

What Child is This?



DAILY DEVOTIONS FOR ADVENT

Welcome to Advent 2019

If you ever pay a visit to the Holy Land, one of the places you are likely to visit is the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. It is the oldest site of Christian worship in the world, and it was built in the sixth century over the traditional site of the birth of Christ. It replaced the first church built on that site by the Emperor Constantine in 339 A.D.

In order to enter the church, you have to stoop low and make your way through a small door that is approximately four feet high. The door was built that way in 1500 A.D. to stop looters from driving their carts into the church. However, for Christians, being forced to bow low has become a symbol of the appropriate way to approach the sacred site.

Once inside, the church is cool and dark. There are no pews, but the walls are covered with recently restored mosaics from the 12th century depicting angels, saints and church councils. Near the front of the church, there is a small stairway that leads through another door that you have to pass through in order to get to the altar, under which is the spot where it is believed that Mary gave birth to Jesus.

I remember the last time I visited the Holy Land, we passed through the first door easily enough. However, as we looked toward the front of the church at the second door, there was a long line waiting to make the descent to Jesus' birthplace. I don't remember exactly how long we waited, but it seemed as if the wait would never end.

Then suddenly, it was our turn. My wife, Carol, went first, and I followed right behind. We descended into the small stone chapel and took our turn kneeling at the star marking the spot. To some people it may not seem like that big a deal, but to us it was profoundly moving. Our minds went back to that night all those centuries earlier when the *"Word became flesh and dwelt among us...full of grace and truth."* (John 1:14) For us, that moment made the long wait worth it.

As we enter into the season of Advent, we enter into a time of waiting. We look forward to that moment when at least metaphorically, we take our turn at the spot and Christ is born anew among us. But until then, we wait.

Of course, there are two ways to wait. One is filled with complaining, whining and irritability while the other is a way of waiting that leads to enriched spirits and deeper devotion. One of the best ways is to use this Advent Devotional booklet and each day read a devotion written by one of the members of our church. In doing so, I think you will find that by the time Christmas arrives, you will be ready to receive the One who comes to live among us.

I want to thank all of those who made contributions to the daily Advent Devotional book and Anne West, who led this project.

Your Pastor,



Rev. Dan Brown
Senior Pastor

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 1

Jesus Loves Shawn and Me

By Glenda Joiner

*“He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”*

MICAH 6:8

Keeping the spirit of Christmas in our hearts everyday isn't always second nature to us. We continually learn what God requires of us through our life experiences and Biblical text.

Consider Luke 16:15: *“He said to them, “You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of others, but God knows your hearts. What people value highly is detestable in God’s sight.”* It's the story of Shawn, a tall, skinny, ultra-effeminate boy who first befriended me on the streets of Atlanta, whose loving nature caused me to befriend him in return, and whose life touched mine.

Sadly, the first time Shawn approached me after church in downtown Atlanta, he ran toward me in the parking lot, waving his long lanky arms and screaming, “Hey! Hey! Wait!” I jumped in my car, locked the doors and cracked the window. He asked for a couple of dollars for food. I opened the window a little more and gave him a few dollars. Thanking me, he apologized if he had scared me.

I asked God to forgive me, realizing that is not how someone who wants to harm you would act. It's definitely not the way Jesus would respond. Shawn needed help, and who was I to question someone's needs. God convicted me of my initial actions, and I felt the guilt. After that, I looked for Shawn after church, hoping to make amends and clutching money to give discretely before he asked.

We became friends on the sidewalk on Sundays. I learned he was HIV positive, often ending up at Grady. He didn't look well but he had personality plus and greeted you with a hug and a flamboyant wave. He was always upbeat and asking God to bless you. Sometimes he would come into worship, sitting in the last pew. He considered several of us friends and would sashay down the aisle to see us when the service ended, saying, “Hey! Hey! See, I'm at church!”

Shawn was homeless, poor, sick, always happy and humble. He may not have fit every church goer's profile of a Christian. Yet, when you spent time getting to know him, you saw the love in his heart for others and the joy in his heart for Jesus. He would tell you right away he loved Jesus.

One Sunday I told Shawn I wouldn't see him for several weeks because I was having cancer surgery. He quickly threw one arm around me and the other arm up to the heavens, commanding, “Cancer to be gone in the name of Jesus. Thank you Jesus, thank you Jesus!” It felt like a healing revival for two right there on Peachtree Street. He wanted me to be healed. He knew he couldn't do it, but he knew who could.

Not one of us is perfect. We all receive our righteousness through Jesus' forgiveness of our sins. The Bible teaches that if we have committed one sin then we have committed them all. No one is perfect except Jesus. Matthew 18:3: *“And he said: “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”*

Learning to be humble may seem impossible, since holding on to social rules passed down for generations are chains around our spirits, inciting fear having nothing to do with loving our neighbors. Acts 15:8: *“God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us.”*

Prayer

Father, may the Holy Spirit go in front of me, greeting others on my journey so that I might follow you growing in love and humility. Amen.

Today's Thought

Who am I, Lord, that you should be mindful of me?

MONDAY, DECEMBER 2

Spiritual Lesson from Life

By Rev. W. Melton McNeill

*“Your unfailing love, O LORD, is as vast as the heavens; your faithfulness reaches beyond the clouds.
Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains, your justice like the ocean depths.”*

PSALM 36:5-7

What is the weirdest gift you have ever received?

I read about two men who exchanged the same fruit cake each Christmas. The one receiving it this year left it wrapped and sent to his friend the next year.

For me, it's a loved gift of a clock with numbers scattered all over the face of the clock with these words written on it: “Who Cares.”

What is the best gift? No problem for me. It's a loving, caring, wife of many years and three daughters who blessed our lives with their love.

However, let me share with you the most marvelous gift that all of us have received. It is the gift of God's grace, His unmerited love, which we celebrate and remember especially at Christmas.

The verse above says the gift is God's grace. As a speaker on the radio said, “Grace turns everything upside down.” Grace turned Saul of Tarsus from persecuting Christians to the apostle Paul, the proclaimer of God's grace. It turned Wesley from works for salvation to simply accepting Christ as Lord and Savior and repenting of his sins.

Another and better way of saying it: “Grace which turns everything right side up.”

Prayer

God of grace and love, thank you for the best gift. Help us remember the grace you give us every day. Amen.

Today's Thought

Spend some time today thinking of the gifts God has given you.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 3

But if Not

By Sid Linton

“If our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire and out of your hand, O king, let him deliver us. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods and we will not worship the golden statue that you have set up.”

DANIEL 3:17–18

While not a Christmas lesson for sure, this is a timeless one.

Dunkirk, France, May 1940—with 380,000 troops facing all but certain annihilation by the German army with their backs to the North Sea, a desperate British naval officer cabled three words to London, “But if not.”

True faith in God is a steadfast faith which abides even in the face of God’s apparent abandonment of us.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were threatened with death in the fiery furnace if they did not serve Nebuchadnezzar’s gods and bow down to the golden statue he had set up. They refused to submit, claiming (knowing) that their God would deliver them from the furnace. But even if he does not save us, they vowed, we will remain faithful to Him and not worship your gods.

We all have faith in God when things are going well and we feel blessed. But, what about when we are threatened and the threats are carried out? Where is God then? Where is your faith then?

Real faith is “but if not” faith:

but if things are not good,

but if I am not blessed,

but if my prayer is not answered,

but if my son does not get well,

but if we are not rescued from Dunkirk, we will keep our faith and fight to the finish.

All of England heard the message, and in that bygone era of being well versed in Scripture, all of England knew exactly what those three words meant.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, because of my faith, I know you will deliver me. But if you do not, I promise not to lose my faith. Amen.

Today’s Thought

Be not tempted to look elsewhere for salvation. Oh, and learn Scripture.

Forgotten Traditions

By Teresa Dietz

“Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God.”

I JOHN 4:7

When one thinks of Christmas traditions, the standard ones come to mind: buying, wrapping and exchanging gifts; decorating the house inside and out; baking Christmas cookies; sending Christmas cards, to name a few. And, of course, there is Christmas music. What would Christmas be without the hours and hours of familiar holiday tunes on the radio, not to mention the music sung in church by choirs and soloists and played by the organ, brass and other instruments? And, what says Christmas any more than hearing Handel's "Messiah" sung and played in concert or on the radio.

But there are a few traditions that have fallen to the wayside as the years passed by. In the busyness of the season, do we still make room in our schedules to spend time with dear friends and families? There are many ways we can do so that will create memories we will treasure for years to come. Plan a baking session with your children or a cookie exchange with your neighbors, go caroling around the neighborhood, or pile everyone in the car and drive around to view the various Christmas light displays.

Dressing up, even at home, is a simple tradition that makes the holiday feel special and different. And, don't forget that forgotten art of handwriting thank you notes to the people who took the time to give you a thoughtful gift or invite you to a holiday gathering.

Perhaps the most important tradition of all to revive is giving back to others. Is there someone who could use a food basket, an elderly neighbor or acquaintance who could use help with decorations or other tasks? Consider donating coats or blankets to the homeless, or care packages for the military overseas. Is there someone you know who is single that you could invite to share your holiday meal? And, don't forget the folks who live in retirement homes with no family nearby. Can you help make their holiday brighter by visiting before or after the holiday? Even visiting on Christmas Day with a small gift, or singing some carols with them and listening to their stories means so much.

There are many Christmas traditions that make the holiday so special and meaningful, but there is also a deeper meaning to the good news, brought to us in the form of the baby Jesus so long ago. And, that is simply to love one another and find ways to show that love by lending a helping hand to others or bringing a bright moment to their life.

Prayer

Father God, help us to enjoy our own Christmas traditions, but not forget those who are in need of a loving touch. Amen.

Today's Thought

Make me aware each day of ways to show God's love to others, not just during Christmas, but every day of the year.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 5

The Best Decoration

By Megan Cann

“People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.”

MARK 10:13–16

Our home will never be featured on the candlelight tour of homes in Dunwoody, but I love our Christmas decorations! They are a meaningful hodgepodge collection of hand-me-downs from my mom and my beloved grandmother. They are probably more beautiful when viewed through my eyes than the eyes of most! For example, a cherished treasure is a needlepoint tree skirt my grandma made that features the wise men bringing their gifts which are bedazzled in a variety of sequins!

My very favorite decoration to unveil annually, however, was made by a four-year-old Clara under the patient guidance of the uniquely gifted preschool teachers, Anne Trask and Amy Haas. Every year, I gently open the “twinkle toes” shoe box to open a salt dough baby Jesus resting on a spliced toilet paper roll. Gazing down at him is the happiest Joseph you can imagine with uneven scribble eyes and a GIANT crayon smile. A veiled Mary displays equally uneven eyes and the biggest smile possible on her construction paper face. A glitter-lined yellow star pops out of the top, and a toilet paper roll angel with a doily on her back stands guard over the creation. And, there’s more! Mrs. Trask and Mrs. Haas interviewed the class and got their version of the Christmas story, and their sweet, simple, timeless tale is glued to the bottom of the box.

This masterpiece reminds me of so many things! The cost involved in this exquisite gift was minimal. It reminds me of the sweet preschool experience my girls had at DUMC. I remember how excited Clara was to give this to us on Christmas morning. Those days seem so recent and so long ago simultaneously.

Let us enjoy every moment of this season and appreciate the little things; may we all be as happy as the construction paper and crayon created Joseph. Joy to the world indeed!

Prayer

Lord, thank you for the simple joys of this Christmas season. Help us to continually remember why we celebrate this time of year and be thankful for the gift of your Son. Thank you for children and the lessons they teach us. Amen.

Today’s Thought

Be merry!

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

By Rev. Keith Lawder

“The angel said, ‘Don’t be afraid! Look! I bring good news to you—wonderful, joyous news for all people. Your savior is born today in David’s city. He is Christ the Lord.’”

LUKE 2:10–11

Come, thou long-expected Jesus, born to set thy people free;
From our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in thee.
Israel’s strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art;
Dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart.

Charles Wesley penned these words and attached them to an old tune. When people gathered in worship to sing this hymn, it literally transformed and prepared hearts to expect salvation anew.

Today, we have become rather cynical and blasé regarding Christmas expectations. So many focus only on the busyness and pressures. When are the best sales? How can we provide the best feast for our family? How do we fit in the office Christmas party with the children’s Christmas pageant, and the decorating and the housecleaning? How can we do it all? Is it any wonder that for many Christmas Day is a difficult and sad day? For many, the expectation of Christmas is far from the joy of every longing heart.

And yet, when we do focus our expectations on the birth of our Savior as prophesied and described in the Scriptures and in the hymns we sing, God offers us something much better than the “secular perfect” Christmas. God offers us freedom, release, rest, strength, hope and joy!

For me, Advent is a time to read the Scriptures with heightened expectations, to dive into the devotions and to pray with renewed fervor, “Come, thou long-expected Jesus!”

Prayer

O God, fill me anew with great expectations for your imminent coming! Amen.

Today’s Thought

Pause daily during this busy Advent season (and beyond) to refocus on what God has given you.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7

Love and Joy in the Manger

By Tambryn Freund

“Since Joseph belonged to David’s house and family line, he went up from the city of Nazareth in Galilee to David’s city, called Bethlehem, in Judea. He went to be enrolled together with Mary, who was promised to him in marriage and who was pregnant. While they were there, the time came for Mary to have her baby. She gave birth to her firstborn child, a son, wrapped him snugly, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the guestroom.”

LUKE 2:4-7

I love the Christmas story and the hope and joy it brings during the dark winter days. I love the many traditions that have developed to help us celebrate this season of Advent. So many traditions reconnect us to family and friends. Other traditions teach children about the joy of Jesus that adults struggle to explain during ordinary times. Some traditions are fun moments for families to build memories together.

These are all wonderful parts of the season. They are many of my favorite parts of the Christmas holidays. But, the season comes because of a baby with the simplest beginning in a simple manger.

When the traditions get so busy that you aren't feeling the joy of Jesus' arrival anymore, it's okay to step back, miss an event, cut a tradition and make room to reflect on the joy that will come from one tiny person in one humble place. He will teach us how to love bigger than anyone ever has before.

Prayer

Loving God, give us a renewed sense of joy as we study the story of Jesus' birth. Amen.

Today's Thought

Love and joy are the most wonderful traditions of the whole season; can you feel it?

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8

The Biggest Gift

By Joe Seegars

“For the promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far away, as many as the Lord our God will call to himself.”

ACTS 2:39

When our first child was two years old, we bought a wooden Advent calendar and started the tradition of opening a door each day from the first through the 25th of December. We put an inexpensive trinket or piece of candy into each small compartment. Our children looked forward each day to opening the next door and seeing what unexpected gift was waiting for them.

The calendar built anticipation. Our children always knew how many more days there were until Christmas Day. When December 25 finally arrived, they couldn't wait to see what was behind the “big door”—our calendar was built so that the 25th was the largest door on the calendar.

The point we made to our children applies to young and grown alike—while we celebrate the entire Christmas season and enjoy giving and receiving gifts, the biggest, most important gift is received on Christmas Day, the gift of Jesus' birth.

Prayer

Dear Lord, thank you for sending your Son into the world that we might have eternal life. In the midst of our busy Christmas schedules, help us to remember that the gift of your Son is the biggest gift any of us will ever receive. Amen.

Today's Thought

The biggest and greatest gift ever came to each of us as a newborn baby.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 9

Flower Garden Moment

By Shannon Whiting

“You have been born anen, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God. For “All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord endures forever.” That word is the good news that was announced to you.”

1 PETER 1:23–25

I was cutting these over grown rose bushes and I kept getting stabbed over and over again—ouch!

Obviously, I'm a newbie at rose gardening, but I did start to notice the difference between the stalks.

The older, thicker stalks had more thorns and their flowers were starting to fade.

The newer, smaller stalks had little or no thorns and boasted vibrant flowers.

This made me think about life and aging. In our younger years, we were vibrant and fresh and didn't need many thorns for protection. We were unstoppable! As we age and grow stronger, we become more protective, sometimes defensive and even less vibrant. We fade!

But, we don't have to! I encourage everyone, at any age, to never stop growing or reaching out and don't become too defensive. Even if you fade on the outside, you can still be a stalk! Encourage others and be the strong stalk that holds up the younger, weak ones!

The Advent season is a great time to think about this gardening lesson. Be vibrant as you celebrate Christ's birth, be strong as you proclaim “Merry Christmas” and be joyful in the good news of Christmas!

Prayer

Heavenly Father, the roses are beautiful, but they remind us of the cycle of life. As we celebrate the birth of your Son, may we focus on the beauty of the birth and may we grow to be strong stalks for you. Amen.

Today's Thought

This Advent season, remove some thorns from the garden that is your life.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 10

Anticipation

By Jerry Carnes

“God did this so that they would seek Him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him, though He is not far from any one of us.”

ACTS 17:27

A well-known ketchup company created an entire ad campaign based on the notion that anticipation brings satisfaction. Their television commercials depicted a bright red blob rolling slowly out of a glass bottle as the music of Carly Simon provided a savory backdrop. It was the H.J. Heinz Company’s way of convincing America that tomato based-condiments taste better when you’re forced to wait.

Christmas is all about anticipation. Once the Thanksgiving turkey is fully digested and the leftover stuffing is snug inside of plastic Tupperware, our eager hearts fill with holly and tinsel. The days can’t move fast enough until we realize we can’t possibly finish all of our shopping. We turn to Amazon while frantically begging the hours to slow. Once the last box arrives at the front door, we race again toward the day of bows, stockings and gift cards.

It is so easy to allow December to slip by in a blur. Our minds are preoccupied with the potential contents of boxes beneath a tree. We’re distracted by a giving spirit focused on a wish list rather than the One who gave His life. Anticipation can hide the treasures that are sitting right at our feet, unwrapped, anxious for our attention. We’re blind to the constant presence of Jesus and the blessings He constantly bestows.

Imagine the Jewish people who spent years anticipating the Messiah. Jesus wasn’t at all what they’d envisioned. Their anticipation was for a redeemer of their own design. It kept them from appreciating the gift of a Savior designed by God.

Our modern day lives are filled with work days that are overshadowed by our longing for the weekend. When weekends aren’t enough, we dream of an extended vacation. A week at the beach only whets our desire for a more exotic getaway. We’re rarely in the moment. We’re always looking forward to something bigger, something better.

There is nothing bigger or better than Jesus. He deserves our all. He is in every vacation, every weekend, every breath. His grace is there in our missteps. His adoration is present in our victories. He is aware of every hair on our head, every moment of stress, every argument, every embrace. To ignore Him for even a second devalues His grace, His love, His overwhelming power.

In the waning years of His life on earth, Jesus anticipated the day He would suffer and die for our sins. It was His purpose. The anticipation didn’t stop Him from seeing the suffering, the conflict, and the needs of those around Him. He never missed an opportunity to heal and love. He lived in every moment. He did it for us.

Prayer

Lord, as we anticipate the approach of another Christmas, keep us aware of your eternal presence. Amen.

Today’s Thought

There is nothing wrong with anticipating Christmas, as long as Jesus is part of it. He wants to be in every moment. He deserves it. He is the Carly Simon song that covers our heart. He is the spicy condiment that adds flavor to life. He is a gift, a blessing, a rescuer.

Meaning of Christmas

By Wendy Schmitt

“And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. 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, good will toward men.”

LUKE 2:12–14

I enjoy many things about Christmas: the music, decorations, the Christmas pageants, festivals, traditions, etc. As one of five children, my holiday memories are rich: the year we got Atari and a unicycle, big family dinners and singly loudly with my brothers at church on Christmas Eve.

I have spent Christmas with friends in other countries, in the homes of my siblings, with my in-laws and in most recent years, of course, with my husband and our own children. We’ve developed our own sweet traditions, including the walk down the stairs in pajamas on Christmas morning, afternoon meal with the kids’ godparents and the less conventional stop at Dunwoody Tavern for french fries and a Coke (or maybe a beer) before Christmas Eve service at DUMC!

But this devotion is about Advent—the waiting period before the big day. I think I may enjoy Advent with the build-up and anticipation even more than Christmas Day itself.

I read that in medieval times, Advent was a period of fasting, which I am glad is not the standard for today. Instead, the four weeks of Advent are filled with activities intended to help us prepare for the celebration of the Nativity of Jesus. At home, we like to set the tree up early in December, and it becomes our favorite light in the house—so much so that many days we even turn it on early in the morning before school and work.

I realize that Christmas is a huge commercial holiday, but I appreciate that the birth of Jesus gets so much airtime, since at the root of it all, that is why we celebrate. It’s up to me to reel myself back in to the meaning of Christmas as I bake cookies, wrap gifts, write on Christmas cards and sing songs. As simple as it may seem, when we light the Advent wreath each week at church, the glow of the candle is the perfect prompt for me to reflect on the spirit of Advent and the messages of hope, faith, joy and peace.

Prayer

Lord God, the wait is hard, but the reward is great as we prepare for the coming of baby Jesus. May we be aware of the beauty of this season and the miracle of what you have given us. Amen.

Today’s Thought

As the light grows with the lighting of another candle in the Advent wreath each week, think about how you can grow hope, faith, joy and peace in your life.

Glorifying and Praising God for All We Have Heard and Seen

By Andy and Karen Drexler

“When the angels returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, “Let’s go right now to Bethlehem and see what’s happened. Let’s confirm what the Lord has revealed to us.” They went quickly and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. When they saw this, they reported what they had been told about this child. Everyone who heard it was amazed at what the shepherds told them. Mary committed these things to memory and considered them carefully. The shepherds returned home, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. Everything happened just as they had been told.”

LUKE 2:15–20

Four years ago, Dr. Charles Mulli came to Dunwoody UMC from Kenya, Africa, and inspired many of us to read his biography, "Father to the Fatherless" by Paul Boge. Abandoned by his parents and with little education, Charles faced a life of hunger and hopelessness. As a teenager, he heard the Gospel and gave his life to Christ. He started a business and by age 42 was one of the wealthiest men in Kenya. Along the way he experienced miracles of biblical proportion. In 1989, he answered God’s call to give it all up and devote his life to rescuing orphaned and abandoned children. In 30 years, he adopted over 13,000 kids into the Mully Children’s Family (MCF).

Like the shepherds in Luke who had to go see the manger to believe what they heard, we went to see MCF. What we found was more than we could have imagined. God is at work at MCF, and we had the privilege to contribute to this mission by sharing our time, talents and treasure to support MCF.

During our week with MCF, our team of 16 people, mostly from DUMC, heard the heart-breaking and inspiring testimonies of many of the previously orphaned and abandoned kids Dr. Mulli has rescued. The story of one young man, Kennedy, was memorable. During middle school, his biological father became violent, causing his mother’s complete disability and then abandoning her and their children. Kennedy’s grandmother took them in but could not support them. Although a promising student, Kennedy’s hunger drove him to drop out after the sixth grade to work odd jobs in hopes of eating each day. His future was, at best, grinding poverty, hunger and hopelessness. This is the condition from which Dr. Mulli and MCF rescued him. During the next six years, Kennedy found unconditional love and, following Charles Mulli’s example, gave his life to Christ. He graduated high school, is learning German and will matriculate at a German University on full scholarship to study Electrical Engineering.

He is humble and thankful, and his future is bright; not because of worldly success, but because of his faith in Jesus Christ and his desire to serve God by giving back to MCF. We heard so many other inspiring stories which start with desperate conditions—death of one or both parents, crushing poverty and hunger, parental divorce and abandonment or worse. Each story always ended in overwhelming thankfulness to God and unshakable hope for the future, thanks to God’s love shown by those at MCF who have answered His call.

Prayer

Loving God, be with those struggling to survive this day. Open our eyes to ways we might help spread your love. Amen.

Today’s Thought

As we prepare our hearts this Advent season, we encourage you to prayerfully ask God to reveal His call to you—how you can become His hands, feet and voice, spreading the good news of Jesus Christ to others.

Jesus, from the Blood of Sinners

By Sean Taylor

"Jesse was the father of David the king, David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been the wife of Uriah."

MATTHEW 1:6

Matthew begins the Gospels section of the Bible and does so with a Genealogy of Jesus, giving a record of the ancestors of Jesus Christ, all the way back to Abraham. In the sixth verse of this 17-verse genealogy, we read this odd "description" of Bathsheba ("Whose mother had been the wife of Uriah"). Why not just call her by name—Bathsheba? Why not just write "David was the father of Solomon" and end the statement there, as with most of the other steps in this genealogy? Why even bring up the matter at all?

Is there one sin in your life that is especially troubling to you? I am sure David walked around with great shame and grief. You see, David had committed an unbelievable sin—adultery with another man's wife, and then murdering that man to cover up his own crime.

So once again, as we are introduced to Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, why put this in the middle of his introduction? Or, perhaps, what better place could there be to find this? David's story reminds us that among Jesus' ancestors were some of the worst sinners imaginable—people guilty of murder, adultery, prostitution, sacrilege and child sacrifice, among others. Jesus carried their DNA. Their bodies furnished the basis for His. The sinless Savior of the world had an ancestry of sinful people.

Jesus is "God with us." Essentially God in us and us in Him. Jesus is truly with us in the most intimate, personal ways. He comes to us, even in the darkest, most shameful depths. He shines His light into our lives. He cleanses us with His own blood, shed on the cross. He lifts us up and makes us God's own people, washed clean and pure by His mercy. This is what Jesus was born to do.

Prayer

God, we give you thanks for the gift of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

Today's Thought

Take time to ask Jesus to be with you and bring His cleansing forgiveness.

Radical Fatherhood

By Andy Drexler

“This is how the birth of Jesus Christ took place. When Mary his mother was engaged to Joseph, before they were married, she became pregnant by the Holy Spirit. Joseph her husband was a righteous man. Because he didn’t want to humiliate her, he decided to call off their engagement quietly. As he was thinking about this, an angel from the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, don’t be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because the child she carries was conceived by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you will call him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” Now all of this took place so that what the Lord had spoken through the prophet would be fulfilled: Look! A virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they will call him, Emmanuel. (Emmanuel means “God with us.”) When Joseph woke up, he did just as an angel from God commanded and took Mary as his wife.”

MATTHEW 1:18–24

“Do you love me?” Jason and Jack, two really cute first graders at Hightower Homework Club, asked me this through their misbehavior as we played a “sound out the word” flash card game. My natural response in the past would have been to sternly demand good behavior if they want to play the game. But these kids don’t need any more unloving condemnation than they already have in their lives, so my natural response would have been counterproductive.

The ninth lesson in Radical Mentoring (RM) is on Fatherhood. Thanks to D. Ross Campbell’s book, “How to Really Love Your Child,” I thought the boy’s behavior might be a non-verbal “do you love me?” Campbell says every child has an “emotional tank” that we “fill” with love through direct eye contact, appropriate touch and focused attention. If the emotional tank runs low because the child is not getting enough unconditional love, the child may ask “do you love me?” in inappropriate ways. Have you experienced this with your kids? I decided to try filling Jason and Jack’s emotional tanks instead of condemning them. It worked! Soon their misbehavior ended, and we had a wonderful time playing the flash card game.

We don’t know much about Jesus’ earthly father, Joseph, except that he put God first; he was righteous and obedient. Did Joseph understand Jesus’ need for unconditional love and how to convey it? It’s hard to know but I’m sure that a man who puts God first in his life, who is righteous and obedient, has the best foundation for fatherhood that a man can have.

I would have been a better father to my two boys if I had learned to convey unconditional love earlier in life. As an RM mentor, I’ve been blessed to watch young fathers assimilate and apply this lesson as they “go all in” for Jesus over the 10 months we spend together. When a man decides he wants to be the spiritual head of his household and invests 10 months learning and practicing putting God first in his life and in his family, then, like Joseph, he has the best foundation for fatherhood that a man can have.

Prayer

Lord God, help me to seek you first in all I do and to share your radical, unconditional love with everyone I meet, starting with my family, my community and to the ends of the earth. Amen.

Today’s Thought

Are you the father of young children? Do you want to become the spiritual head of your family or know someone who does? Contact Pat Morgan at ptm.1stst@gmail.com for new RM groups forming in January. Do you have a heart for helping at-risk kids? Contact Rich Reynell at rreynell@comcast.com to volunteer for Hightower Homework Club.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 15

A Season of Waiting

By Randy Pilkenton

"The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him."

LAMENTATIONS 3:25

To prepare an Advent devotion this year, I looked for some inspiration by reading quotes from famous people who have spoken and written about Advent. I came across this one (which some of my friends will greet with a chuckle or maybe a shaking of the head) from Dietrich Bonhoeffer's book, "God Is in the Manger: Reflections on Advent and Christmas."

"The Advent season is a season of waiting, but our whole life is an Advent season."

It appears Bonhoeffer is quite correct. In looking for Bible verses about waiting, I quickly found well over 100 to choose from!

In reflecting on this, it seems true that a life of strong, faithful belief in God will include a lot of waiting. In fact, it probably is mostly waiting.

God is ready at every moment to hear from us and wants us to know that He is always with us. Yet, how God seemingly responds to us is sometimes not as we want or in the time frame we want. It is often hard to accept His will over ours.

Reading through the verses I found on waiting, it is easy to see that God's people often have had to wait. This is true especially about the birth of Jesus. Over many generations, the promise of a Messiah was anxiously awaited. The prophets of the Old Testament seemed to be clearly foretelling that He would be coming soon.

And while for so many of God's people the wait was instead very long, the wait as we all know was worth every moment.

Prayer

In the name of Jesus we pray that waiting will be our strength. That waiting will give us rest. That waiting will open our hearts and minds to God's presence. That celebrating the birth of Jesus, the Messiah, will remind us that the waiting is worth every moment. Amen.

Today's Thought

As we wait for Christmas Day and the celebration of Jesus' birth, I hope we can be reflective. Hopefully, we can feel comfort in knowing that God's promise of forgiveness and eternal life will require no waiting. It already has been given.

Sleigh Bells

By Anne Horton

“Dear friends, don’t believe every spirit. Test the spirits to see if they are from God because many false prophets have gone into the world. This is how you know if a spirit comes from God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come as a human is from God, and every spirit that doesn’t confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and is now already in the world. You are from God, little children, and you have defeated these people because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. They are from the world. So they speak from the world’s point of view and the world listens to them. We are from God. The person who knows God listens to us. Whoever is not from God doesn’t listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error. Dear friends, let’s love each other, because love is from God, and everyone who loves is born from God and knows God.”

I JOHN 4:1–7

When I hear bells or the song, “Sleigh Ride,” I know that Christmas is not far away. Leroy Anderson began writing the music during a heatwave in July of 1946 at his summer home in Connecticut and completed the song in 1948. Mitchell Parish of Louisiana wrote the words to the song in 1950. Even though the song does not reference Christmas, Anderson’s intentions were to convey the imagery of a sleigh ride during the winter season reflecting nature, the outdoors and kindness to others.

The song takes me to a simpler time in the 1950s when extended families joined together at the family farm in north Alabama for a weekend of family fun, hayrides, hunting, laughing and lots of good food. The main reason for the gathering was to allow the men folk to go pheasant and turkey hunting. My favorite time was the Saturday evening hayride on the big wagon with lots of hay, horses, blankets, lanterns, lots of hugs and the sound of bells—sleigh bells. My grandpa loved bells. They were on the wagon, on the horses and on some of the shoes we kids had on.

My uncle would talk about England, our grandpa’s homeland. This gave the kids who did not know our grandfather, who died in 1948, the opportunity to learn about our family heritage. To this day, when I hear sleigh bells, I reflect on the stories and experiences of love, compassion and traditions from those gatherings.

Prayer

Dear Lord, may the sight and sounds of Christmas move us to love others as you love us, to reach out to others with a compassionate heart. Amen.

Today’s Thought

Keep this final line of “Sleigh Ride” in your heart as you enjoy the beauty of this season:

“Let’s take that road before us and sing a chorus or two
Come on it’s lovely weather for a sleigh ride together with you.”

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 17

Oh Little Town

By Cheryl Dunbar

“Since Joseph belonged to David’s house and family line, he went from the city of Nazareth in Galilee to David’s city called Bethlehem, In Judea. He went to be enrolled with Mary, who was promised to him in Marriage, and who was pregnant. While they were there, the time came for Mary to have her baby. She gave birth to her firstborn child, a son, wrapped him snugly, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the guestroom.”

LUKE 2:4-7

I read that Bethlehem means “House of Bread.” It refers to the fact that the small town was located in a fertile place. It was a special place, and the land had abundant water and adequate food.

Bethlehem was not a grand, flourishing place like Jerusalem. It was a place that is remembered today because it is where Christ was born.

Where would we least expect to see the power of God? In Bethlehem, of course, where we find God working out His purpose. Though this was a small, little place, our hope still resides there.

In this Christmas season, our hearts are stilled by the enormous, extravagant love sent down by God. God is seen in the ordinary and the small, in the miracle and magnitude of His divine greatness.

A little town became the focus of our hope. A tiny baby came to show us the way. Christmas belongs to all of us who feel the presence of God in our hearts and lives today and for those who lived long ago.

This is the story of Christmas. It is the star, the angel, the shepherds, the kings, Mary, Joseph, our hopes and our fears. It is that God sent His very best, and He continues to do so each and every day.

Prayer

Father, we thank you for your gift of Jesus. Help us to keep Christmas each and every day. Amen.

Today’s Thought

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see the lie.

The Power of Prayer

By Martha Davis

“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”

HEBREWS 11:6

Are you familiar with Operation Christmas Child? Each Christmas, Operation Christmas Child collects and sends over eight-million shoe boxes stuffed with small gifts such as candy, school supplies, small toys, toothbrushes, soap and shampoo to children across the world. I recently heard a story about hundreds of children gathered in a church in a small Mexican village, excitedly awaiting the arrival of their precious shoe boxes.

There was much happiness as the shoe boxes, wrapped in brightly colored Christmas paper, were placed in the eager hands of each child. Wrapping paper was ripped and ribbons untied as smiles began to appear across the faces of each child. Their Christmas treasures were revealed, and there were some very happy children. However, one little boy dissolved into tears as he lifted the lid of his box and looked inside to see what he had received for Christmas this year.

An Operation Christmas Child volunteer spotted the little boy and hurried over. Through an interpreter, the volunteer asked the crying boy, “What is wrong? What is in your box?” With tears streaming down his face, the boy said, “Socks!” The worker instantly understood and assured the boy that he could trade his box of socks for another box that might have crayons or a piece of candy in it.

The boy looked at the volunteer, shook his head and quickly jerked the box away from her. Holding tightly to the box, the boy cried out an explanation to the interpreter who listened for a few minutes and then, with tears spilling out of his own eyes, turned to the volunteer and said, “You won’t believe this!”

The interpreter explained, “This little boy was born with a rare skin condition. It affects his feet more than any other spot on his body. The doctors have tried various medications and treatments, but finally told him nothing will work, and his feet will never heal unless he begins wearing cotton socks. His parents cannot even afford food for their son, much less provide socks for him. So, all year long, he has been praying for socks.”

Socks were at the top of the little boy’s prayer list. In fact, they were his list. The sight of the ordinary cotton socks brought tears to his eyes as he stared in awe at the priceless gift in his hands—socks. Those socks were more than just a gift. They were the answer from our EXTRAORDINARY God to a child’s simple prayer. One unknown and seemingly-insignificant boy in Mexico prayed. God heard him and said, “Let me take care of you.”

No matter how small or trivial your prayers may seem, remember God’s perspective. If it is important to you, it is important to Him.

Prayer

Father, thank you for the privilege of coming before you in prayer. Prayer should be as natural to us as breathing in and breathing out. Help us refuse to believe the lie that our prayers are too small or unimportant for you to hear. You are our Father, you are our God and you want to hear our voices. I pray we will better understand the power of prayer each day. Amen.

Today’s Thought

Today, pray in faith and see what God does!

Trust in God's Strength and Wisdom

By Sally Murphy

“Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

PHILIPPIANS 4:4-7

My grandmother, a devout Christian, faced seemingly insurmountable obstacles throughout her life with grace, integrity and unwavering faith. An inspirational figure with a heart of gold, she suffered unimaginably. Macular degeneration slowly robbed her of her sight. Alzheimer's greedily tangled the neurons in her brain, causing her to lose her memory in pieces until she failed to recognize the people she loved. Incontinence robbed her of her dignity. Finally, pneumonia ended her life on this Earth.

Even before the deterioration of her body began in earnest, she never complained. She was a proud Southern woman who could talk to a tree and light up any room she entered with her grace and welcoming smile. She was courageous beyond words, beginning college after my mom left home to pursue her own college degree. In the 1960s, this was definitely out of the ordinary. Not only did she earn her degree, she also went on to earn a graduate degree and pursue a career in social work. She served tirelessly as a Girl Scout leader. She dedicated her time and talent to her church, singing in the choir, serving on various committees, working with charities and always maintaining an upbeat attitude as she lived her life to serve Christ as a faithful servant.

When I was in a very dark period in my life, my grandmother constantly reminded me that God would always be with me—that I need not ever be afraid. Her faith, prayers and guidance helped me fight through some of the most trying of times. I admired her incredible strength, faith and wisdom.

When my grandmother slipped into her own world of pain and anguish, I struggled to understand why God would let this happen to such an incredible person. Had God abandoned my grandmother? No. God was always with her. Her faith in Christ helped her to know that she would never be alone.

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, help us to remember your love for us and to understand that we are never alone. Your wisdom and strength will help us to conquer all obstacles with grace and dignity. Amen.

Today's Thought

God has your back. He loves you and will never abandon you. His wisdom and strength will help you face the challenges life brings.

We Speak in English; God Speaks in “Son”

By John Rhea

“In these final days, though, he spoke to us through a Son. God made his Son the heir of everything and created the world through him. The Son is the light of God’s glory and the imprint of God’s being. He maintains everything with his powerful message. After he carried out the cleansing of people from their sins, he sat down at the right side of the highest majesty.”

HEBREWS 1:2–3

I’ve been reading from The Passion Translation (TPT) lately. It gives a fresh voice to the familiar New Testament scripture and offers much detail in its footnotes. For example, The Passion Translation of the Common English Bible (CEB) verse above has the same fresh look at how God speaks to us:

“But to us living in these last days God now speaks to us openly in the language of a Son, the anointed heir of everything for through him God created the panorama of all things and all time. The Son is the dazzling radiance of God’s splendor the exact expressions of God’s true Nature—His mirror image.”

Further in the verse’s footnote it adds: “For Jesus is the Language of God. The sonship of Jesus is the language He now uses to speak to us.”

For those of us who want to directly hear the voice of God, I invite you to go first to the sayings, teachings and actions of Jesus found in the Gospel, and there seek the voice from God’s mirror-image.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, let me find your voice through the testament of your beloved Son, Jesus. Amen.

Today’s Thought

As we approach the birth of Christ, consider how is God speaking to you today. Are you listening?

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 21

A Simple Gift

By Ellen Sparks

“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.”

JAMES 1:17

I have attended United Methodist churches all my life. I spent many hours at the church my family attended when I was a young girl. Like many, my favorite time of year at the church was Christmas. I loved attending the family Christmas Eve service every year, but I couldn't wait to be old enough to attend the candlelight Christmas Eve service that started at 11:00 p.m.

As luck would have it, the year that I was finally old enough to go to the candlelight service, I got sick as Christmas approached. While I was feeling much better by the time Christmas Eve arrived, I wasn't able to attend either service that night. I was very disappointed.

As I sat at my house feeling sorry for myself, I was surprised by someone ringing the doorbell. When I opened the door, I was excited to see one of my best friends from church. She had made an adorable ornament shaped like a snowman with my name on it and wanted to bring it by to cheer me up. This simple gift meant so much to me and really brightened my otherwise awful day.

Forty or so years later, I still have that ornament. It brings a smile to my face every year as I put it on our Christmas tree. I have no idea what I received as Christmas gifts that year, but I will always remember receiving that ornament and the kindness it represents.

Prayer

Loving God, thank you for all the gifts that you have blessed us with, especially for the birth of your Son, Jesus. Amen.

Today's Thought

Kindness is a gift everyone can afford to give.

If Your Christmas Has No Cross

By Margaret Gallagher

“When they (the Magi) saw the star, they rejoice exceedingly with great joy; and going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts: gold and frankincense and myrrh. But, being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way. Now, when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child to destroy him.”

MATTHEW 2:10–13

Since before I joined, our Chancel Choir has offered a fall retreat in September. However, the better description of it is a Musical Marathon to learn the music that will be sung through the end of the calendar year. The seven to 10 hours of singing over that weekend covers the Christmas concert music, and this year’s rehearsal also included five songs from Duruflé’s “Requiem” for All Saints’ Sunday.

Sonny bounced back and forth between movements in the "Gloria" and the "Requiem" throughout the rehearsal time. The musical style, the languages in which we sang (English versus Latin and Greek), and the message of the lyrics felt like polar extremes. On one level, it seemed wrong to continuously alternate between the joy of Christmas and the sorrow of the "Requiem." But, the more I thought about it, the more appropriate it became.

The Christmas Story is often romanticized, but, as someone once said, we’re short-sighted if our Christmas tree doesn’t lead to a Cross. The truth is that God came among us, in the form of us and walked through the vicissitudes of life, just as we do.

In Matthew’s account, the pendulum swings both ways in just a few verses. The Wise Men’s adoration is immediately followed by fleeing to escape Herod’s death threat. Life in this world is like that: such a mixture of joys and sorrows. The good news for us is that God has and does walk through all of it, just as the music of both birth and grief glorify Him.

Prayer

Lord, thank you for walking with us through all of our experiences. Let us remember to honor and glorify you in every circumstance. Amen.

Today’s Thought

God knows my path and walks with me in all the highs and lows of my life.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 23

A Baby Changes Everything

By Sherry Waugh

“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.”

LUKE 2:11

The arrival of every baby is a life changing event. I remember the changes that happened to me when each of our sons was born. I felt my heart seem to grow larger with love for those babies. It also seemed to grow more tender and aware of the miracle of all life.

I saw their absolute love looking back at me. I recognized that blessing and felt the accompanying responsibility.

My priorities changed for lots of things: time, money, sleep...

The absolute need to communicate with these precious children was celebrated with their first words. As they are now adults with families of their own, I love and understand the importance of all communication—visiting, talking and texting often to stay close.

The Christ child is touching my life in all these areas as well.

He guides my heart in loving and relating with others.

He shows me that His absolute love is with me always.

He influences my priorities of time and money.

He communicates with me in many ways, as well as in prayer.

Prayer

Father, thank you for the gift of the baby Jesus who has changed the world and each of us. Amen.

Today's Thought

As Christmas approaches, be aware of how Jesus touches your life. Watch for the many unexpected ways He communicates with you.

Shaping His Light

By Jesse Fulmer

“Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.”

JOHN 8:12

Growing up in my house, Christmas was always a magical time filled with decorating, planning, shopping, family get-togethers and good food. There was one part of the holiday that seemed to capture the spirit of the season best and that was all the different lights.

Lights always come in different forms during this season. Colored lights. Clear lights. Lights on trees. Lights on houses. Candles. Advent wreaths. We see all these lights as we prepare for the big day.

The beauty and importance of the lights truly comes through in our candlelight service. While it's always beautiful and humbling to celebrate the holiday together, I love to reflect on how each of the candles represents a person and their “little light.”

Each one shines bright as its owner holds their candle and sings. Then when the service ends and we all quietly walk out, I notice that each of the candles is now different. None of them look the same as they did in the beginning of the service. Some are melted. Some have curved. Some have broken. Yet, the lights all stayed the same when the candles were lit.

To me, this shows that God is our light and we are the candles as He is shaping us with His light. While we all become different by the reshaping of our candle, we can trust in knowing that the light of God will always stay the same and connects us together.

Prayer

Loving God, we lift our candle to celebrate the birth of our Savior Jesus. We are so humbled by what you give us every day, especially what you gave us on this night so very long ago. Help us keep the light of your love burning every day in all that we do and say. Amen.

Today's Thought

God gave you a unique light. Let it shine!

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 25

Family, Forgiveness and Grace

By Hal Gresham

“Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.”

PSALM 106:1

As I prepare for the Christmas and holiday season, it comes with a variety of thoughts and memories. From the anticipation of celebrating the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ and enjoying our wonderful Dunwoody UMC services, music and ministry to the gathering of family and friends, the taste of great food and spirits and taking time away from work and school—it truly is a blessing to gather with family and friends.

But not always...

With all the preparation and effort for families to travel across the country, each person brings an expectation. For our family, this means Republicans breaking bread with Democrats, southerners and west coasters sharing spirits, and introverts and extroverts finding that right balance in conversation.

My prayers for all who read this—we are all God’s children. Let’s be kind and LOVE one another! We don’t have to agree, but we do need to remember God’s grace is a gift for each and every one of us.

Prayer

Dear God, you have loved us so much, even when we have sinned and not listened to your voice. Thank you for that unconditional love. May we share that love with all that we meet. Amen.

Today’s Thought

Among all your gifts this Christmas Day, remember that God’s love is the greatest gift you will ever receive.

DUMC Advent and Christmas Season

WORSHIP

Morning Worship Services

December 1, 8, 15, 22

8:45 a.m. Chapel Service, *Chapel*

8:45 a.m. Contemporary Service, *Sanctuary*

11:05 a.m. Traditional Service, *Sanctuary*

The Longest Night:

A Service of Hope

Wednesday, Dec. 18, 6:30 p.m., Chapel. This service acknowledges the hardships many of us face and reminds us that Christ, the light of the world, is always giving us hope.

A Night of Christmas Worship

Monday, Dec. 23, 6:30 p.m., Sanctuary. Come for an evening of modern, dynamic Christmas worship led by DUMC's Contemporary Worship team.

Christmas Eve at DUMC

Tuesday, Dec. 24, Sanctuary

Family Services — 4:00 p.m. and 5:30 p.m., Choirs perform with a Christmas message, carols and the lighting of candles.

Holy Communion Service —

7:00 p.m., A Christmas Communion service with music leadership by the Youth Choir and youth musicians.

Lessons and Carols — 9:00 p.m., Chancel Choir.

Holy Communion Service —

11:00 p.m., A holy and reverent communion service that brings us into the quiet, early moments of Christmas Day.

Last Sunday of 2019

Sunday, Dec. 29,
10:30 a.m., Sanctuary.

ADVENT SERMON SERIES

What Child Is This?

Dec. 1 The Hope of the World, *Isaiah 35:1–10; Matthew 11:2–6*

Dec. 8 The Prince of Peace, *Isaiah 2:1–5; Luke 2:13–16*

Dec. 15 Good News of Great Joy, *Isaiah 12:2–6; Luke 2:8–12*

Dec. 22 Emmanuel, *Isaiah 7:10–16; Matthew 1:18–25*

Dec. 24 A Light in the Darkness, *Isaiah 9:2–7; John 1:1–14*

Dec. 29 The Boy in the Temple, *Luke 2:41–52*

FELLOWSHIP

Deck the Halls—Advent Decorating and Dinner

Wednesday, Dec. 4, 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. Join us for Wednesday Night Supper, and bring your entire family to make an Advent craft together in the Youth Area. Please consider offering a cash donation to cover craft supplies. To make a reservation for Wednesday Night Supper, visit dunwoodyumc.org/wednesday-nights.

Family Christmas Concert and Advent Celebration

Sunday, Dec. 8, 4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m., Sanctuary. We invite you and your family to DUMC's annual Family Christmas Concert led by the Youth and Children's Choirs. Following the Family Christmas Concert, please join us for fellowship and a live Nativity on the lawn.

GROWTH

Advent Devotionals

Subscribe to receive daily Advent Devotional emails composed by church members, clergy and staff by visiting dunwoodyumc.org.

MUSIC

Christmas Concert featuring John Rutter's 'Gloria'

Sunday, Dec. 15, at 3:30 p.m., Sanctuary. Dunwoody UMC's annual Christmas Concert featuring John Rutter's "Gloria." For more information, contact music@dunwoodyumc.org.

MISSIONS

Christmas Tree Sales

Friday, Nov. 29. Please help contributing to the transforming Youth Ministry by purchasing a Christmas tree or signing up to volunteer for a shift on the lot. Sign up to volunteer for a tree lot shift by emailing youth@dunwoodyumc.org.

Angel Tree

Please visit our tree in the main lobby of the Activities Building. Choose one (or more) angel(s) to help make Christmas merry for these ministries.

DUMC Christmas Catalog

Make a donation in the name of a friend or family member and pick up a card detailing the gift made in their name. Catalogs will be available at the Welcome Desk. Contact chris.mixer@dunwoodyumc.org for more information.



A Dynamic Christian Community of Fully Devoted Followers of Jesus Christ
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prayer@dunwoodyumc.org

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In case of an emergency such as a death or critical illness.