

Highlights *From the Heights*

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER | NORTHMINSTER EPC | DECEMBER 2025 – VOLUME 12

PASTOR'S CORNER — ADVENT: THE KING IS COMING

*And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant." — Luke 1:46-48*

There's a tension lurking underneath the surface of our celebrations of Christmas each year. It's one of those things that can be easy to overlook, but once you see it, it's really hard to unsee it. In the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ, we celebrate the fulfillment of all of the prophecies in the Bible that speak to the redemption of all of humanity and creation. Over the course of this month, we will sing of joy, while many are filled with sorrow and struggle with depression. We sing of peace, while wars rage around the world and in our hearts. We sing of love, and yet are surrounded by so much hate. We sing of hope, but wonder, deep down, if anything will ever change. Wasn't Jesus supposed to change all of this?

Consider Mary's song of joy of what God has already done in *The Magnificat*: "*He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.*" (Luke 1:51-53) I look around the world today, and I see a lot of proud and mighty people still boasting. I see those of humble estate still struggling.



The hungry are still starving; the rich are still hoarding. We know Jesus accomplished these things, because the Bible is very clear that He did, but why is there still so much suffering and injustice, sin and brokenness? It is the season of Advent that helps provide an answer.

In her magnificent book, Advent: The Once & Future Coming of Jesus Christ, Fleming Rutledge writes,

Karl Barth exclaimed, "What other time or season can or will the Church ever have but that of Advent!" This illuminates the *present* dimension of the season. It locates us correctly with relation to the first and second comings of Christ. Advent calls for a life lived on the

edge, so to speak, all the time, shaped by the cross not only on Good Friday but wherever and whenever we are, proclaiming his death to be the turn of the ages “until he comes” (I Cor. 11:26)... In a very real sense, the Christian community lives in Advent all the time. It can well be called the Time Between, because the people of God live in *the time between* the first coming of Christ, incognito in the stable in Bethlehem, and his second coming, in glory, to judge the living and the dead. In the Time Between, “our lives are hidden with Christ in God; when Christ who is our life appears, then we also will appear with him in glory” (Col. 3:3–4). Advent contains within itself the crucial balance of the now and the not-yet that our faith requires. (Pg 7)

Everything the Bible says about what Jesus accomplished in His incarnation is absolutely true. God is now with us in Jesus Christ. The power of sin and death has been broken. The proud have been brought down and the humble lifted up. Prisoners freed. The blind given sight. The lost found. The broken soul made whole. And yet. And yet, all of these things are also yet to be completed. As Jesus said, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” (Mark 1:15) Jesus has absolutely accomplished all of these things, but He has not yet completed all of these things. Advent is the season that reminds us of this tension and invites us into it. It is the season of, as Rutledge said, “the Time Between.”

When Jesus returns, the Kingdom of God will finally be consummated. The work begun with His first coming will be completed. That which has

happened now in part will then be completed in full. It is the season of Advent that keeps our focus and our hope on that great and wonderful day. Advent doesn’t merely acknowledge the tension of the already/not yet, it embraces it. Just as in the incarnation our Savior came to earth and met us where we are, the season of Advent reminds us that He is still doing the same today, and that one day He will finish what He started.

This Advent, we’ll take a look at how each of the Gospels tell the story of the birth of our Savior (except for Mark, who doesn’t include a birth narrative), and how each points us to His return. We’ll begin our Advent celebration with a service of prayer, scripture and song, using Mary’s Magnificat as our guide to prepare our hearts and our souls to worship deeply and well this holiday season. As you prepare for and celebrate the birth of our Savior, keep your eyes focused on His return. Joy to the world, the King is coming!

Blessings,
Rev. David Garrison

1 Corinthians 13:9-12

For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

THANK YOU FOR THE COLLEGE CARE PACKAGES!

We delivered or mailed 9 care packages total.
Here's just a sampling of the gratitude all expressed for them!



LIFE TOGETHER

Keeping in touch with one another

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 what they need.

Marjorie Mills is healing from open heart surgery on November 21st.

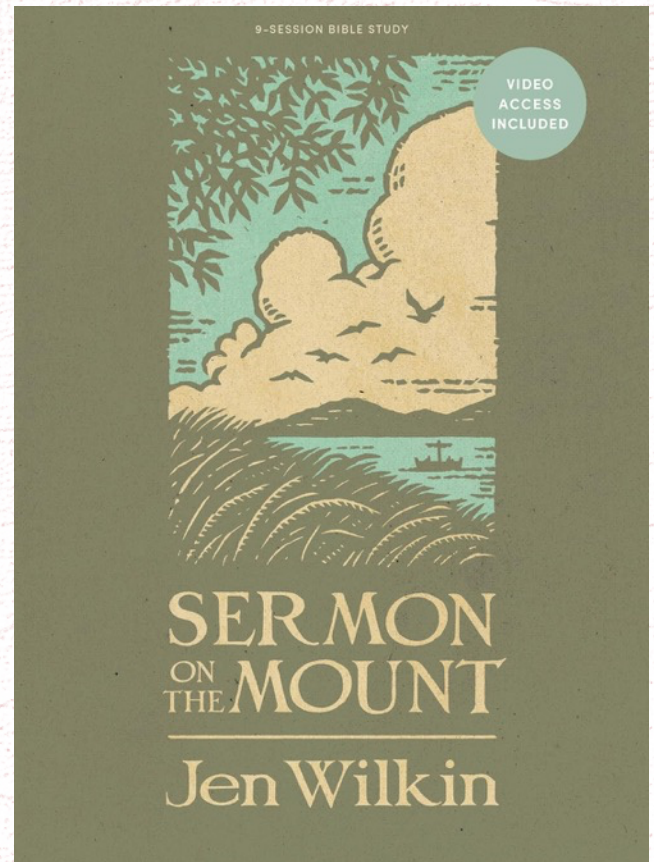
Larry Irvine is at UVA recovering from sepsis.

Throughout the holiday season, keep those who are grieving loss and broken relationships in your prayers.

Remember others who cannot be with us in church: **Arlene Horton, Mary Murray, Mary Wilhelm, and Dolores Wright.**

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

WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY MEETS TUESDAY, DEC 2



The Bible Study group will meet on Tuesday, December 2 at 3:30 in the afternoon. We are using the book, "Sermon on the Mount" by Jen Wilkin. Grab your book, your Bible and a snack that you can share with the whole group. Please work on pages 21-35 before you come to class. If you have not gotten your book yet, grab a copy out of the office. A big thank you to Karey who is going to be our teacher for this book. Looking forward to seeing you at Bible study. If you don't get the homework done, come anyway. And, as always, bring a friend!!

FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP REPORT 2025 GENERAL FUND

	October	Year To Date
Income	\$10,209	\$100,078
Expenses	\$11,093	\$102,069
Balance	\$ -884	\$ -1,990

MILLS' MUSINGS – GLORIA IN EXCELSIS DEO

By Rev. Bob Mills

For as long as I can remember, I have loved the music of the Christmas season. From *Linus and Lucy Can Rock* to *You're a Mean One, Mr. Grinch* and from *Frosty the Snowman* to *Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer*, music from the animated specials of my childhood still brings a smile to my face.

Through the years, I have added an appreciation of more substantial works, including Antonio Vivaldi's *Gloria* and George Friedrich Handel's *Messiah*. Although they were written about 300 years ago, both are still widely performed when Christmas time is here, eloquent evidence of music's ability to convey profound truths to human souls.

And I never tire of playing or singing Christmas carols. My favorite is *Angels We Have Heard on High*. The melody comes from a traditional French piece, "The Angels in Our Countryside." "Traditional" is one way musicians say, "We have no idea who wrote this tune."

The author of the 10 original verses is equally unknown. We do know that in 1860, these verses were translated into English by James Chadwick, a Roman Catholic bishop from England. I was surprised when I learned that it was not until 1966, when the American composer Austin Lovelace was preparing to include it in a new United Methodist hymnal, that this centuries-old carol was first given the title "Angels We Have Heard on High."

One of my earliest musical memories is learning to sing this carol for my home church's Christmas pageant. This annual event was the standard small church bathrobe drama, complete with shepherds and angels, wise men and a plastic baby Jesus. But with each tableau, the Junior Choir sang a verse or two from an appropriate carol. When we got to *Angels We Have Heard on High*, I was asked to sing the alto line for the refrain.

That was a revelation.

As the carol's refrain began, the sopranos held their note for several beats while the altos sang shorter notes below them. Then we held a long tone while the sopranos kept changing notes above us. I was hooked. It would be years before I learned that the technical term for that musical procedure is "polyphony," literally, "many voices." It took me even longer to recognize that this compositional technique provides an ideal way to set the text of the carol's refrain, which is taken from Luke 2:13-14:

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,
"Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

By definition, a multitude of angels would include many voices. Using what a former pastor called my "sanctified imagination," I can imagine that the voices of the heavenly host ranged from low to high, each with its own distinctive timbre. And while I can't imagine what that heavenly choir sounded like when they praised God from the sky, I'm sure that what the shepherds heard was glorious and that it glorified God in the highest.

As together we begin this new Christian year, journeying through Advent to Christmas with the music of the season ringing in our years, let me encourage you to listen a bit more carefully to the carols you'll hear and sing. For even though we know them all by heart, if we pay a little more attention to both the words and the music, we just may find our souls refreshed in unexpected ways.

Gloria in excelsis Deo.



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 **\$10.00 each** and the deadline is **Sunday, Dec. 7**. Please contact Linda Lange if you have questions.



DECEMBER 2025 MISSION FOCUS: Christmas Food Baskets

The Mission/Outreach/Evangelism Committee invites everyone to contribute to the annual Christmas Food Boxes for area needy families.

If you have names of people/families that should receive one of these boxes, submit names and number in family, address and telephone numbers to Pastor David or the MOE Committee. These must be submitted the first Sunday in November so that they can be reviewed.

Eight or nine churches in the area participate in the collecting, packing, and distribution of food. These foods include soup, canned fruit or vegetables, breakfast items such as pancake mix and bottles of syrup, peanut butter, jelly, (best if these two items are not combined), canned meats, etc. Non-perishable packaged foods that include most of the ingredients are also welcome.

Monetary donations are always needed. It is usual to spend more than \$3,000 buying bulk hams at a discount. Hundreds of pounds of apples are gotten from Fitzgerald Orchard at good price.

There will be a food collection location in the narthex.

Volunteers will also be needed to pack boxes at Amelon U.M. church in mid-December.

ONLINE WORSHIP & GIVING

Northminster has worked hard to take advantage of various online resources to help us stay connected. Our efforts have primarily focusing on helping you join us for worship on Sunday mornings through live-streaming the service, and providing ways for you to make your donations to church online. Here's a basic tutorial for these services.

Worshipping With Us Through YouTube **On a Phone or Computer**

On any internet-connected device, go to www.npcmh.com/live to find our worship service. If you don't see the Live feed, refresh your browser to reload the page. We usually start the live stream about 5 minutes before the service begins, but we might be a little bit late every once in a while.

If You Have a YouTube/Google Account

Make sure you subscribe to our YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/@npcmh) and set it to notify you whenever we go live, and YouTube will send you a notification when the service starts.

On A "Smart" TV, Roku device or Apple TV

Most modern TV's are "smart" TV's that includes a variety of streaming services and apps. On those TV's, or if you have a Roku or Apple TV, you can open the YouTube app. If you need to search for it, go to the search tab and enter "npcmh."

Find the Bulletin Online Each Week

To assist your worship, the bulletin will be available on our website at www.npcmh.com/online-order-of-worship. This is formatted to work well on a computer, phone or tablet.

NORTHMINSTER ON THE 'NET

Website

www.npcmh.com

Calendar, Directory & more

npcmh.churchcenter.com (This is also an app for your phone! Go to your app store and search for "Church Center")

Facebook

www.facebook.com/npcmh

YouTube

www.youtube.com/@npcmh

Donate Online Through tithe.ly

You can now make donations online! You can do this on a computer, phone or tablet. Simply go to our homepage, www.npcmh.com, and scroll down until you see the blue "Online Giving" button (pictured on the left). Tapping or clicking on it will send you to a secure donation page. Once there, you can make a one-time donation or set up a recurring donation. There is a small processing fee for each transaction, and you can choose to include those fees in your donation if you would like (otherwise the church absorbs those fees).

WOMEN'S BOOK CLUB MEETS THURSDAY, DEC. 4TH, 11:30 AM

The Book Club will meet at Depot Grille at 11:30 a.m on Thursday, December 4th. We will not be reading anything special for December but if you have a favorite Christmas short story or poem that you would like to share, please bring them.

Also, please bring a wrapped and gently used book that we will give to one another as gifts. This is an Icelandic tradition that we started last year and will continue this year. Looking forward to our Christmas celebration on the 4th!!





DECORATING THE CHURCH FOR CHRISTMAS

Saturday, December 6 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 John Lange for questions about decorating the church.



POTLUCK LUNCH & BIRTHDAY PARTY FOR JESUS

Sunday, December 21, after Worship

Please join us on Sunday, December 21st as we celebrate the birth of the Christ Child with our church family. Worship will be at 11:00 a.m, followed immediately with a pot luck lunch, singing *Happy Birthday* to Jesus and then singing our favorite traditional Christmas carols. Please bring a dish or two of your choosing. The meat and drinks will be provided. Even though we will have a birthday cake, feel free to bring a dessert!!



CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICE

Wednesday, 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 CAROLING

Monday, December 22, 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!





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First-
Class
Postage
Here