



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE HEIGHTS

NORTHMINSTER EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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

NOVEMBER 2023

Volume 41, Issue 11



Show & Tell



For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? — Rom. 10:13-15

One of my favorite quotations is often attributed to St. Francis of Assisi. “Preach the Gospel always. If necessary, use words.” I love this quote because it emphasizes how important our actions are in backing up what we say we believe. Telling others about the Gospel is good; living the Gospel is better. In last month’s article, we talked about how we live the Gospel in our lives, thinking purposefully about how we live in “uniquely Christian” ways in our areas of influence and the places we go. As the quote above stresses, it is important that we live what we say we believe, and through those actions, proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to those who do not know.

But the quote does not say *not* to use words. Words are important, and when it comes to sharing the Gospel and good news of Jesus Christ with others, we do need to use words. As the words of the Apostle Paul at the top of this article make clear, there comes a point where we have to invite others to learn more about Jesus Christ. How are people supposed to know about the goodness of the Lord and the joy of our salvation if we aren’t telling them about it? When God meets you where you are and you experience His love and grace in a new and different way, that is something we should want to share with other people. As Peter says in 1 Peter 3:15, “...in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for the hope that is in you.”

Telling others about what God is doing in our lives doesn’t have to be a full exposition of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. You don’t have to have all the answers. Actually, you don’t have to have any of the answers. Just Jesus. To paraphrase the (formerly) blind man’s answer in John 9:25, “*I don’t know everything there is to know or understand about Jesus. One thing I do know, I once was blind, but now I see.*” Or even better is Philip’s answer in John 1:46, “*Come and see.*” Invite others to “come and see” Jesus for themselves. Show people what Jesus has done and is doing by living in uniquely Christian ways, and tell them they can come and see for themselves! It might simply saying something along the lines of, “I had the most incredible experience with God in church this past Sunday. You should come next Sunday so you can experience it too.” Or maybe, “I’m so grateful for my church community because they {fill in the blank}. If you’re looking for genuine community, come with me next Sunday.” It might even be “Yesterday, my pastor said {fill in the blank}, and I’d never realized that about God/Jesus/The Holy Spirit/etc, and I’m so

encouraged!” Although, it’ll more likely be, “Yesterday, my pastor put his foot in his mouth so badly, and it was hilarious. Come and hear him do it again this Sunday!”

By all means, seek to love and serve others wherever you go and in whatever you do in uniquely Christian ways. As much as you’re able, live out the Gospel in which we have found our hope and our life. Live in such a way that others want to ask you about your hope and faith in Jesus Christ, and tell them about Him!

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.”

— Isaiah 52:7

Blessings,
Rev. David Garrison

YOUTH MINISTRY NEWS – NOVEMBER 2023

We’re continuing our series “All Out War” in November. 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

November 5 – Church Picnic at the Hendersons’ Farm (2:30 PM)

November 12 – Flame-Resistant Faith

November 19 – Protecting Your Mind

November 26 – No Youth Group (Thanksgiving)



Gleaning for the World

Each month, members from NEPC carpool over to Gleaning for the World in Concord. The tasks vary each visit, but there’s always something for all ages to do. Join us on our November 15 visit as we participate in Gleaning for the World’s ministry around the world!

Thanks to pictured NEPC members for helping out in October with sorting pillows.

Life Together

NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS:

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



NOVEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

- 20 Ed & Vera Campbell 1965

FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP REPORT 2023 GENERAL FUND

	September	Y-T-D
Income	9,232	88,154
Expenses	10,564	94,969
Balance	-1,332	-6,815

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 continues 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 now back home.

John Lange is recovering from a knee replacement and heart issues. He will have an outpatient heart ablation on Thursday, November 9.

Jimmy Wright is having ear surgery on Wednesday, November 1.

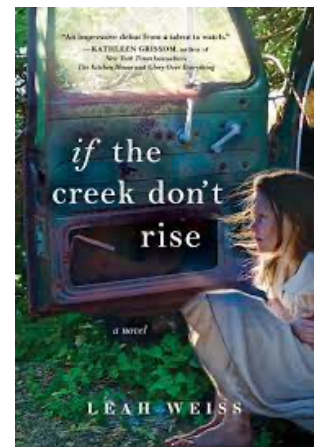
Jude Nyanzi, director of Daystar Junior School in Uganda, is recovering from back pain suffered in a recent car accident.

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 – November 9 at 10 AM

What a special book club we are having on Thursday, November 9th! Leah Weiss is joining us again to talk about her first book, If the Creek Don't Rise! We are meeting at Mary Wilhelm's home at 198 Lyttleton Lane in Madison Heights at 10 AM.

Here is a bit about the book: Sadie Blue has been a wife for fifteen days. That's long enough to know she should never have hitched herself to Roy Tupkin, even with the baby. Sadie is desperate to make her own mark on the world, but in remote Appalachia, a ticket out of town is hard to come by and hope often gets stomped out. When a stranger comes up the mountain and knocks things off-kilter, Sadie finds herself with an unexpected lifeline. She'll need all the pluck and courage she can muster to figure out how to use it.



We had so much fun last year with Leah as she talked about the second book she had written. Leah Weiss spent several of her growing up years in Madison Heights and she lives in Lynchburg now. All of that makes her near and dear to our hearts! It doesn't matter if you have never been to our book club meeting, please feel free to join us. If you have friends and neighbors that would like to come, bring them with you. And if you haven't read the book, come anyway!

Join us on November 9th and ask Leah Weiss all the questions you have about her unforgettable book!



How the Poinsettia Became a Symbol of the Christmas Holidays

How did a tropical plant become an unlikely symbol of the Christmas holiday? The history of the poinsettia begins with an old Mexican legend and, later, a prominent American business venture. Discover the legend of the poinsettia!

America's Favorite Holiday Flower

Aside from the Christmas tree itself, no plant symbolizes Christmas quite like the poinsettia. More than 2 million will be sold this year.

Why Are Poinsettias *the* Christmas Flower?

Native to Mexico, the plant is called *Flor de la Noche Buena* (Flower of the Holy Night) due to its resemblance to the Star of Bethlehem. In their native region of southern Mexico, poinsettias flower during the winter season. It's a perennial shrub that was once considered a weed and will grow 10 to 15 feet tall in the wild. The Aztecs used the poinsettia bracts to make a reddish-purple dye for fabrics and used the sap medicinally to control fevers. The colored "flowers" are specialized leaves called bracts, while the actual flowers are inconspicuous beads found in the center of the bracts.

According to Mexican lore, a young child, Pepita, did not have a gift for the baby Jesus at a Christmas Eve service. She was penniless, so all she could do was pick a bouquet of weeds to offer. The angels felt compassion for her plight. So, after Pepita set the flowers at the crèche of the nativity on Christmas Eve, the angels transformed the weeds into beautiful red flowers. This is why red and green are the colors of Christmas today.

The Namesake of the Poinsettia

The reason blazing red poinsettias are the Christmas flower in the United States is an accidental discovery by Joel Roberts Poinsett (1779–1851), an American statesman and the first U.S. ambassador to Mexico in 1828. An amateur botanist, Poinsett saw the red flowers when visiting the Mexican town of Taxco. Poinsett was so impressed by the beauty of these plants that he sent cuttings back to his home in South Carolina. The plant was shared with botanical gardens and growers across the country. Soon, the plants became popular across the U.S. and were renamed for Mr. Poinsett.

But the reason poinsettias became so popular is due to Paul Ecke and his inventiveness. Ecke, who lived in California, discovered a technique that caused seedlings to branch, resulting in a fuller plant. He began growing the plant in the tens of thousands for Christmas when other flowers were scarce. To promote poinsettias as a Christmas plant, he sent the crimson-leaved plants to TV studios nationwide, including "The Tonight Show" and Bob Hope's holiday specials.

The rest is history. Today, poinsettias are the most popular Christmas plant and the best-selling potted plant in the United States and Canada. For over 150 years, December 12 was considered National Poinsettia Day to honor the day of Poinsett's death in 1851. In 2002, an Act of Congress made it official.

Excerpts from *The Legend of the Poinsettia as a Christmas Plant* by Robin Sweetser, www.almanac.com/poinsettia-christmas-story



Decorating the Church for Christmas

Saturday, December 2 9 a.m. – 12 noon

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.

Once again, we will gather together to decorate beautiful trees with Chrismons, set up Advent candles, wreaths, and banners as we enjoy light brunch refreshments, 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. If you plan to attend, please sign the sheet in the bulletin board so we can plan for delicious brunch items. See you there!

Please note: some preliminary work will also be done during the week ahead of Saturday, such as bringing down decorations from the attic and assembling trees. Please indicate if you can assist with these tasks. We will arrange times at your convenience for this preliminary work.

See Liz Boothe for questions about decorating the church.



Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

Sunday, December 24, 7 p.m.

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. We look forward to seeing you there!

CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS

Remembering or honoring a family member or friend with a poinsettia displayed in the church has been a long-standing tradition in our Northminster congregation. Once again, we are ordering poinsettias to help decorate our sanctuary 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. Poinsettias are **\$6.00 each** and the deadline is **Sunday, Dec. 10**. Please contact Liz Boothe if you have questions.



Christmas Caroling

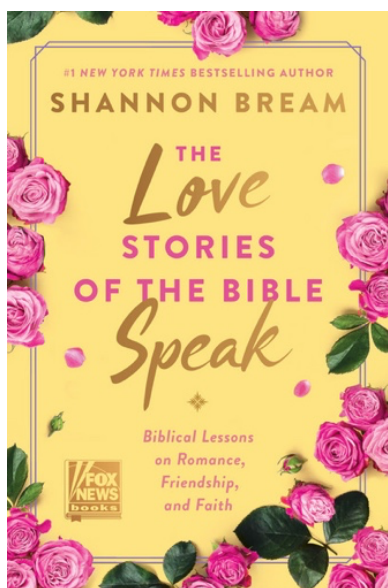
Sunday, December 17, 4:00 to 6:30 p.m.

Join us for our annual tradition of 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!



Mission Focus for November: Christmas Cheer Boxes

We continue to collect foods in the narthex for the Christmas Food Boxes or also known as the Christmas CheerBaskets. This is a joint effort by community churches. The last Sunday to bring food will be Dec. 10th and these will be gathered from all churches and sorted on Dec. 14th starting at 9am at Amelon United Methodist Church. Packing foods will begin at 9 am on Friday and delivery on Saturday. Donations of canned goods are encouraged. Monetary contributions are also welcomed and needed by November 5th.



New Women's Bible Study – November 6!

Please join us on Monday, November 6th at 7 PM for our newly formed Bible Study group that will meet monthly on the first Monday of every month (except when there is a conflict). We will be meeting at the church at seven in the evening. We are using the book, The Love Stories of the Bible Speak by Shannon Bream. We will also be using the workbook that goes with the book. You can get a copy of the book online, Mardel, Barnes and Noble or wherever books are sold.

For November we will be reading from Song of Solomon and the topic is "The Gift of Love." Karey Garrison will be our hostess and our facilitator. For this lesson. read the chapter and complete the workbook. However, if that doesn't work out, come anyway!

As always, feel free to bring friends or neighbors with you to this Bible study group.

Our meetings for the year are as follows:

December 4 - Joseph and Mary - A Bond of Trust - Anne Wilkins

January 8 - Samson and Delilah - Mercy and Restoration - Liz Boothe

February 5 - Adam and Eve - The Original Love Story - Cindy Copp

March 4 - Esther and Xerxes - Marriage to a Monarch - Judy Reyburn

April 8 - Ruth and Boaz - Second Chances - Barbara Baker

May 6 - David and Abigail - The Rebel and the Peacemaker - June Hedrick

Please join us as we study the Bible and learn to apply its teachings to our life!

The deadline, Dec. 31, for matching funds for Jude's Daystar School is fast approaching. Please mention to family, friends, even casual acquaintances this opportunity for giving. A Christian school that speaks English in Africa is a worthwhile effort.



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.

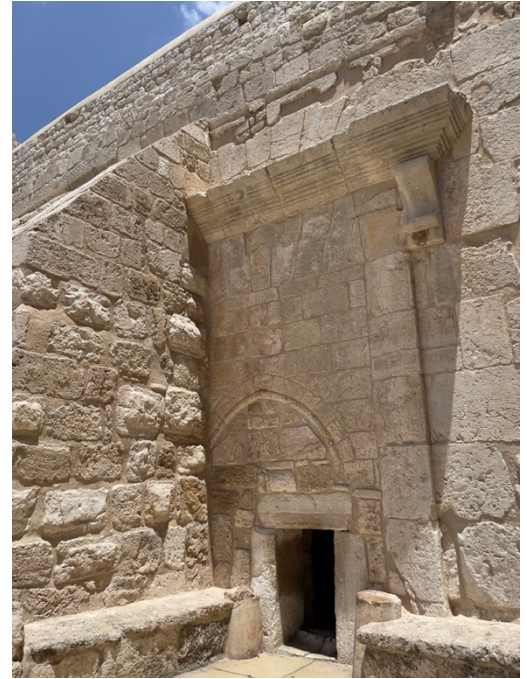
Go to this link (<http://www.npcmh.com/bread-into-buildings-fundraising-campaign/>) to learn more, and please share that link with others.

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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