



Highlights

From the Heights

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER | NORTHMINSTER EPC
JANUARY 2025 – VOLUME 1

MILLS' MUSINGS — DO YOU SEE WHAT I SEE?

*Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."
(Matthew 2:1-2)*

I've been interested in astronomy ever since I was a child. That may in part be an accident of timing: I had just turned six when President Kennedy said America would put a man on the moon by the end of the decade. I was a rising 8th-grader when I watched Neil Armstrong make one giant leap for mankind.

Through the years, the intensity of my interest in things beyond our planet has varied. But it never disappeared. In 1986, I saw Halley's Comet make its only swing by earth in my lifetime. Earlier this year I went to Indiana to observe a total solar eclipse. (As I wrote in the May newsletter, it was spectacular.) And in 2020, I looked through my son Tim's telescope to see Jupiter and Saturn appear closer together than they had at any time in the last 800 years. Indeed, they came so close that the naked eye might have mistaken them for a single, new object.

The astronomical term for such unusual proximity is "conjunction." Conjunctions are not rare. But they are sufficiently uncommon that those who study the night sky tend to take note of them. That's why some today believe it was a conjunction of planets that the wise men saw and followed to Bethlehem, looking to worship the newborn king of the Jews.

Their theory does have some scientific support. There was a rare triple conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in 7 B.C. This "new star" could have been interpreted as a sign of a royal birth, with Jupiter symbolizing kingship. Less



likely astronomical theories sometimes used to explain the celestial phenomenon that led the wise men to Bethlehem include the appearance of a comet and the explosion of a star.

As Scripture regularly reminds us, God is quite capable of using natural phenomena – storms, floods, earthquakes, fire – to reveal his will to his human creation. But the appearance of a previously unknown celestial entity, what many now call the Star of Bethlehem, does not require a naturalistic explanation. The Maker of heaven and earth is certainly capable of putting a new star in the sky, allowing only those he chooses to see it, and then having them let us know what they saw.

For example, think about the army of angels that was initially invisible to Elisha's servant (II Kings 6:15-17). The servant, constrained by the physics of human vision, thought he and Elisha were hopelessly outnumbered by the army of the King of Aram,. But Elisha had been given the gift of seeing what God saw. And when God answered Elisha's prayer, the servant saw not only the chariots of fire but also the truth of Elisha's words, "those who are with us are more than those who are with them."

Perhaps more so than in years past, it is understandably easy for you and me to look out our windows as this new year begins and see only the forces arrayed against God and those who do his will. Each time we look, their numbers seem to have grown. In such moments, may we be strengthened by the example of the wise men, who saw for a sign then followed it to Jesus. And may we be comforted by the knowledge that, today and always, "those who are with us are more than those who are with them."

Blessings,
Rev. Bob Mills

Romans 8:19-25

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

THE WORK AT DAYSTAR CONTINUES

Doors, windows and a fresh coat of paint!



LIFE TOGETHER

Keeping in touch with one another

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS:

12 Mason Brine
15 Barbara Baker
19 Mary Wilhelm



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 what they need.

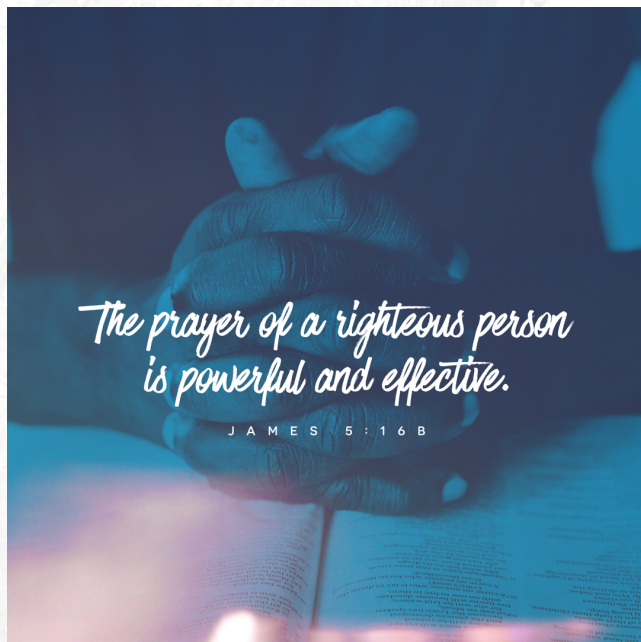
Marge Mills is healing from recent dental work as she prepares for heart valve replacement surgery this spring.

Jimmy Wright had a successful evaluation of his heart health and needs no further surgery at this time.

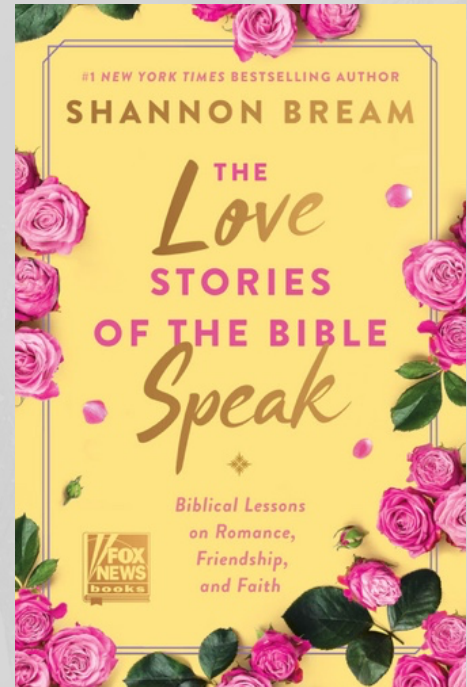
Remember others who cannot be with us in church:

Pat Callahan, Arlene Horton, Margie Seal, Dot Stinnett, and Dolores Wright.

All active servicemen and women, law enforcement personnel, first responders.



WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY MEETS MONDAY, JAN. 13



Northminster's Women's Bible Study will meet on Monday, January 13th at 7:00 p.m.

We will continue using the book, The Love Stories of the Bible Speak by Shannon Bream. Our lesson for the month is "The Friendships of Paul" and it begins on page 197 in the book. Please complete the lesson in your workbook, too. If you are willing to host or lead the lesson, please let Sharon Bryant know at 434-942-8566. This is also a great time to bring a friend. See you on Monday, January 13th!! Happy New Year!!

FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP REPORT

2024 GENERAL FUND

	December	Year To Date
Income	\$11,594	\$123,515
Expenses	\$10,941	\$131,338
Balance	\$ 653	\$ -7,824

WOMEN'S BOOK CLUB

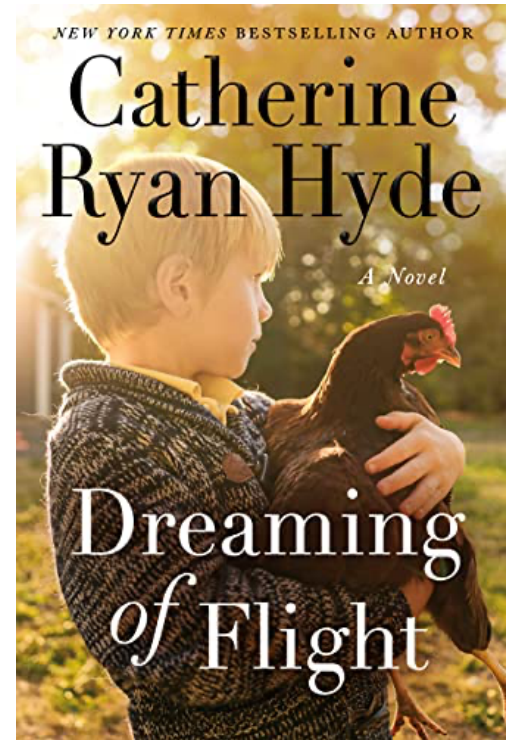
Thursday, January 16, 10 AM @ Northminster

The Northminster Book Club will meet on Thursday, January 16th at 10:00 in the morning at Northminster in the New Song Room. The book we are reading is Dreaming of Flight by Catherine Ryan Hyde. Happy New Year to all!! We are excited to begin a new year of reading books and if you are not involved, please come and join our group and bring a friend! We have so much fun!! You do not have to be a member of Northminster to join the book club!

We had our December meeting at Depot Grille and we started a new

tradition. Everyone brings a slightly used book, wraps it up and then we exchange books. We are basing our new tradition on an Icelandic tradition called "Christmas Book Flood" where everyone receives a new book on Christmas Eve and then everyone enjoys reading together on Christmas Eve. For all of the people that love to read, this is such an awesome tradition.

Looking forward to seeing everyone on Thursday, January 16th!!



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Here