

Bedford Presbyterian Church

105 West Main Street, Bedford, Virginia

From 1844 to 2024 (180 Years)

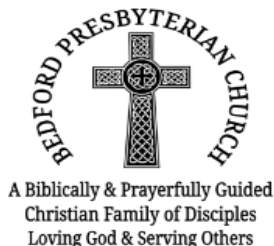


Week of December 1st

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.

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

"Comfort, Comfort Now My People"

Larry Shackley

Words of Welcome

Lighting of the Advent Candle

David & Kathy Grigg

Reader 1: This is the first Sunday in Advent. In four weeks we will celebrate the birth of Christ.

The first candle is lit

Reader 2: Today we light the candle of Faith. May the light of this candle enlighten our way with the assurance of His presence and guidance during our journey to Christmas.

Both: O Come, O Come Emmanuel

***Advent Hymn**

"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"

Hymn 154

***Prayer of Confession**

God, we come before You as children caught up in the frenzy of Christmas preparations. We decorate our homes, wrap our gifts, write our cards, prepare our holiday dishes – but forget to prepare our hearts. Forgive us when we get so caught up in the world's celebration that we forget the reason for the season: You love us so much, You sent Your Son to show us how to love. Help us to live and share the love of Jesus.

***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

PROCLAIMING THE WORD OF GOD

Introduction to Scripture

Scripture

John 1: 1-5, 14

Anthem

"Ding Dong Merrily on High"

Joel Raney

Sermon

The Christ Before Christmas

On the evening of Halloween, 1938, the famous actor, Orson Welles, presented a special broadcast on national radio. Based on a science fiction thriller, *War of the Worlds*, the radio broadcast was such an authentic adaptation of the book that thousands of people really believed that America had been invaded by Martians. Multitudes fled from their homes in sheer panic. Since that scary broadcast there have been many portrayals of visitors from Outer Space, especially in the movies. Most of these imaginary beings have been evil villains, intent on destroying life, especially human life on planet earth.

There was One, however, who really did arrive from the great beyond just over two thousand years ago. He was not imaginary, and He did not come from another planet in our solar system or from some far distant galaxy. He came from the realm of heaven and He came to help us, not to harm us. This divine intervention is introduced in the first chapter of the Gospel of John. It is a magnificent declaration of God's determination to bring light and love into our world. It is also an important and poignant reminder that there was and is a Christ before Christmas.

Let's be honest. Many people, even some Christians, have a hard time believing that there was a Christ before Christmas. They have read the accounts of Christ's birth in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke and have come to the conclusion that everything started with the birth of Christ. Christ came into existence when Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Thankfully, the writer of the Gospel of John casts that misconception aside. He provides us with a vivid portrait of a Christ that was very much alive before He entered into our world as a tiny baby. So let's take a look at what the author of this gospel has to say to us in those opening verses of the life and ministry of Christ. Hopefully it will help us to gain a much better understanding of the majesty and magnitude of what God did for us when He sent His only begotten Son into our world.

But what about the pre-existence of that Son? Writing to the early church, John knew that Christ was the "anointed One of God." God had chosen and appointed Him for a special purpose here on earth. That's literally what the word "Christ" means. He also knew that this anointed One had been given the name of "Jesus" when He was born in Bethlehem. It means "God's salvation" and that's why God sent Him into our world. His mission was to save humanity. But how could John describe this Son of God before He came to earth, during those eons of time when He was with His Father in heaven? He needed a new word, something that would accurately describe His pre-existence before the birth in Bethlehem. Looking back through the pages of the Old Testament, it suddenly dawned upon John that there was a perfect word to identify the Christ who was before Christmas. It was right there in those first verses of the book of Genesis. Over and over again those opening verses in Genesis declared that the whole of creation came into existence when God spoke. For example, in verse three, God said, "Let there be light," and suddenly rays of light burst forth into existence. This Christ before Christmas was, therefore, the Voice of God, the very Word of God.

Furthermore, John also began to realize that there were a variety of ways in which this Word of God could be described. So he included that description in the opening verses of his gospel. He said that this Christ before Christmas was the **Divine Word of God**. He said that this Christ before Christmas was the **Creative Word of God**. Lastly, he said that this Christ before Christmas was the **Incarnate Word of God**. Let's look at each of these descriptions and discover how they can help us come to a richer and more meaningful understanding of the nature and character of God's Son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

In the first two verses of his gospel, John declares, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning." What is John telling us? He is telling us that the Christ before Christmas is the divine presence of God and like God He is eternal. He has no beginning and no end. At the end of the book of Revelation, Christ declares, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End" (Revelation 22:13). Those two words, alpha and omega, are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. Saying that He is the alpha and the omega

means that Christ sums up the totality of time, both past, present and future. In fact, like God He stands outside of time. Christ possesses the same eternal and divine nature as His heavenly Father. Just as John states in that opening verse of his gospel, “Christ was not only with God from the beginning, He was and is God.”

In the Gospel of John we also learn that the Christ before Christmas is the creative Word of God. In the book of Genesis the very first verse boldly declares, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” But how did God do that? The Bible says that God spoke the creation into existence. He spoke and the universe began to take shape and form. The Christ before Christmas was the author of creation. This is what Saint Paul tells us in his letter to the Colossians, “For by Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him” (Colossians 1:16). The Christ before Christmas, God’s voice, His divine Word, brought the universe into existence and that spiritual declaration is now being confirmed scientifically. Researchers have recently discovered that the universe was created by a symphony of sound. Writing about this discovery for the British Broadcasting Corporation one of their correspondents wrote in a compressive article, “Before stars and planets, before blackholes and white dwarfs, before even atoms and rays of light, the Universe reverberated with something surprising—sound”.* Just as the Bible says in the book of Genesis, it was the voice of God that brought forth all that there is and that Voice, that Word from on high, was the voice of the Christ before Christmas.

Finally, the Christ before Christmas was the Incarnate Word of God. The Word of God took shape and form and became focused in a single human being when Jesus was born in Bethlehem. As John states, “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1;14). But he doesn’t stop there. Listen to the rest of verse fourteen, “We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” This means that Christ was separate from and yet at the same time uniquely unified with His heavenly Father. Both during the creation of the universe and especially when Christ became a human being, He was the incarnate Word of God. Literally, the word *incarnate* means “to take on human form, to be made out of flesh and blood.” Christ’s incarnation was the embodiment of who God is in a way that could be touched and seen and heard.

An illustration from the pages of history may prove to be helpful as we try to understand what God accomplished. In the opening days of the Second World War, Winston Churchill was chosen to be the Prime Minister of England. He faced a daunting task, rallying the people of Great Britain to rise up and defeat the forces of Nazi Germany. He addressed the nation and that speech took on a life of its own. As he told the nation that they would have to fight their enemies on the beaches and on the land and if need be door to door, the people of England rose up with an undaunting determination that led to ultimate victory. Most of the people in England never met Winston Churchill personally. But they heard his speech on that radio broadcast to the nation and they saw portions of it in the news reels that followed. Those words became a tangible expression of Churchill’s nature and character, a declaration of who he was and what he believed. In the same way the Word of God in the person of Christ Jesus, as He entered into our world as a tiny baby, became the living and tangible expression of who God is.

Writing to fellow believers, John opened his first letter to them with these words, “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life” (1 John 1:1). As we enter into this upcoming Christmas season, let us never forget that the One who created the entire universe was also the One who came to live among us, so that through Him we might know and experience the love of God.

*bbc.com/future/article/20231003-the-primordial-hum-from-the-beginning-of-the-universe

RESPONSE TO THE WORD OF GOD

Hymn

"Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence"

Hymn 232

Communion

"Of the Father's Love Begotten"
"Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming"

Instrumental

Doxology

"Doxology on Advent"

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Almighty God, we thank You for the holy scriptures, in which You have revealed to us Your Son Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of the law and prophets, the promised Messiah of Israel, and the Redeemer of humankind. Grant that we, who gratefully celebrate His advent and acknowledge Him as your living Word, may walk in the light of His truth and make known the good news of His kingdom in all the world, to the glory of Your name. 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**

"Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus"

Hymn 153

THE SENDING FORTH

***Benediction**

Postlude

"Sussex Carol"

Mark Hayes

The flowers are given to the Glory of God and in memory of Christine Riley

Operation First Responder Christmas tree decorating party December 22nd

For several years now, BPC has been spreading a bit of Christmas cheer to first responders and other service organizations that have their employees working on Christmas eve and Christmas day. As a small gesture of our appreciation for all they do, we "decorate" small trees with snacks that they can eat during the holiday week. This year we will be decorating those trees after church on Sunday, December 22nd. We will have cookies and beverage for you to enjoy as we do this service ministry together.

** We ask that you begin to bring to church, items that are individually wrapped and can easily be tied with string and hung on a branch...i.e. granola bars, lance crackers, cookies, small candy bars and packs of candy like M&M's and skittles, small bags of chips, popcorn, pretzels and cookies, small pkgs. of jerky, like Slim Jim's.

**We will need some of you to offer dropping off a tree or two before Christmas eve. Each tree will have a card that has the location where it is to be dropped off. It will also have the name and phone # of our church. That will go at the top of the tree so they can call for pickup when the tree is empty. Each person should pick up the trees they deliver after we get that phone call.

Thank you for helping with this wonderful ministry!

If you have any questions, please get in touch with Judy Blair

December 2024

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

Joys- December 1st

Joy- Gerald DeWitt- thankful for rain

Joy- Deanna Rutledge thanks to BPC

Concerns- December 1st

Avery: Tinkie, hospice care

Barefoot: Jim, in hospital, continue to improve

Barnes: Kim Hedrick- (friend) cancer

Jerry Dillon (nephew) health issues

Jody Lineberry- leukemia treatment unsuccessful

Benton: Nicole- (stepdaughter) in Asheville helping Helene victims

Blair: Philip Davis recovering from surgery for melanoma

Sandy(sister) back issues

Boone: niece undergoing radiation treatments

Family of Dorie Massey on her passing

Callahan: Mary Jane (friend) in remission

Steve Chaffin (friend) blood clots

Compter: Jeannie, Seth (both friend) health issues

Scott and Robin Umphlet, Scott is ill after a trip abroad.

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

Garrett Winslow – struggling, autism

Janice Campbell-(friend) under hospice care

Ryan- (grandson) searching for faith

Lory Graham- (friend) health issues, wife caretaker

Brenda Wilkerson- UVA seizures

DeHart: Lucile Kesterson (Dawn's mother) aging memory issues

Julian Kesterson (Dawn's stepdad) nursing home, multiple falls

Dan- cataract surgery

Easter: Jim (brother) cancer

Fleming: Dominick (Ann Marie's brother) heart surgery successful,

Foster: Ron (brother-in-law) in home

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

Tom- home

Prayers for everyone on dialysis and those in paths of storms where centers are gone.

Bob- (Ellen's brother) heart surgery went well, home

Goode: Amy (niece) biopsy

Jay Barnes- weakness

Goodman: Friend Betty is near death

Grigg: Beth Falwell- starting cancer treatments

Chris Mays- diabetic complications

Grubb: John cancer

Hann: Alice's brother, congestive heart failure, cancer

Harris: Jim, back pain

Heinrich: Steven - (grandson) autoimmune disorder

Barbara Lore- (Helen's sister) heart problems

Kuhn-Kibbey: Dot reinjured her back

Sarah McCabe Oakes, amputation of pelvis and leg

Lambert: Margaret sciatica pain, arthritis

Linton: Candy (Parkers's friend) health issues from car accident

Mauser: Joyce Reese- (friend) health problems
Steven-(son's boss) going blind
Barbara (Al's sister) intense headaches
Gayle- home

McManis; Charlotte, doing better

Monk: Libby's mother, Mary Duncan, Bedford Nursing Home

Morris: all law enforcement, firefighters and all other first responders
Forensic scientists who deal with crime
Rev. Pam Ledbetter
James Morgan (cousins husband) spot on lung
Margaret's brother in NC prayers for those impacted by storm
Elisa (daughter-in-law) family needs

Neal: Jeff (Harold's son) heart attack, stents inserted, home

Rutledge: friend in Hawaii health issues

Salley: Jillian Salley pregnancy doing better

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: Nick, Tiffany, Savannah-safe arrival to CA
Morgan (nephew) life decisions
Cook at Shepherd's Table, has baby in NICU
Dave- Covid

Stevens: Jackie Landis- heart problems
Earl Carter- health issues
Matt- lung cancer

Watkins: family of Dr. Wells, son COPD in hospice,

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 1st

Sunday: 10 am Worship

Communion

1st Sunday of Advent

Session

Wednesday: 3 pm Something More

Sunday: December 8th

10 am Worship

2nd Sunday of Advent

5¢ a Meal Offering

BCM donations/collections

December Birthdays

Nancy Dwyer - 4

John Blair- 10

Bill Mitchell - 17

Shawn Webb - 18

Gayle Mauser - 30

December Anniversaries

Ken & Charlotte McManis - 3

Al & Gayle Mauser - 12

Roy & Libby Monk - 20

The 2025 Flower Calendar is out and ready to be filled in.

Abendmusik

December 15th at 6:30 pm

**We Thank everyone for helping to decorate the tree in the fellowship hall.
It looks fantastic!**