews and Gentiles. "Gentile" is simply a name for someone who is not Hebrew. But when Jesus and Paul, and the other New Testament writers, use the term, it's more helpful to think of it as "people who don't believe in Jesus." So Christians aren't supposed to live their lives the same way non-Christians do. But what does that look like? Paul continues, "*put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness*" (Eph. 4:22-24).

What does living and serving in uniquely Christian ways look like? Pretty much every book of the New Testament talks about this, but a great place to start is the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7, a portion of which is quoted above. In



summary, Jesus says that a uniquely Christian life is one that seeks reconciliation with others, honors the image of God in all people, is a person of their word, turns the other cheek instead of seeking retribution or revenge, loves their enemies, gives generously to those in need, seeks God in all things without flaunting their faith in front of others, radically trusts God in the present and in the future, focuses first on personal holiness rather than judging what's wrong in others. There's obviously a lot of nuance in what Jesus said that I skipped for the sake of summary, but you get the gist. Another great place to continue your study of what it means to live and serve in uniquely Christian ways is to read the rest of Ephesians 4, which we looked at in the previous paragraph. Start with Ephesians 4:17 and read through the end of chapter 5.

As followers of Christ, our lives ought to be fundamentally different than those who don't follow Christ. Peter writes, *"...in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil"* (1 Pet. 3:13-17). Our very way of interacting with others and the world around us, the love we extend to each and every person, the faith we hold on to, the hope that secures us, should be captivating and intriguing to those who don't know Jesus. We are called to be *different*.

Take some time to look at yourself and your life. How are you serving and living in uniquely Christian ways? What might need to change so that you reflect Christ more clearly and brightly to those around you? These are great questions for any Christian to ask, at any point in their walk with the Lord.

*"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."*

— Matt. 5:14-16

Blessings,  
Rev. David Garrison

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## YOUTH MINISTRY NEWS – OCTOBER 2023

We're continuing our series "All Out War" in October. It doesn't take much to realize there's more to our lives than what we see – there are spiritual forces at work for good and for evil. How do you contend against forces you can't see? God has given us those very tools. Through this series, we're studying the Armor of God in Ephesians 6:10-18.

Youth Group meets Sundays at 6:30pm at Northminster

### October Schedule:

- October 1** – Getting Dressed for the Right Question
- October 8** – *Fall Break – No Youth Group*
- October 15** – *Fall Break – No Youth Group*
- October 22** – A Peace Fix
- October 29** – Halloween Game Night & Costume Contest



# Life Together

## OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS:

- 13 Bobby Irvine  
Elizabeth Kidd
- 15 Robi Vandevander
- 16 Alayna Vandevander
- 18 George Brine  
Jonathan Bryant
- 19 Mickie Brine
- 21 Gabbi Scruggs
- 23 Debbie Irvine
- 26 Lois Stewart



## OCTOBER ANNIVERSARIES

- 26 Jeb & Beth Clarke, 2003



### **FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP REPORT** **2023 GENERAL FUND**

	<b>AUGUST</b>	<b>Y-T-D</b>
Income	8,605	78,922
Expenses	<u>9,949</u>	<u>84,406</u>
Balance	-1,344	-5,484

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

## 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.

**Janet Vandall** is recuperating from a fall on Friday, September 22 in which she broke both bones in her left leg, near the ankle. She and Ray are staying with their daughter while she heals.

**Toren Newsome** was born to Christopher & Mandy Newsome on Monday, September 18. After a few days in the NICU, Toren is home. Both mother and son are doing well. Toren is the grandson of Harry & Vonnie Rucker.

**Garrett Mann**, son of Keith & Jennifer Mann and grandson of John & Linda Lange, is home from Penn State with a stomach ulcer and gastrointestinal issues. Please pray for his healing.

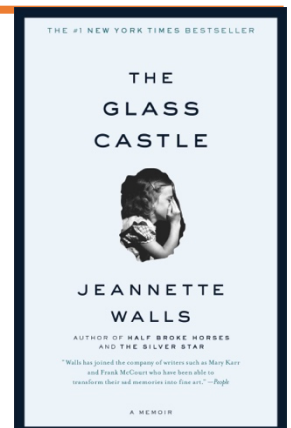
**Mason Brine** has been diagnosed with Crohn's Disease. Please pray for him and his family as they adjust to a new lifestyle and for his healing.

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

## The Women's Book Club – October & November

The book club will be meeting at Sharon Bryant's house on **October 19th** at 10:00 a.m. We are reading The Glass Castle by Jeanette Walls.

Leah Weiss will be joining us at the November meeting! She is the author of our November book, If the Creek Don't Rise. We will be meeting on November 9th at Mary Wilhelm's house.



## Mission Focus for October: Christmas Cheer Boxes

We continue to collect foods for our local Christmas Food Boxes. There is a collection receptacle in the Narthex. Peanut butter, canned meats, canned fruits, soups, and jelly or jam are always a good idea. Since we are closer to the delivery date, mid-December, we can now add packaged foods such as mac and cheese, pasta, and pancake mix. Of course, spaghetti sauce and syrup are welcome too! When buying something for yourself, consider getting two and bringing one for this worthy mission.



## New Women’s Bible Study Starting October 9!



The Women's Bible Study will begin on Monday, October 9th at 7:00pm at the church! We will be using the book, *The Love Stories of the Bible Speak* by Shannon Bream. In *The Love Stories of the Bible Speak*, Shannon Bream draws lessons from the good, the bad, and the ugly of Biblical romances, friendships, and families. She shows how God’s love is often very different from ours, turning upside down our assumptions about life, relationships, and each other.

*The Love Stories of the Bible Speak* reminds us that, no matter where we find ourselves, God’s unwavering love will sustain and guide us. These insights into biblical relationships will uplift and encourage you, and reveal new dimensions to the most central Christian duty: to love God and your neighbor.

Please come and bring a friend!!

## SAVE THE DATE! Autumn Harvest Picnic on Sunday, November 5

Plan to gather with the NEPC church family on Sunday, November 5th at the Hendersons’ farm for an Autumn Harvest Picnic.... details to follow!



web - [npcmh.com](http://npcmh.com) \* facebook – [npcmh](https://www.facebook.com/npcmh) \* phone - 434-929-2713 \* contact – [office@npcmh.com](mailto:office@npcmh.com)

DAVID GARRISON, *Pastor*

**ELDERS**

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

**STAFF**

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



## Ordinary Time and Ordinary Times

Bob Mills

As the calendars on our phones and kitchen walls progress from Summer to Fall, the Christian calendar moves through a single season – Ordinary Time.

Ordinary Time begins after Pentecost and continues until Advent. It's the longest season of the Church's liturgical year. And I suspect its length may be one reason why this season doesn't get much attention from most Christians.

Advent, which only includes four Sundays, fills us with excitement and anticipation. It prepares us to celebrate Jesus' coming. Our worship services include hymns and prayers appropriate to this season. Our sanctuary offers visual reminders of our focus in this season.

Similarly, our corporate worship in the eight-week Easter season leads us once again along the well worn path from despair through awe to nearly inexpressible joy. It annually invites us – as individuals and as a congregation – to pause and reflect on Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension.

### Ordinary Time

So, what is the role of Ordinary Time in the Christian year? How is Ordinary Time accented in our corporate worship? And how can Ordinary Time help us as individuals grow in our Christian faith and life?

A good place to begin answering such questions is by recognizing that, in this context, the word "ordinary" does not mean normal or usual. Rather, looking back to its Latin root, the word derives from the *ordinal* numbering of the Sundays of the season. If you look at the top line of our bulletin during Ordinary Time you see something like, "the 18<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost."

Historically, the Church has used Ordinary Time to focus what Jesus said and did during his earthly ministry. Continuing that tradition can be especially important for those of us who describe ourselves as Evangelical Christians. Evangelicals sometimes tend to move from Jesus' Incarnation directly to his Resurrection. The unintentional result is we can overlook all the lessons we can learn by looking at what happened in between. Ordinary Time can help us correct this oversight by going back to the more common definition of "ordinary" and thinking about what we might call ordinary times.



### Ordinary Times

Most of our lives, inside and outside the Church, are lived in ordinary times. Our daily lives tend to follow certain routines. Whether intentionally or by default, we follow patterns of behavior that help us navigate the course of daily life. Daily and weekly times of worship serve as pillars for those patterns. By setting aside time each day to read the Bible and to pray, we grow in our awareness of God's presence in our lives. Similarly, gathering weekly with those who share our faith helps us regulate the larger rhythms of our lives.

Special seasons are welcome excursions that renew our spirits and restore our souls. But especially this tumultuous year, I pray that this longest liturgical season may help us hear what God is saying to us in and about Ordinary Time.

## Check Out the Library



With the evenings getting shorter and colder, it's the perfect time to curl up with a soft blanket, a hot cup of tea, and a good book. If you aren't sure what to read, why not stop by the church library and see what's available? There are plenty of options to choose from whether you enjoy romance, adventure, history, or all three. In the Christian fiction section authors like Dee Henderson, Gilbert Morris, and Jeanette Oke will warm your heart or keep you on the edge of your seat! Plus, there are nonfiction books as well. We hope you'll stop by and check some out! Happy reading!

## Joan Ricketts Body Life Fund

Following the lead of Pastor Ray Steadman in his book, *Body Life*, Northminster seeks to be the body of Christ. One way of doing this is by reaching out not only to people in our community, but also assisting members of our own congregation who find themselves in a financial crisis.

When a family in the church has special needs that they were unable to meet, perhaps due to losing a job, or some sort of crisis, money from the Body Life Fund can be requested to help. While money does not usually solve people's problems, it can be a source of great encouragement to a family that is struggling through a crisis. Although the church cannot fully support a family that is out of work, any financial help is usually appreciated greatly, and tells them that the church truly cares.

Northminster's "Body Life Fund" was established in 2002 and named in honor of Joan Ricketts.

Funding for the Body Life Fund occurs through contributions made directly to Body Life, not from the general income. Over the past several years, we been blessed to be able to provide special assistance to many in our congregation. As a result, the balance in the fund right now is very low. We invite you to prayerfully consider making a special donation, above and beyond your regular giving, to help replenish this fund so that we might be able to bless others in our church family should the need arise.





**Helping Daystar Junior School in Uganda Add a New School Building**  
**A donor has offered to match up to \$100,000 of donations**  
**made through Northminster by the end of 2023**

**What Difference Can We Make**

As a small church, we often wonder what kind of a difference we can actually make. In a community and world with so much need, how can we, with our limited resources, make a meaningful impact?

**The Miracle of Multiplication**

In Mark 6, a large crowd follows Jesus and his disciples to a desolate place. Having compassion on them, Jesus begins to teach them. As the day moves to a close, the disciples encourage Jesus to send the people home, as there was nowhere to eat nearby. Instead, Jesus tells the disciples to give the people something to eat. How could they possibly do this? They are too few, and the crowd far too great. Jesus asks them to see how much food was brought with the crowd. All they are able to gather are five loaves of bread and two fish. Jesus takes this meager offering, blesses it, and begins to break it apart and distribute it to the crowd. When all is said and done, everyone is full, with twelve baskets of leftovers! Mark says that the crowd consisted of 5,000 men, which easily puts the total number over 10,000 people. It's an incredible miracle that demonstrates we follow a God of ridiculous abundance and provision. He takes the little we have to offer and works miracles.

We have often seen God do this through our support of Daystar Junior School in the Makindye division of Kampala, Uganda. What is little to us becomes abundance for them. Daystar Junior School opened in 2015 with 197 students. Our relationship with Jude began when he visited our church in the fall of 2017. When Jude visited us in 2017, they had 395. This year, 2023, Daystar has 923 registered students — all squeezed into a mere 15 classes. To say the school is operating at capacity is an understatement. They are in desperate need of new facilities.

The Lord has given Jude a vision of a new building, one that can be built in levels, one at a time as funds become available. To build the first floor, the school needs \$150,000 in US dollars. The second floor would be an additional \$130,000. Such a building would cost many times that in the United States.

**Turning Bread into Buildings**

We are a small church, but we believe strongly in the work Daystar and Jude are doing in their community. To that end, we are seeking to raise \$100,000 for Daystar by December 31, 2023. An anonymous donor has generously offered to match any funds donated through Northminster for Daystar, up to that \$100,000 by the end of the year. If we reach our goal, Daystar will have enough for the first floor of the new education building and most of what is needed for the second.

If the Lord moves you to contribute to this project, you can do so by clicking the online giving button at the link below or by sending your donation to:

Northminster Evangelical Presbyterian Church  
106 Clearview Road  
Madison Heights, VA 24572

Please designate your giving to "Daystar." 100% of the funds received will be passed along to the school.

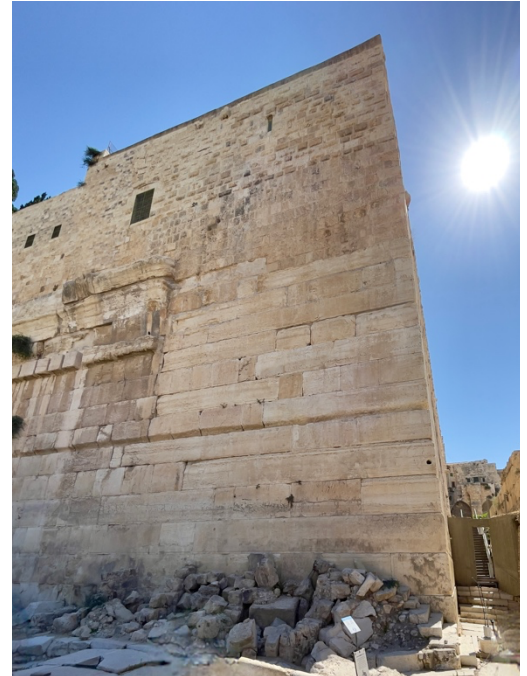
Go to this link (<http://www.npcmh.com/bread-into-buildings-fundraising-campaign/>) to learn more, and please share that link with others.

## Holy Land Pilgrimage with Pastor David June 21-30, 2024

What stands out as you tour the Promised Land is how much the land itself proclaims the Gospel of Jesus Christ, hence why it has earned the name, 'The Fifth Gospel.' As another pastor friend of mine said upon his return from the Holy Land, you'll never read your Bible the same again. We know the Bible is true, but when we visit the Holy Land it becomes *real*. It really is as transformative an experience as they say.

You are invited to join me on a tour of the Holy Land next summer, June 21-30, 2024. This trip will bless you in every way, encouraging your faith and strengthening your walk with the Lord. There are few things in life that can compare to walking in the same places that Abraham, Moses, David, Jesus, and the Apostles went. This land has a special place in God's heart, and it should be in ours as well, even as we wait eagerly for the new heavens and new earth to come down with Christ when He returns.

***For more information, contact Pastor David.***



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