

“AS MEMBERS OF THIS CONGREGATION, WE WILL FAITHFULLY PARTICIPATE IN ITS MINISTRIES BY OUR PRAYERS...

Patsy Zeigler Hilda Edwards Becky Derrick Dale Wells Patsy Shuler Christopher McCroskey
Jimmy Grahl Marty Johnson Latson Lewis Steve Aiello Kaye Floyd John Ballentine
Jackie McNeill

Shut-Ins: Shirley Butler; Esther Carter; Gillett Hipp; June Hutto; Linda Maloch; Melton Martin; Georgeann Pace; Jean Raynor; Claudia Sineath; George Taylor

Family and Friends: **Pearl Geddens** (mother of Tom Geddens); **George Taylor, Jr.** (son of George Taylor, Sr.); **Laura Horlbeck** (niece of English Percy); **Andrew Jordan** (nephew of John Jordan); **Beverly Lipscomb** (sister-in-law of John Jordan); **Ross Deal** (grandson of Mary Kamoroff); **Jimmy Dawkins** (friend of Jeanette Hornsby); **David Turner** (brother of Pam Turner); **Chip Mixon** (friend of Tommy Gleaton); **Ron Walker** (friend of Tommy & Chris Gleaton); **Merit Takach** (friend of Joyce and Brent Robinson); **Frankie Hendrix** (cousin of Billy Pearson); **Howard Stephens** (former church member); **James Boggs** (father of Claire Boggs); **Stacy Coggins** (daughter of Steve Aiello); **Dan & Leslie White** (brother & sister-in-law of Steve White); **Alva Humphries** (friend of Marty Johnson); **Bill Areheart** (friend of Bonnie Ramsey); **Hayley Beaudoin** (niece of Edwa Meek); **Max Nova** (son of friend of Edwa Meek); **Addie Kinard** (cousin of coworker of Edwa Meek); **Stuart & Penny Lloyd** (son & daughter-in-law of Tom & Marilyn Lloyd); **Megan Corby** (daughter of Carlis Edwards); **Chip Hooker** (Wayne Hooker's father); **Robert Bradley** (Business Associate of Simon Ross); **Gary Becton** (friend of Mark Branham); **Florence Lee Carter, Monnie Tiller** (friends of Chris Derrick); **Adrin & Linda Hargett** (stepfather and stepmom of Christopher McCroskey); **Alexa Lookingbill** (wife of coworker of Kathy White); **Katelyn Rose** (daughter of coworker of Kathy White); **Vickie Edwards** (neighbor of Kathy White); **Teddy Derrick** (uncle of Arvan Derrick); **Haidee Baehr** (friends of Ruth Frady); **Dianne Schmotzer** (sister-in-law of Gale Frady); **Denise Paul, Scott & Karen Nelson** (cousins of Gale Frady); **Dan Conner, Max Johnson** (friends of Gale Frady); **Wayne Blair** (son of Dot Johnson); **Walt & Janet Beck** (friends of Jo Ann Heiting); **Adam Lavender** (son of Phil Lavender)

If you have a friend or family member on the Prayer List, we ask you to please keep us updated. If no word is received, we will trust that our prayers have been answered and remove the name. To update us, please call the office or e-mail us at trinityumcwc@sc.rr.com.

OUR PRESENCE ...

In-Person Attendance 12/25 SS: N/A Worship: 15

OUR GIFTS ...

General Fund 12/25 \$9,736.10

OUR SERVICE ...

OUR WITNESS."

Upcoming Events

01/02 Exercise Class, 10:30 a.m.

01/04 T.a.G., 7 p.m.

01/05 Exercise Class, 10:30 p.m.

Readings for January 8

Isaiah 42:1-9

Psalm 29

Acts 10:34-43

Matthew 3:13-17

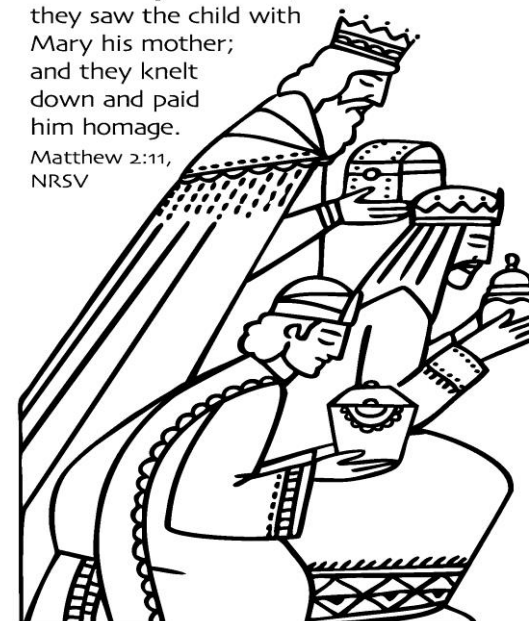


Ministers	The Congregation
Pastor	John D. Jordan
Resident Bishop	Jonathan Holston
District Superintendent	Rev. Fran M. Elrod

Our mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Our vision is to Connect, Nurture, Inspire and Transform

On entering the house,
they saw the child with
Mary his mother;
and they knelt
down and paid
him homage.
Matthew 2:11,
NRSV



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“Hope In Christ”

(Read Matthew 2: 1-12)

This is the Word of God for the people of God! Thanks be to God! Let us pray: Father God, may these words that I am about to say be the words that you want us to hear on this first day of the New Year. I thank you, Lord, for your many blessings. It is in Jesus' name that we pray. Amen.

The wise men (Were there three of them? We do not know. Matthew never says.) were seeking Christ the Child King. Matthew 2:10 tells us that when that great and mysterious star that God had sent to guide them to Christ had stopped over where the young Child was that the wise men “rejoiced with exceedingly great joy.”

Today is the first day of 2023. There were many in our church family who went on to be with the Lord this past year. I think that Pastor John said that he conducted fifteen funerals in 2022! That's a lot of funerals! Too many, in fact. And many of us had loved ones who were not affiliated with the church who went to be with the Lord this past year, too. I therefore am going to go out on a limb here, so to speak, and bet that there were many in our church family who could not wait to take your 2022 calendar down this morning! Many of you probably said, “Good riddance!” to 2022.

On Christmas Eve, my mother had a couple of falls and she had to spend the rest of Christmas Eve and all of Christmas Day in Prisma Hospital. She cracked her tailbone. I went to our Christmas Eve service that evening and although it was a beautiful service, I am sure that I seemed remote to many of you. I spent the night of Christmas Eve, the night of Christmas and the day after Christmas at my parents' house, looking after my father in my mother's absence. My father had fallen last year, too, and hurt his shoulder, so we did not want to leave him in the house alone.

The day after Christmas, I drove back to my home briefly so that I could gather some fresh clothes and other things in anticipation of spending the rest of the week between my parents' house and my workplace. I also needed to get a few tasks done while I was briefly at home.

I don't know how many of y'all had ever had a day like this: Your mind is heavy with all that you have to do and all that you are worried about, you're driving down the road from one task to another, and it is like every song that comes on the radio, the lyrics seem to be speaking directly to you? The radio station that I listen to plays a lot of songs from the Eighties. That is my era, so that is why I listen to it. And so: Here I am thinking about my mother in the hospital, I'm trying to get things done at my home before I go back to my parents' home and be with my father, and every song that came on the radio had lyrics that seemed to understand my situation, whether it was “Our House” by Madness, “I'm Still Standing” by Elton John, or “I've Got My Mind Set On You” by George Harrison.

Finally, I was in my kitchen, fixing my lunch fixed for work once my Christmas break was over, when I looked over at the clock on my microwave oven.

It was 3:16.

Now, like all you, I have looked at a clock when it says “3:16” thousands of times, so it may sound like no big deal, but this time, as I had my mother and my father on my mind, those numbers suddenly hit me squarely in the gut. I immediately thought of John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

When bad things happen, like the loss of a loved one, it is common for us to ask in anger, disgust, frustration, sorrow and pain, “What kind of a God would let something bad like this happen?”

But rarely do we ask ourselves, “What kind of a God loves us so much that He gave His only begotten Son?” I know that I have asked the first question a heck of a lot more times than I have asked the second question! But it is the second question that I should have been asking all along, because it is the second question that holds the key to our Christian faith. The second question leads us to the hope that we have in Christ.

What kind of a God loves us so much that He gave His only begotten Son? A loving God Who loves us all, that's Who! A God Who loves us unconditionally! A God Who is Love, as 1 John 4:8 reminds us. A Father Who wants us all to enjoy the gift of everlasting life, if only we will embrace His Son.

The Wise Men placed their hope in that great and mysterious star and trusted that it would lead them to God's only begotten Son. God fulfilled their hope by bringing them to His Son! There are many times when life itself feels devoid of all hope. But as Christians, we have to remember that although there is going to be plenty of pain and sorrow and loss in this life, God is not the One inflicting it upon us. Pain, sorrow and loss are all a part of this life and sometimes, as much as we do not want to consider it, they are a necessary part of life. But God does not want our lives to be mired in pain, sorrow and loss. He wants us to also experience joy, peace, love and hope. The bad moments in this life are necessary steps on our road to the next life- to eternal life. Jesus Christ is the Door to the Next Life. In Christ lies the Greatest Hope That Will Ever Be.

When I read the Four Gospels in the New Testament, the pages are alive with hope! I feel hope when I read about Jesus and His disciples being in the boat as the storm rages on the water. The disciples are panicking but Jesus calmly tells the storm to cease and it does. He then asks them: Where is your faith?

I feel hope when I read about the woman caught in adultery who is brought to Jesus. The hypocritical men who have accused her are prepared to stone her, but Jesus cuts to their hearts with this challenge: "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first." Shamed to the core, one by one, each man drops his stone and disappears. That scene from the Gospel Story gives me hope because it reminds me that our God is a God of mercy and that He did not send His Son into the world to condemn us but to save us.

I am reminded of the hope that we have in Christ when I read about the disciples marveling at the fig tree that had died after Jesus cursed it. Both Matthew and Mark tell this story, but I am partial to Mark's version because I love how Jesus responds to their amazement in Mark 11: 22 with these four simple words: "Have faith in God." Four simple words that contain all the power that you need: "Have faith in God." When you feel as though all the hope has drained out of you, meditate on those four words and write them on the tablet of your heart.

And I am reminded of the hope that we have in Christ when I recall what He told His disciples after He was resurrected: "Where two or more are gathered in My name, I am with you."

God's promise to us of everlasting life leads to Heaven but it does not exclude our lives here on Earth. Heaven is indeed the fulfillment of everlasting life but it also includes this life, no matter how devoid of hope this life sometimes seems to be. God wants us to live godly lives and to obey His commands. He wants good things for us in this life. And because God is Love and because He loves us, He desires that we love Him and love one another. And loving God includes loving His Son. The only way to the Father is through Jesus Christ.

Just as the wise men searched for the Son of God, eternal life in God's Heavenly Kingdom awaits those who search for His Son here on Earth.

There will be heartache, there will be loss and there will be pain in this world. But God sent His only begotten Son to save us from this world. Christ healed. We can be healed, too! Christ had mercy. God has mercy on us for all of our sins and we should show others mercy, too! Yes, we have wept, but Christ wept, too! Christ forgave those who crucified Him. Shouldn't we forgive others who have done much less to us?

I slept at my parents' house Christmas night as my mother slept in the hospital. That night, one of our church family members whom we said goodbye to last year visited me in a dream. He looked happy and he looked at peace. I think that God sent him to me in that dream to remind me of the hope that we all have in Christ.

That great and mysterious star that the wise men followed eventually stopped right above the house where the Child Jesus stayed. When our earthly lives stop as that star stopped, we, too, will find ourselves before Jesus. And when we see Jesus, we will truly rejoice with exceedingly great joy!

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit! Amen!