



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE HEIGHTS

NORTHMINSTER EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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

DECEMBER 2023

Volume 41, Issue 12



A Season of Promise

"Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: 'The LORD is our righteousness.'" — Jeremiah 33:14-16



Advent is one of the most popular seasons in the church calendar; it's certainly one of mine. Of course, culturally it's popular because it means Christmas is coming and most of us look at Advent as a time to prepare for the celebration of that holiday. But there is a depth and richness to Advent, an irony even, that runs much deeper than merely getting ready for Christmas. "Advent" is a Latin word that means "coming" or "arrival." Yes, it is a season of preparing to celebrate Christ's first coming 2,000 years ago, but even more it is a season of preparation for Christ's return. This dual focus makes Advent a season of promise — promise fulfilled and promise yet to come.

As foretold in Jeremiah (and Isaiah and the other prophets), the incarnation of Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of God's promises to redeem His people from sin and exile and restore His Kingdom on earth in a fuller and more beautiful way than ever before. As the New Testament makes clear, every one of God's promises about the Messiah were fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Every single one. We can spend our entire lives contemplating the wonder of God's promises fulfilled in the incarnation of Christ and find there are always more depths to explore, which is why Advent is necessary to help us prepare to celebrate the birth of our Savior.

What no one expected, though, was that the birth, life, and death of Jesus Christ was just the beginning, the inauguration, of that work. The completion and consummation of that work is yet to come, which is why we also use this season to prepare for the glorious return of our Savior. As certainly as He came the first time, He will surely come again. The guarantee of His return is that He already came, along with how many times He said He would return (Matthew 16:27; Luke 12:40; John 14:3; Acts 1:11; Revelation 22:20, to list just a few). A full and complete celebration of Advent and Christmas not only looks back, but also looks ahead, anticipating the joyous return of our Savior and the consummation of the Kingdom of God.

Advent is the season that shines brightly the hope, love, joy, and peace of Jesus Christ in the darkness of this world. The irony of Advent is this: as the cold of winter sets in and the leaves fall and flowers die, as the dark of winter grows longer each day, Advent reminds us that death has been defeated (1 Corinthians 15: 54-57) and the Light of Jesus Christ continues to shine forth and cannot be overcome (John 1:1-14). God will be faithful, and the promise of this season will bear fruit. So this Advent, hold fast your hope. Love, because He first loved us. Rejoice in your salvation now and your salvation yet to come. Rest, knowing that God has brought you peace, even in the midst of your enemies.

We invite you to join us in worship throughout the season of Advent as we explore *The Promises of Christmas*.

Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. — Hebrews 10:22-25

Blessings,
Rev. David Garrison

YOUTH MINISTRY NEWS – DECEMBER 2023

We're continuing our series "All Out War" in December. 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.

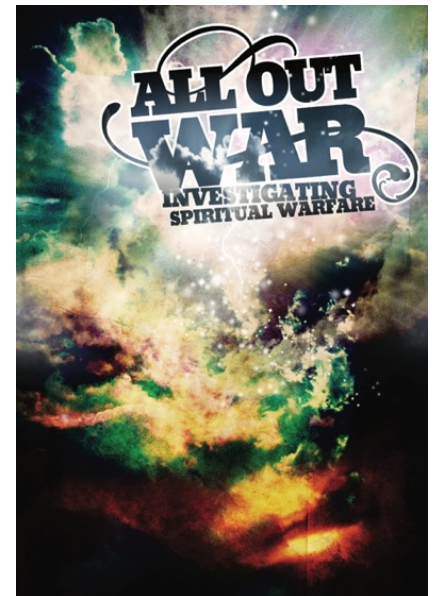
Youth Group meets Sundays at 6:30pm at Northminster

December 3 – Never Retreat

December 10 – TBD

December 17 – Caroling and Youth Group Christmas Party

December 24 & 31 – No Youth Group (Christmas & New Year's Eve)



Candlelight Christmas Eve Service **Sunday, December 24, 7pm**

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!



Life Together

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS:

- 3 Karey Garrison
- 3 Jackson Moore
- 5 Joan Porter
- 12 George O'Brien
- 20 Dolores Wright
- 24 Matt Brine
- 27 Gerald Bryant



DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

- 1 Ron & Judy Reyburn, 1962

PRAYER REQUESTS

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

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.

John Lange is recovering from a knee replacement and a heart ablation procedure last month.

Jimmy Wright is doing well following ear surgery on Wednesday, November 1.

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

| FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP REPORT | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| <u>2023 GENERAL FUND</u> | | |
| | October | Y-T-D |
| Income | 10,529 | 98,683 |
| Expenses | <u>10,566</u> | <u>105,536</u> |
| Balance | -37 | -6,853 |

The Women's Book Club – December 14 at 11:45 AM



In December, the Book Club will be meeting at Depot Grille on Thursday, December 14th at 11:45 a.m. to enjoy lunch together. We will also be talking about the book, A Redbird Christmas by Fannie Flagg.

The book takes place in a sleepy little community known as Lost River, a place that time itself seems to have forgotten. After a startling diagnosis from his doctor, Oswald T. Campbell leaves behind the cold and damp of the oncoming Chicago winter to spend what he believes will be his last Christmas in the warm and welcoming town of Lost River. There he meets the postman who delivers mail by boat, the store owner who nurses a broken heart, the ladies of the Mystic Order of the Royal Polka Dots Secret Society, who do clandestine good works. And he meets a little redbird named Jack, who is at the center of this tale of a magical Christmas when something so amazing happens that those who witness it will never forget it. Once you experience the wonder, you too will never forget "A Redbird Christmas!"

Please join us at Depot Grille on Thursday, December 14th!



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 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!



WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE CHRISTMAS CAROL?



Last year at Christmas, Northminster had a wonderful time when we visited members and friends who are homebound. At each location, we sang such Christmas carols as “O Come All Ye Faithful,” “Joy to the World,” “Away in a Manger,” as well as light-hearted fun songs like “Santa Claus is Coming to Town” and “Jingle Bells.” We also asked those we were visiting what they would like to hear—what was their favorite Christmas Carol. It was quite interesting - “Silent Night, Holy Night” was the unanimous choice!

The much-loved carol 'Silent Night' was first performed on Christmas Eve, 1818. Originally it was sung to a simple guitar accompaniment. The carol began life as a poem, written in 1816 by Father Joseph Mohr. Two years later, his friend Franz Gruber set the poem to music and the pair first sang the carol at midnight mass on Christmas Eve. Mohr's manuscript was lost, leading to confusion about the song's authorship, until his handwritten version resurfaced in 1995. By then, 'Silent Night' had been translated into over 300 languages and was a worldwide Christmas phenomenon.

Be sure to join us **Sunday, December 17, from 4 to 6:30 p.m.** when we once again go Christmas caroling. We'll be sure to sing your favorite Christmas carols too!

(Adapted from “The Story of ‘Silent Night’” <https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/school-radio/assemblies-ks1-the-story-of-silent-night-christmas-carol/zrjpxbk>)

Mark your calendars!

*Christmas Undecorating of the
Sanctuary and Church*

Saturday, January 13, 2024

9 a.m. – 12 noon

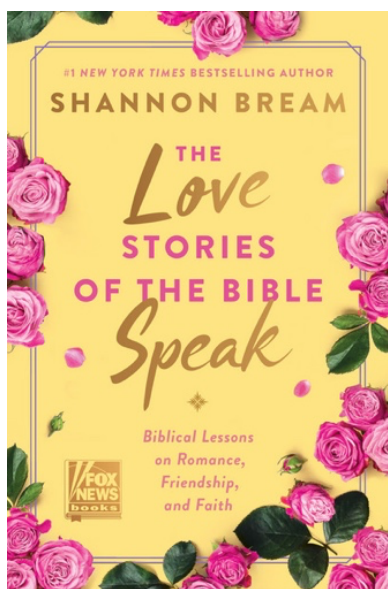
Please Join Us!

TAKING DOWN
CHRISTMAS
DECORATIONS



Mission Focus for December: Christmas Cheer Boxes

We continue to collect foods in the narthex for the Christmas Food Boxes or also known as the Christmas Cheer Baskets. 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. 15th 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.



Women's Bible Study December 4 at 10 AM!

Please join us on Monday, December 4 for our Bible Study group that will meet 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 except for in December. 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 December we will be reading about Jesus' earthly parents and the topic is "A Bond of Trust." Anne Wilkins 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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