

Bedford Presbyterian Church

105 West Main Street, Bedford, Virginia

From 1844 to 2023 (179 Years)

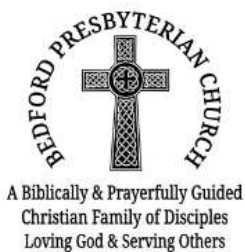


Week of December 24th

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 is a Biblically and
Prayerfully Guided Christian Family of
Disciples, Loving God and Serving Others*

The Approach to God

One: The peace of Christ be with you

All: And Also with you

Prelude

“Away in a Manger”

Mark Hayes

Lighting of the Advent Candle

Larry & Barbara Compter

Reader One: This is the fourth Sunday of Advent. In one week we will celebrate the birth of Christ.

The fourth candle is lit.

Reader Two: Three of the candles of Advent have been lit, the candles of faith, submission and diligence. Today we light the candle of JOY. Like the shepherds in the fields of Bethlehem, may our hearts be filled with a joyous celebration of Christ’s birth during our journey to Christmas

Hymn

“Angels, from the Realms of Glory”

Hymn 189

Prayer of Confession

We confess, O God, that the Christmas rush is typical of our efforts to live the Christian life. We pursue peace on earth, but we end up with frayed nerves and short tempers. Joy gives way to frustration, and the spirit of Scrooge replaces the Spirit of Christ. Forgive our foolishness, and remind us again that our Lord was born into a world just like ours. On this Nativity of Christ’s birth, help us to once again proclaim the good news of Your comfort and redemption for us, so that all the ends of the earth may see the salvation of our God. Amen.

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”

Rutledge

Proclaiming the Word of God

Introduction to Scripture

Scripture

Luke 2:8-20, Isaiah 9:1-7

Anthem

“Angels Watching Over Me”

Joel Raney

Shepherds are always given a rather romantic role in the Christmas story. On Christmas cards they are often portrayed watching over their flocks while angels in the nighttime sky proclaim the birth of Christ. It's a beautiful scene. However, these artistic expressions disguise the fact that shepherds were at the very bottom of the social pecking order in the ancient world.

For one thing, they carried about themselves a rather distinctive and often offensive odor. Sheep are smelly animals. Shepherds also spent a great deal of time outdoors in all kinds of weather. They were on duty 24/7. Observing the religious traditions and practices of the Jewish community were difficult if not impossible. There was also the danger of wild animals and thieves. Being a shepherd was reserved for those who had no better prospects for employment. If you will remember when the Old Testament judge, Samuel, visited the home of Jesse in Bethlehem, young David was not even invited to participate in the family's festivities. Evidently sheep herding was reserved for the youngest and least important member of the family. He had to be summoned from the shepherd's fields after which he, instead of all of his older brothers, was anointed to be the next king of Israel.

These particular shepherds, the ones we are going to meet today, did possess one attribute that set them apart from all of the shepherds throughout the land. They watched over the sheep that were set aside for sacrificial offerings at the temple in Jerusalem. All of the sheep that were offered on the high altar as atonement for the sins of the Jewish people came from their flocks and herds. Little did they realize the perfect Lamb of God, who would take away the sins of the world, would be born very close to where their flocks were feeding that very night. So let's meet these shepherds who are even now are watching over their sheep out in the fields of the little town of Bethlehem.

There's a group of four or five of them, a rather scruffy looking bunch, sitting around a small campfire. It's a chilly night and they are observing the crush of people crowding into Bethlehem. Several of them are getting up in years. One of them, however, was barely beyond his childhood. They were discussing the recent census of the Roman government. The oldest one commented, "I can't believe it. All of those people crowding into our little town. I never realized there were so many people who could trace their lineage back to our forgotten little village." A second shepherd joined in the conversation, "Well, it was the home of our illustrious ancestor, David. I guess he had lots of children." "So what?" the third shepherd complained. "A lot of good they've done us. We're paying taxes to Rome so they can count our noses. They call it a census. One thing's for sure. We're not a free people." The fourth shepherd, the young teenager, was a bit more optimistic. He said, "At least we don't have to mingle with that crowd over there. At least we're out here all by ourselves, even if we have to take care of these ewes who will soon be giving birth to their young."

It was that time of year when shepherds did not put the flocks at night into a large, rock walled pen that was, as you can imagine, a rather filthy place, especially for newborn animals. No it was better to watch over their flocks, especially at night, in the pastures around Bethlehem, where it would be a lot cleaner and nicer for the arrival of those baby lambs. Sitting around the campfire, this little gathering of shepherds was just about ready to doze off when there was a commotion in the heavens, the likes of which they had never heard. It was like a huge door being opened into eternity. Above them they saw what looked like a man but more than a man, surrounded by an ethereal light that lit up the darkness. Scared to death, the frightened shepherds could not help but look upon the face of this angelic figure as he spoke to them, "Do not be afraid," he said, "For behold I bring you glad tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you. You will find the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger" (Luke 2:10-12).

The shepherds could hardly believe what they were hearing, a Savior, born right here in Bethlehem. It was unbelievable but even more unbelievable was what happened next. Suddenly the shepherds were gazing upon not one, but a whole host of angels. The sky was filled with them and they were singing, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14). With the sound of that angelic choir still echoing across the hillsides, the doorway into eternity swung shut and once again the darkness returned, bright stars shining in the evening sky. Looking at one another one of the shepherds said, "What do you think we should do?" The oldest one in the group replied, "Didn't you hear what the angel said?" "But where can we find this Baby?" another one asked. "Come on fellows," that older shepherd once again reminded them, "The Baby is going to be born where they stable the animals. The parents are going to wrap Him in bands of cloth to keep Him warm and place Him in a manger, the place where they feed the livestock." "Then let's go!" said the youngest shepherd. "We've got to find this Christ Child, this Savior right now."

So they hurried off without even thinking about who was going to watch over the sheep. Asking around when they arrived in town about any new born babies, it didn't take them long to find the Child. Just as the angel had said, He was lying on a bed of straw in a manger, swaddled in bands of cloth wrapped around His tiny little body. Gazing upon Him in awe, they told His mother and father about the angelic visit announcing His birth. Instead of being surprised, His parents seemed to take it all in stride, as if they already knew that this was a night unlike any other night since the dawn of creation. Realizing that Mary and Joseph, especially Mary, were truly exhausted, they quietly departed, but not for long. As they made their way back through the dark streets of Bethlehem, they began shouting and singing. They told everybody whom they met about what they had seen and heard. God had finally kept His promise. He had sent a Savior to deliver His people and not just the Jews. The angel had clearly stated that this Savior was for all people, everyone, everywhere! In fact, they were so boisterous as they returned to the fields that they aroused a few people who were less than thrilled about being awakened in the middle of the night. But they didn't care. It was time to sing praises and glorify the Lord for everything that they had seen and heard. Just as the angel had said, God had sent a little baby boy to be the Savior of mankind.

Well, what do these shepherds have to say to us this morning as we reflect upon what they experienced. There are a couple of things that we should take note of. First, God often chooses to speak through those who reside in the lower echelons of society. The announcement of Christ's birth was not proclaimed in the hallways of Rome, or for that matter among the religious elites at the temple in Jerusalem. It was certainly not proclaimed in Herod's palace and for good reason. Instead the first people to hear of Christ's birth were lowly shepherds. God has a way of uplifting the least and the forgotten and elevating them to a place of prominence. It's a theme often repeated throughout the pages of the Bible. For example, Psalm 113:7-8 declares that God "raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes, the princes of their people." That was certainly true of the shepherds and it can also be true for you and me.

Let's be honest. Compared to the wealthy, the famous, the celebrities on TV and the politically well connected, most if not all of us are small potatoes. Additionally there's another multitude who are even more forgotten, who, like the shepherds, live on the fringes of society. Does God care about us? Does God care about them? The answer is "YES!" That's why the shepherds were the first ones to hear about the birth of Christ. The keepers of the sacrificial sheep were the first ones to be informed of the birth of the sacrificial Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world. That was an honor reserved just for them.

Likewise one of the earliest fragments of English literature cannot be traced to a well-known poet, but to a bullied and abused herdsman, who was ridiculed because he couldn't sing, because he couldn't give voice to the lovely ballads that everyone loved to hear. Sleeping in a stable to get away from his tormentors,

this herdsman, an old man by the name of Caedmon had a dream one night. An angel appeared who told him to sing. "But I cannot sing," he bemoaned. "Then I will teach you," said the angel and he imparted to Caedmon a beautiful song. The next morning, Caedmon went to the Venerable Bede, a well-known priest who lived during the Middle Ages. This priest was a well-educated man. He wrote the first history of the English speaking people and how they came to Christianity. Caedmon, of course, could neither read nor write, but he remembered what the angel had told him and he repeated it to the Venerable Bede who wrote down his words. To this unlettered peasant belongs the honor of having created "the earliest Christian poetry in the English language." Here's a portion of what he recited and what the Venerable Bede wrote down: "Creator all holy, He hung the bright heaven, a roof high upreared, o'er the children of men; the King of mankind then created for mortals the world in its beauty, the earth spread beneath them, He, Lord everlasting, omnipotent God." Pretty good poetry for an uneducated cowherd.

Yes, God has a way of blessing and uplifting the humble and they in turn have a way of expressing their thankfulness with great joy. Certainly that was true of the shepherds. They returned to the fields of Bethlehem singing and shouting for joy about all that they had seen and heard. They woke up the whole town. In fact, you might say that they were the first evangelists, the first ones to proclaim the good news that our Savior had been born, that God had sent His Son in the form of little baby to save us from their sins. But they are not the only ones. I'm reminded of the Christmas song "Go Tell It on the Mountain." It's an African American spiritual that was introduced to the world by a professor at Fisk University. Back in the early 1900's at this African American school in Tennessee, students would gather very early on Christmas morn, going from dorm to dorm singing this beloved Christmas carol. Like those students and like those shepherds in Bethlehem, we too should be about the business of joyfully declaring to all the world, "Go tell it on the Mountain that Jesus Christ is born."

There's one final note that we also ought to sing about, that we ought to share with this war torn world in which we live. To the soldiers fighting in Ukraine and those embroiled in the conflict in the Middle East, as well as in a thousand other places throughout our world, people need to hear the words of the angel who proclaimed to the shepherds so long ago, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14). They also need to hear Isaiah's prophetic declaration. Hundreds of years before the birth of Christ, Isaiah proclaimed, "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6).

Yes, to the lowly shepherds watching over their sheep on the hillsides of Bethlehem as well as to lowly folks like you and me sitting right here in this sanctuary on Christmas Eve, God has delivered a wonderful message unto us. It's a message that He wants us to share with everyone, a joyous message. It's a message of peace for those on whom God's favor rests, a message of peace for those who have welcomed His Son into their hearts and lives.

Response to the Word of God

Worship Song

"We Adore You"

Paul Baloche

An Advent Affirmation of Faith

Rev. Stephen M. Fearing

We believe that God has come to us; that God brought us into being, that this God gave us breath and purpose that we have been blessed to be a blessing to others, that we have fallen short of this commandment, but that God has nevertheless loved us despite our brokenness.

We believe that God is coming to us; that God is not happy to leave us alone, that this God will come to us as a particular human being, that God will be made known to us in flesh and bone like

ours, that Mary will soon give birth and Joseph will soon clap his hands in joy, that Jesus Christ will be born and our salvation made complete.

We believe that God will come to us; that God will have the final word and that Word will be good, that this God will give us the presence of the Spirit to continue our work, that we are called to be disciples to all the corners of the earth, that the day is coming when tears and pain will be no more and all will gather at the Table to sing an endless and perfect "Alleluia!"

Doxology

"Doxology for Advent or Christmas "

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Our Father, there are so many things to be thankful for. Receive these tokens of our gratitude for Your love incarnate in the babe of Bethlehem. May they become God-with-us for all the world. May they breathe magic back into a world that desperately needs a sense of wonder and joy. Amen.

Sharing of Joys and Concerns

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.

Closing Hymn

"Hark! The Herald Angels Sing"

Hymn 185

The Sending Forth

Benediction

Postlude

"Angels We Have Heard on High"

Dale Wood

The flowers are given to the Glory of God and in loving memory of
Dorinda Mitchell Hopkins by the family of Bill Hopkins.

TONIGHT!!!! Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

Christmas Eve is always a special time in the life of our church. It is an opportunity to celebrate the birth of Christ. It is a vivid reminder that God loves us so much that He came to dwell among us as a tiny babe born in Bethlehem. This evening we will gather together at 7 pm. The Christ Candle on the Advent Wreath will be lit in honor of His birth. We will celebrate the Lord's Supper as we remember the sacrifice of His life for our salvation. At the conclusion of the service, our lit candles will declare to one and all that Jesus Christ is the light of the world. Come and join with us for our Christmas Eve Candlelight Service.

THE STORY OF THE SHEPHERDS

This morning we will be meeting the shepherds of Bethlehem as we continue our journey to Christmas. We'll discover what they experienced on that special night when God sent His Son into our world. Next week we encounter someone who could dampen any holiday celebration, a man by the name of Herod. His murderous intentions will serve as vivid reminder of the darkness that even now seeks to extinguish the light of God's love. "Something More" will not meet this coming Wednesday. It will resume on January 3rd.

December 2023

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1	2
3 <i>10 am Worship 1st Sunday of Advent Communion Session</i>	4	5 <i>Office opening late</i>	6 <i>Something More, 3 pm</i>	7	8	9
10 <i>10 am Worship 2nd Sunday of Advent 5¢ a Meal BCM collection Abendmusik, 6:30 pm</i>	11	12	13 <i>Something More, 3pm</i>	14	15	16
17 <i>10 am Worship 3rd Sunday of Advent</i>	18	19	20 <i>Something More, 3pm</i>	21	22	23
24 <i>10 am Worship 4th Sunday of Advent Christmas Eve Service, 7pm</i>	25 <i>He Is Born! Office Closed</i>	26	27	28	29	30
31 <i>10 am Worship New Year's Eve</i>						

Joys- December 24th

Joy- Christy Boone thankful for those that went Caroling and also on recent hike to Matt's Creek, the beauty survived

Joy- Judy Blair Ecumenical group met and prepared trees of First Responders

Concerns- December 24th

Avery: Tinkie, hospice care

Barnes: Kim Hedrick- (friend) colon cancer

Mark- (nephew) open heart surgery, caregiver of special needs adult

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

Family of Judy Salmon

Blair: Ecumenical youth group

Tonya: extra security in Arizona for religious communities

Boone: Linda Cole- heart transplant

Don Bartz- (brother-in-law) in hospital, pneumonia

Callahan: Mary Jane (friend) cancer

Steve Chaffin (friend) blood clots

Compter: two brothers- unbelievers

Prayers for friends to come to the Lord

Michael Compter- (brother) heart failure

Steve & Mary- (friends) Steve disabilities

Zoey Fisher-(child) doing well

Vicky-(friend) recurring lymphoma

May- (friend) breast cancer

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

Janice Campbell-(friend) under hospice care

Ryan- (grandson) searching for faith

Lory Graham- (friend) health issues, wife caretaker

Brenda Wilkerson- UVA- seizures

Sally- bad cold

DeHart: Dawn's mother gall bladder surgery

Michael Rutter- septic shock, amputation

Easter: Ruby Key (friend) cancer

Dallas (friend) heart issues

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

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

Tom- home

Prayers for everyone on dialysis

Goode: prayers for Eunice, health issues

Rodney & Connie Groggins (husband's cousins) Connie

Alzheimer's, Rodney caregiver, health issues

Cynthia- (friend) physical therapy

Those held hostage in Gaza

Goodman: William McGuire home from hospital

Grigg: Beth Falwell- starting cancer treatments
Heinrich: Steven - (grandson) autoimmune disorder
Barbara Lore- (Helen's sister) heart problems
Kuhn- Kibbey: Phyllis Smith (friend) heart attack
Lambert: Margaret caring for brother, strokes, doing better
MaManis: Family on passing of sister
Mauser: Joyce Reese- (friend) health problems
Steven-(son's boss) going blind
Barbara (AL's sister) intense headaches
Gayle- doing better
Morris: all law enforcement, firefighters and all other first responders
Forensic scientists who deal with crime
Kyle Coble- (cousin) leukemia
Rev. Pam Ledbetter, recovering from stroke
James Morgan (cousins husband) spot on lung
John Hargett (friend) slow recovery may never walk
Ron- heart issues
Margaret's sister-in-law, surgery
Monk: Libby, recovering from procedure
Narwid: Ed- not doing well
Saunders: (Ronnie) Colin Bridges- (grandson)
Scott- (son-in-law) doing well
Scheurer: Jim Hedrick- (friend) cancer
Bob Lindell-(friend) prostate cancer
Sonny (son) doing well
Smith: Dorothy Smith- (John's mother) that she comes to the Lord
Stetson: Clay Ramsey- thyroid cancer
Nick, Tiffany, Savannah- Savannah back in ICU
Stevens: Jackie Landis- heart problems
Two firefighters who suffered falls
Van Dyke: Rich Anderson (nieces' husband) recovering
Webb: Shawn, Kathy, appt with eye doctor

Prayers for our nation and our President

Prayers for healing the divisive spirit among our leaders/nation

Russian invasion ends and not resort to nuclear weapons.

Prayers for new residents to come to worship with us

Prayers for Ukraine

Pray for World Peace

Prayers for Israel

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Activities for week of December 24th

Sunday: 10 am Worship
 4th Sunday of Advent
 7 pm Candlelight Service

Monday: **He Is Born!**
 Office closed

Wednesday: NO Something More

Sunday: December 31st
 10 am Worship
 New Year's Eve

December Birthdays

Kathy Chryssikos - 24
 Gayle Mauser - 30

December Anniversaries

Roy & Libby Monk - 20

January Birthdays

Gerald DeWitt - 4
 Christy Boone - 8

January Anniversaries

Bill and Janet Yodis – 24



There's a new Flower Calendar in the hallway outside of the Sanctuary and waiting for you to fill in for 2024!!

Thank you for your continued support.

DESCRIPTION	BUDGET FORECAST 2023	ACTUAL NOV 2023	ACTUAL YTD 2023
TOTAL UNRESTRICTED INCOME	\$ 196,609.00	\$ 23,190.31	\$ 192,002.35
-- CONGREGATIONAL GIVING FOR GENERAL OPERATIONS	\$ 145,000.00	\$22,012.00	\$ 179,035.52
-- MISCELLANEOUS INCOME	\$ 51,609.00	\$ 1,178.31	\$ 12,966.83
TOTAL BUDGETED EXPENSE	\$ 202,875.70	\$ 8,432.36	\$ 143,734.67
BUDGETED SPENDING (OVER) UNDER INCOME	\$ (6,266.70)	\$ 14,757.95	\$ 48,267.68