

# God's Love In Action

GLIA: the essential element, or glue,  
which connects the tissue found in the nerve centers of the body

Trinity United Methodist Church, 1201 Mohawk Drive, West Columbia, SC 29169

Pastor: *John Jordan*

Office Manager: *Jackie Eitel*

Music Director: *Christopher A. McCroskey*

Office Hours: 8:30 - 4:30 Monday-Thursday  
Sunday School 9:45 a.m.      Worship Service 11:00 a.m.

The mission of Trinity United Methodist Church is to:  
**To make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.**

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DECEMBER 2023



## Christmas Cards & Gifts for Shut-ins and Residents of Asbury Arms

It is time to begin writing Christmas cards for our shut-ins and residents of Asbury Arms. There will be approximately 75 bags so we will need lots of cards. Please bring your cards to the church and place them in the box in the Gathering Area designated "Cards." Please bring your cards to the church by Sunday, December 17. (Please write the names of our shut-ins on the cards' envelopes.)

**Shut-ins:** *Esther Carter, Nell Cooke, Gillett Hipp, Linda Maloch, Jean Raynor, Claudia Sineath, Libby Strickland and George Taylor*

All of the cards will be placed in gift bags as well as small gifts and treats. If you would like to donate to this ministry, please place your check or cash in an envelope marked Christmas Gift Bags, and either (1) place it in the offering plate or (2) give it to Jackie Eitel, by December 17.



Sunday, December 24  
11 a.m.

There will be a Service of Lessons and Carols on Sunday, December 24, at 11 a.m.



## Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion Service Sunday, December 24

The Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion Service will begin at 6 p.m. Plan now to attend this beautiful and meaningful service.



*The Gifts of Christmas*  
Sunday, December 17

This year's Christmas Cantata is called *The Gifts of Christmas*. What will be unwrapped through music and narrative are the things we celebrate at this season: family, friends, presents and the spiritual blessings we find in the birth of Jesus. Please come and celebrate with us on Sunday the 17th as we usher in the gifts of Christmas.



Columbia Community Concert Band  
*Holiday Cheer*  
Sunday, December 17  
4 p.m.

Sunday will be a day of music for our church family! Our Trinity choir will present their beautiful Christmas Cantata during our time of worship which is always special and meaningful. Christopher and the choir have been practicing for weeks to prepare this musical celebration of the Christmas season, and we do hope that many of our congregation will attend in person to enjoy the wonderful musical talents of our choir.

At 4 in the afternoon on the 17<sup>th</sup>, please join us at the Airport High School Auditorium as our community band presents their final concert for the 2023 season. The musical selections vary from classic to contemporary to popular Christmas songs and there's bound to be one that you'll recognize. And there may be a song or two you haven't heard before that might be a new favorite! So, let's make it a musical day as we slow down from all the rushing around and enjoy the sounds of the Christmas season. You'll be glad you did! Chris Derrick will be driving the church bus which will leave the Gunter Circle parking lot at 3:20 pm. A signup sheet is on the round table in the Gathering Area if you'd like to join our festive group!



George Henry

Stoney & Creola Harrleson

Shirley Butler

Jeanette Hornsby

Dale Wells

Fletcher & Joanne Carter

John & Patsy Zeigler



**Tuesday, December 19  
11 a.m.**

The Grief Support Group will meet on Tuesday, December 19, at 11 a.m. in the Conference Room. This group is open to everyone.



Each month we highlight the birthdays of those who are turning 85 or older. There are none in December.



This month I will begin a program I am calling **Wednesday's Words** at 11:30 am. You may participate in person in the sanctuary or on our YouTube channel. The beginning series will be Finding and Keeping Joy based on the *Book of Joy* by Bishop Desmond Tutu and the Dali Lama. After that, I will begin a series on United Methodist beliefs. This will be ongoing and open to any topics you might like to discuss. Come or tune in on Wednesdays at 11:30 am.



Since the CoVid 19 pandemic, we have been donating to missions instead of buying Poinsettias. This Christmas we will donate to the Food Pantry at the University of South Carolina. Due to the increased expenses of college, food insecurity is on the rise on many campuses. Please donate the cost of a poinsettia(s) in honor or memory of loved ones to help feed a hungry student.



**Reminder:** In January, we will begin sending the GLIA by email. Please make sure we have your email address so that you can continue to receive the GLIA. If you do not have internet access, please call the Church Office.

# John's Jotting

## *Where Are You Going?*

During the clergy session at the Annual Conference, candidates for Full Connection are asked Wesley's nineteen questions for admission. The first question is, "Have you faith in Christ?" The second is, "Are you going on to perfection?" During one examination, Bishop Gerald Kennedy asked one candidate this question, who replied, "No." Bishop Kennedy responded, "Then where are you going?" Where are you going? That might be a good question to ponder during this Advent Season. Joseph and Mary were going to Bethlehem in obedience to the decree of Caesar Augustus, but also to fulfill prophecy. The shepherds went to the manger in Bethlehem in response to the news of the angels. The Magi followed the star to Bethlehem to pay homage to the newborn King of the Jews. They all went to Bethlehem because they experienced a sign from God. Joseph and Mary went to fulfill the prophecy that the savior would be born in the city of David. The shepherds and Magi went to see the promised savior. Bethlehem was their destination.

What is our spiritual destination? The second question asked of Elders, "Are you going on to perfection," gives us the answer. Our spiritual destination is to be perfected; being restored into fellowship with the creator and that life as a faithful steward for which humanity was made.<sup>1</sup> Christian perfection is the restoration of our fellowship with God and the transformation of life to being aligned with God's original will for humanity. We are going on to perfection.

Christian Perfection is not perfection in terms of doing everything right, but a renewal of our relationship with God. It is both a goal and a process. The process begins with justification, the forgiveness of our sins, and the realignment of our will with God's. We are saved by grace, from being a fallen creature to being a saved creature. This change from fallen to saved is not the end of salvation but the beginning. Theodore Runyon states, "God has more in store for us. God not only justifies, thereby providing the foundation for the new life but opens us hitherto unimagined possibilities for growth in grace."<sup>2</sup>

Ok, so much for the theological gobbledygook, what does Christian Perfection mean? Wesley states, "This is the sum of Christian perfection: It is all comprised of one word, Love. The first branch is the love of God: And as he that loves God loves his brother also... Thou shalt love every man as thy own soul, as Christ loved us."<sup>3</sup> Christian perfection is growing in the love of God and fellow humans. We grow more in love with God and our fellow humans (process) until we come to know the completeness of God's love for all creation (goal).

Whether we reach this goal in this lifetime has been greatly debated. I do not know if we can know the magnitude of God's love for us and all creation. We may not reach that destination like Joseph and Mary, the shepherds, and the Magi reached Bethlehem, but we continue to grow in love with God and fellow humans every day. We grow in love with God by our acts of piety: worship, Bible study, prayer, the sacraments, etc. We grow in love with fellow humans by our acts of mercy: feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned. Our most merciful act is listening and hearing the stories of the marginalized and not just doing for them.

Why is it important for us to have Christian perfection as our destination? Growing in love for God and fellow humans is how we remain well-established in our faith. As Paul writes in the letter to Colossians, "But you need to remain well established and rooted in faith and not shift away from the hope given in the good news that you heard (1:23, CEB). Failing to grow in the love of God and fellow humans places us in danger of falling from grace.

So, this Christmas and throughout 2024, let's keep moving toward our spiritual destination. I exhort you as Wesley did:

Lastly, who already feel the Spirit of God witnessing with your spirit that you are the children of God, follow the advice of the Apostle (Paul): Walk in all the good works whereunto ye are created in Christ Jesus. And then, "leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and not laying the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God," go on to perfection. Yea, and when ye have attained a measure of perfect love, when God has circumcised your hearts, and enabled you to love him with all your heart and with all your soul, think not of resting there. That is impossible. You cannot stand still; you must either rise or fall; rise higher or fall lower. Therefore the voice of God to the children of Israel, to the children of God, is, "Go forward! Forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forward unto those that are before, press on to the mark, for the prize of your high calling of God in Christ Jesus!"<sup>4</sup>

Shalom,

John

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1 Theodore Runyon, *The New Creation: Wesley's Theology Today*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998) 82.

2 Ibid, 83.

3 John Wesley, "Sermon 76, On Perfection" Para. I 4.