

Bedford Presbyterian Church

105 West Main Street, Bedford, Virginia

From 1844 to 2022 (178 Years)



4TH SUNDAY OF Advent

Week of December 18th

We will continue sending out this combination of the newsletter and bulletin to keep you up to date on announcements, prayers, needs and scheduled activities for those that are uncomfortable to attend service yet.

Included will be the usual newsletter information along with prayers, scripture and a sermon.

We hope that you can utilize this format to keep up to date while being away from actual services, meetings, activities and watching the online sermon.



Bedford Presbyterian Church
serving Christ since 1844

A Biblically Guided Christian Community,

Loving God, Loving Others,

Serving the World &

Growing Disciples

THE APPROACH TO GOD

One: The peace of Christ be with you

All: **And also with you**

Prelude

“Away in a Manger”

James R. Murray

Welcome and Announcements

- Prayer time meets in the Anna Latimer room following service.
- Something More will meet at 3 pm this Wednesday
- Join us for our Christmas Eve service at 7 pm and there will be a service at 10 am on Christmas morning.

Lighting of the Advent Candle

The Parkers

Reader 1: This is the fourth Sunday in Advent. The celebration of Christ’s birth is soon to come.
(4 candles are lit)

Reader 2: We light this candle as a symbol of **PURITY**. May Your Holy Spirit – who lives in our hearts, O God, purify us that we may be ready for the coming of Jesus, our hope and joy.

Both: Blessed be the God of Israel, who comes to set us free

***Advent Hymn**

“O Come, O Come Emmanuel”

Hymn 154

***Prayer of Confession**

Nation rises up against nation and the peoples of earth weep and beg for release. The very land is wounded; the waters and skies are choked by our insatiable hunger for more. How can we be alert for You, Lord, Jesus Christ, when we run from disaster to disaster, or when we retreat into familiar routines at home and at work? We admit that we do not want to be surprised by Your advent; we don’t need more uncertainty! So we have come to Your house – confessing our weariness and seeking Your strength. Have mercy on us. Show us the way forward. We pray in the name of the One who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

(pause for silent prayer)

***Assurance of Pardon**

One: Friends, believe the good news of the gospel.

All: **In Jesus Christ we are forgiven! Through Jesus Christ we have been born again to new life.**

***Gloria**

“Glory to the Father”

Bill Rutledge

Children’s Time

PROCLAIMING THE WORD OF GOD

Introduction to Scripture

Scripture

Matthew 1: 18-25

Anthem

“Somewhere It’s Snowing”

Choir

The Christmas season is always a special time of year and every family has their own particular traditions:

- decorating the Christmas tree,
- hanging stockings,
- traveling to visit family and friends.
- Many people enjoy driving out to the Elks Home to look at the Christmas displays
- As you drive around the town, you inevitably come across nativity displays set up on front lawns.
- Also, many churches in the area, this year once again including Holy Land USA *(on Dickerson Mill Road)*, will be reenacting the story of Jesus' birth through a living crèche scene.

The cast of characters associated with the story of Jesus' birth is colorful and memorable. We recognize each of them by their **unique speaking parts**.

With dramatic words, **Angels** begin the season. First, the archangel Gabriel visits Mary to make the unforgettable announcement of her pregnancy. Then, another Angel appears to Joseph – in a dream – to explain this birth to him. And on that first Christmas eve, an angelic choir startles a group of sleepy shepherds, with loud singing, "*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.*" (Luke 2:14).

Then there is **Mary**, who having heard of her divine selection, offers a beautiful hymn of thanksgiving, "*My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for He has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed.*" (Luke 1:46-48)

Next the **shepherds** become early evangelists! Following the angelic announcement they hurry to find the baby Jesus. "*And when they saw him, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child*" (Luke 2:17).

Then, finally in come the **Magi** diligently seeking the newborn King, so that they might present Him with gifts of honor, saying, "*Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him*" (Matt. 2:2).

Oddly enough, **only Joseph has no speaking part**. He is the lone silent member of the cast, often forgotten, standing in the background, quietly looking at the child, saying nothing.

Angels bring heavenly greetings. Mary sings a solo. Wise men worship. Shepherds preach. But Joseph is silent. No notable lines are attributed to him. No sound bites. No quotes. Only silence. However, Joseph is just as irreplaceable in the story of Jesus' birth as is Mary. Joseph's importance cannot be overstated.

So, please open your Bibles to join with me in reading Matthew 1:18-25 (if you are using a pew Bible, you find this on page 1 in the New Testament). And pay special attention to the role that Joseph plays in bringing about the greatest gift of all time...

¹⁸Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce

her quietly. ²⁰But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²²All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: ²³"Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us." ²⁴When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, ²⁵but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

It still amazes me, that nowhere in these verses do we hear Joseph's voice. In fact, as we search the Gospels, we discover that they do not contain even a single word uttered from the mouth of Jesus' earthly father. In fact the last time we even hear of Joseph is when their 12-year old son gets left behind at the Temple, and after frantically searching for him, it is Mary who give Jesus the tongue lashing.

But, as people say, **actions often speak much louder than words!**
Through his silent actions, Joseph can still teach us three lessons.

First, is a lesson in RIGHTEOUSNESS:

Let's return to the text. ¹⁸*Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Her husband **Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly.***

We first meet Joseph in the middle of a personal crisis. Having become engaged to a beautiful young girl, he has worked hard to establish an income and provide a home for his new bride so that they might begin a family together. He is in love. He is committed to Mary. He thought she loved him, until hearing the news that his precious bride was pregnant.

Heart-broken and feeling betrayed, how should he respond?
Should he publicly shame her?
Should he turn her over to the authorities, possibly to be stoned?

Mary's explanation of her pregnancy was unbelievable, even blasphemous. Even though she might not have been stoned on the charge of adultery, she could be stoned for the charge of blasphemy against God! However, Joseph chooses the path of mercy. He was "**a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace,**" so he resolved to divorce her quietly.

Did you notice that even before any divine explanation is given, Joseph has already chosen mercy. No malice. No explosion. Certainly he could have asked a lot of questions here: "How could you do this to me? Who's the father?" But, no words are recorded, only tenderness.

He would certainly be the talk of Nazareth. Friends will make snide comments, joke about cuckolded husbands. But he would not hurt Mary, no matter what he thought she had done to him. When he could have demanded a bitter sentence, Joseph chose mercy.

Today, there is much we can learn from Joseph's example of righteousness coupled with mercy. Maybe you've never been in a position quite like Joseph's, but we have all been

wronged by another person. We all know what it feels like to be hurt or offended. How do you react when you are wronged?

Two friends were walking through the desert and got into an argument. One friend slapped the other on the face. The one who got slapped was hurt, but without saying anything, wrote in the sand: "*Today my best friend slapped me in the face.*"

They kept walking until they found an oasis. Thirsty, they stopped for water. The one who had been slapped fell in and started to drown. But, his friend saved him. That night, he carved on a stone: "*Today my best friend saved my life.*"

The friend who had done the slapping and then the saving, asked him, "*After I hurt you, you wrote in the sand but now you carve on a stone, why?*"

He replied: "*When someone hurts us we should write it in the sand where the winds of forgiveness can erase it away. But, when someone does something good for us, we must engrave it in stone where it will be long remembered.*"

Here is the lesson. If we are truly righteous, then we will do right by others, even when they have done wrong by us.

One of Joseph's other sons would one day grow up to take Jesus' place as head up the Church founded by his big brother. Strange, as it may sound, James as the little brother probably had much to forgive Jesus; imagine him – just a normal kid – growing up in the shadow of the Messiah (the chosen one). In his letter to the Church, James would write, "***the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy..***" (James 3:17).

So, Joseph, this righteous carpenter who would raise God's Son, also raised his other sons & daughters to be righteous and merciful people.

The second lesson we can learn from Joseph is one of... REDEMPTION:

Let's go back once again to the scripture. ²⁰*But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, **for he will save his people from their sins.**"*

In Joseph's dream, God gave him a glimpse of the divine plan. Because Joseph was a descendant of David and a righteous man, God gave him the unique privilege and obligation in raising the Messiah. God told Joseph, that Mary's Son would, "**save His people from their sins!**" In fact, the name "Jesus" is a transliteration of the Hebrew word "**Yeshua,**" meaning "The Salvation of The Lord," or more simply "The Savior."

So from even His name, we learn Jesus' mission on earth was to "*save His people from their sins!*" Jesus came to earth to redeem mankind; to save us from the penalty of our sins. But, in order to **redeem something, a price must always be paid.**

Lou Johnson, nicknamed "Sweet Lou," died in 2020 at the age of 85. Back in the 1965 World Series, he was the hero of the Los Angeles Dodgers. But then for a time, he got heavily into drugs. After recovering, he tried for the next 30 years to retrieve the championship ring he had sold to drug dealers. Drug and alcohol abuse had cost him everything from that magical season, including his uniform, glove, and even the bat he used to hit the winning home run in the deciding game.

In 2001, when the Dodgers president, Bob Graziano, learned that Johnson's World Series ring was for sale on the Internet, he did for Johnson what the former outfielder had been unable to do for himself. Graziano immediately wrote a check for \$3,457.00, to buy and then return the ring to its rightful owner.

In the same way, God has done for us what we were unable to do for ourselves. He paid the price for our sins with the blood of His Son. He bought us back. He redeemed us so that we might be restored to our rightful place in the family of God. What an awesome gift!

Can you imagine Joseph's concerns, knowing that he would be responsible for the upbringing of the most important child ever born? Not in a palace, not with guards and soldiers, born with a price on his head, now to be raised by a solitary carpenter and his wife living in the backside of Palestine. God had asked Joseph to raise the Savior of the world – our redeemer – as his own son; most people might hesitate to accept that kind of responsibility.

Which is where we learn a third lesson from Joseph: a lesson in READY OBEDIENCE:

In the same way that his young wife Mary had responded to her angelic messenger, saying, *'here am I, the servant of the Lord' ...*

²⁴When Joseph awoke from sleep, **he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him**; he took her as his wife, ²⁵but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus. With Joseph, just as with Mary, there is no hesitation. He understood clearly what God expected of him, and he obeyed!

He would take Mary to be his wife and suffer the cutting remarks about their child conceived out of wedlock. He would obey in spite of the fact that this child of divine promise would be born and raised under a cloud of adultery. Even adding to those suspicions, rather than giving his adopted son his own name – as instructed – Joseph named Him "Jesus." Joseph believed God and obeyed Him.

Later responding to another dream, Joseph then takes Mary and the child, fleeing by night to Egypt.

- He again leaves behind his newly reestablished carpenter's business.
- He again leaves family and friends, to go into self-imposed exile for the sake of this child.
- Joseph did as he was commanded.

The Bible equates faith with obedience and obedience with faith. In other words, they are two sides of the same coin. You cannot have one without the other.

- Obedience is doing what God has said.
- Obedience is not doing what others say,
- Or doing what you wish God has said.
- It is simply doing what God says.

Jesus' little brother James would later write, ***so faith, by itself, if it has no works, is dead*** James 2:17. You can insert the word obedience here as well.

Surely, to obey is better than sacrifice!

1 Samuel 15:22

As the prophet Samuel told disobedient King Saul, *'Has the LORD as great a delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obedience to the voice of the LORD? Surely, to obey is better than sacrifice!* (1 Samuel 15:22) It's vital to put our faith in Christ Jesus, but unless we are ready also to obey Him, then our faith is fruitless; useless.

D.L. Moody was conducting a series of meetings in Brocton, Massachusetts; leading the congregation in song was Daniel B. Towner. One night a young man responded to the altar call saying, "**I'm not quite sure -- but I'm going to trust and I'm going to obey.**" That statement struck Mr. Towner, who jotted the sentence down, and sent it to J.H. Sammis, a Presbyterian minister. Together they composed the hymn, "**Trust and Obey.**" The Christian's lifelong philosophy can be summed up in these three words.

The Bible uses some interesting figures to represent Christians and their relationship to God: Vine and branches, Sculptor and clay, Shepherd and sheep. An African convert used another metaphor. He prayed: "**O Lord, You are the needle and I am the thread.**"

Having just visited a school where girls were learning to sew, he noticed a simple principle: **wherever the needle went, the thread followed.** That, he decided, represented his relationship to God. If he would stay close to the Lord, praying, reading His Word, depending entirely upon Him and following Him, he would make it to heaven. He was simply the thread following the needle.

Each year as Christmas rolls around, different thoughts come to mind; "*visions of sugar plums dance in [our] heads.*" You may drive through your neighborhood and see an elaborate nativity display or a living crèche. Perhaps you'll even attend a play, with children or adults reenacting the events that brought our Lord and Savior into this world. But, throughout this season, throughout the rest of your life, I hope that you will pay special attention to that quiet man standing in the background and take home with you, these three lessons learned from a simple carpenter given the greatest honor.

Are you a **righteous person**? Do you treat others with kindness, mercy, and forgiveness even when you think that you have been mistreated?

Have you been **redeemed by the blood of the lamb**?

Do you comprehend the sacrifice that Jesus made for you and me?

Have you personally accepted the first and most important gift of Christmas, by trusting in Jesus as your savior?

And finally are you living a life of **ready obedience**?

Are you learning God's Word and will as it is revealed to you in your Bible?

And one day, should an Angel appear to you, are you willing to follow God's command no matter what the cost?

These days, there are multiple sites on the internet, offering the most expensive Christmas gifts:

- For him, how about a Brunello Cuchinelly cashmere sweater for \$2,000.00
- Or a pre-owned Rolex Submariner for a mere \$14,790.00
- And for her, how about a gold and sapphire tennis necklace for the small price of \$15,340.00 – but you had better hurry, there is only one left.

By far the greatest, most precious, most expensive gift ever given was "***the free gift of God, [which] is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.***" Rom. 6:23

Have you accepted that gift?

If you are not a Christian this morning, then we invite you to "*Trust and obey, for there's no other way, to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.*"

The invitation is open, if you have never personally done so and would like to know more about putting your faith in Jesus ... then I, would be honored to speak with you following this service.

Now let's pray, thanking God for His most precious gift of love, and for that humble couple willing to raise Him as their own.

RESPONSE TO THE WORD OF GOD

Hymn

"The Hands That First Held Mary's Child"

Hymn 237

A Christmas Affirmation

We believe in one God, whose almighty word brought forth the universe, who speaks to us by His Spirit through what He has created and through what has been written for us in Holy Scripture.

We believe that at the right moment in time, God's Word became flesh in the life of Jesus of Nazareth, who was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, and born of the Virgin Mary.

We believe that the same angels who heralded Jesus' birth also point us to the cross on which Jesus died, and to His empty tomb. There the angel's message "He is risen!" heralded the glorious good news of Christ's resurrection.

We believe that this same Jesus is alive to meet us every day and to offer us new and abundant life. We rejoice in the knowledge that one day He will return to rule in righteousness, to renew the earth, and to claim us as God's own.

Doxology

"Christmas Doxology"

McIntrye

Sharing of Joys and Concerns

Prayer of Thanksgiving

The needs of this world still come to Your door, O God. Receive these offerings we bring. Use them in touching lives in significant ways: ways that bring strength, ways that renew hope, ways that lift up and reach out with love that You would still make incarnate. May we be the body of Christ today, and may these gifts above all else exercise Christ's ministry. Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Hymn

"Wait for the Lord"

Hymn 166

THE SENDING FORTH

Benediction

May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word...and, may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way...

Postlude

"Deck the Halls"

Carol Tornquist

Joys- December 18th

Joy- Blair's friend Steve, not doing well, but praying for others

Joy- Nancy's diagnosis shows improvement

Joy- Ecumenical Youth, 5 churches involved, well attended

Joy- McManis' celebrating 62nd anniversary

Concerns- December 18th

Avery: Tinkie, hospice care, Frank, cancer returned

Barnes: Kim Hedrick- (friend) cancer

Ruth (sister) broke back, surgery

Wayne Kingery- (brother-in-law) stroke, terminal cancer

Benton: Tracey Thomas- (daughter's friend) transplant

High school friend- prayers

Sister-in-law, breast cancer

Blair: Steve Arrington- (friend) not doing well

Marshall Dunlap- (friend) cancer

Ecumenical youth group

Boone: Michael Bamber (friend) recovering from chemo

Daughter was laid off

Chryssikos: Kathy, eye infection

Clarke: Weebie, hospice care, Harvey, neuropathy

Compter: two brothers- unbelievers

Prayers for friends to come to the Lord

Bob- (friend) Parkinson's

Michael Compter- (brother) heart failure

Steve & Mary- (friends) Steve disabilities

Alan (friend's brother) multi health issues

Cram: Winslow's-(friends of Sally) family & medical problems

Janice Campbell-(friend) under hospice care

Ryan- (grandson) searching for faith

Al & Gayle- Gayle health issues, Al caretaker

Lory Graham (friend) health issues, Carolyn, wife caretaker

Creasy: Walker Wright (Elizabeth's brother) stroke

Daniels: Laurie, caretaker, husband

Michael, (husband) cancer

DeHart: Dawn's mother radiation treatments

Diddams: Dick & Lois- Dick home recovering

Easter: Ruby Key (friend) cancer

Foster: Ron- (brother-in-law) to get out of hospital and into home

Howard & Lynn (brother) difficulty with legs, wife dementia

Tom- breathing problems, sinus infection

Goodman: Charles- blood thinners and dialysis

Heinrich: Steven - (grandson) autoimmune disorder

Barbara Lore- (Helen's sister) heart problems

Hopkins: Mark, chronic back pain

Kuhn- Kibbey: Dot- idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, wet macular degeneration

Dick- macular degeneration, taking shots, bacterial pneumonia

Dick's sister (Kibbey) - dementia, Washington state

Mausser: Joyce Reese- (friend) health problems

Steven-(son's boss) going blind

Barbara-(Al's sister-in-law) intense headaches

Morris: all law enforcement, firefighters and all other first responders
Families of those who serve
Kyle Coble- (cousin) leukemia
Rev. Pam Ledbetter, auto-immune, diabetes

Narwid: Ed- not doing well

Neal: Harold- health issues, Alpha Gal

Poindexter: Heather- rheumatoid arthritis

Saunders: (Ronnie) Colin Bridges- (grandson)
Scott- (son-in-law) terminal brain cancer

Scheurer: Jim Hedrick- (friend) cancer
Bob Lindell-(friend) prostate cancer
Sonny (son) doing well

Smith: Dorothy Smith- (John's mother) pray she comes to the Lord
Katherine Tabor- (friend) stage 3 cervical cancer

Stetson: Clay Ramsey- thyroid cancer
Nick, Tiffany & Savannah (can grow new parts of intestines)

Stevens: Jackie Landis- heart problems
Bill Gray- loss of leg, cancer
Smith Farris- (friend) recovering from surgery, pneumonia
Keith Burnett- heart problems

Toney: Judy, Summit room 102
Jack Auer (brother) fell, aneurysm
Karen (daughter) has covid

Van Dyke: Donna Mannel (friend) MS
Nancy- diagnosis good, travel mercies

Winberry: Chris- severe heart issues, improving
Tom & Dee-(brother) COPD, maybe hospice, prayers for family

Prayers for our nation and our President

Prayers for those dealing with loneliness

Prayers for healing the divisive spirit among our leaders/nation

Russian invasion ends and not resort to nuclear weapons.

Nations to stand up for freedom.

Prayers for new residents to come to worship with us

Prayers for our constant responders

Prayers for Ukraine

December 2022

| SUN | MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT |
|--|-----------------------------------|-----------|--|-----------|-----------|---|
| | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 <i>Christmas Parade 11 am</i> |
| 4 <i>10 am Worship 2nd Sunday of Advent Communion Prayer Time 3pm Memorial Service Pat Clarke</i> | 5 <i>Cub Scouts</i> | 6 | 7 <i>Something More 3pm</i> | 8 | 9 | 10 <i>Youth Christmas Service, FH</i> |
| 11 <i>10 am Worship 3rd Sunday of Advent 5 ¢ a Meal Offering Prayer Time Abendmusik, 7 pm</i> | 12 <i>Cub Scouts</i> | 13 | 14 <i>Something More 3pm</i> | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| 18 <i>10 am Service 4th Sunday of Advent Session Prayer Time</i> | 19 | 20 | 21 <i>Something More, 3 pm</i> | 22 | 23 | 24 <i>Christmas Eve Service, 7 pm</i> |
| 25 <i>10 am Service Prayer Time</i> | 26 <i>Office Closed</i> | 27 | 28 <i>Something More, 3 pm</i> | 29 | 30 | 31 |

ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Thank you for continuing to send in your contributions and pledges.
You can mail your pledge or contribution, or you can drop by the office,
Mon-Thurs between 8 am - 4 pm.**

Activities for week of December 18th

Sunday: 10 am Worship
Fourth Sunday of Advent
Session
Prayer Time following service

Monday: Cub Scouts

Wednesday: 3 pm Something More

Saturday: 7 pm Christmas Eve Communion Service

Sunday: December 25th
10 am Worship
Christmas Day- He Is Born!

Monday: Office Closed

December Birthdays

Shawn Webb - 18
Kathy Chryssikos - 24
Jade Creasy - 28
Gayle Mauser - 30

December Anniversaries

Roy & Libby Monk - 20

January Birthdays

Gerald DeWitt - 4
Christy Boone - 8

January Anniversaries

Bill and Janet Yodis - 24