

Bedford Presbyterian Church

105 West Main Street, Bedford, Virginia

From 1844 to 2024 (180 Years)



Week of December 15th

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

"Liebestram with It Came Upon a Midnight Clear"

Mark Hayes

Words of Welcome

Lighting of the Advent Candle

Linda Benton & John Grubb

Reader 1: Today we relight the first two candles of the Advent wreath. The candle of **HOPE** and the candle of **PEACE**. Now we light the third candle of Advent. This is the candle of **JOY**. As the coming of Jesus, our Savior, draws nearer, our joy builds with our anticipation of His birth.

(Light 2 purple candles and the pink candle)

Reader 2: From the Book of Isaiah we read the words of our Lord: "But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating; for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight."—Isaiah 65:18

All: We joyfully praise You, O Lord, for the fulfillment of Your promise of a Savior and what that means in our lives. Thank You for the gift of salvation through the birth of Your son, Jesus. Create us anew as we wait and help us to see Your glory as You fill our lives with Your living Spirit. Amen.

***Hymn**

"On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry"

Hymn 156

***Prayer of Confession**

God of grace and truth, we confess our unworthiness to stand in Your presence. Mary accepted Your call to be the mother of Jesus. Forgive our lack of submission to Your will. Your Son, our Savior, was born in poverty in a manger. Forgive our greed and rejection of Your ways. The shepherds left their flocks to go to Bethlehem. Forgive our self-interest and lack of vision. The wise men followed the star to find Jesus the King. Forgive our reluctance to seek You. We have sinned. Forgive and heal us.

***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 6:35-40

Duet

"Christmas Hallelujah"

Ella & Maggie

In the summer of 1865 a young minister by the name of Phillips Brooks announced to his congregation in Philadelphia that he was going to study and travel abroad. During that trip as he traveled, he visited the Holy Land. There were many places he visited like Jerusalem, the Sea of Galilee and Nazareth, the town where Jesus grew up. There was one place, however, that stood out above all the others, the town of Bethlehem. Arriving on Christmas Eve, he attended the worship service at the Church of the Nativity. It was one of the most inspiring experiences of his entire life. Writing to his church family back home he said, "I remember especially Christmas Eve, when the whole church was ringing with splendid hymns of praise to God. It seemed as if I could hear voices telling each other of the 'Wonderful Night' of the Savior's birth." Several years later he was reminded of that special evening in Bethlehem. It inspired him to write a Christmas poem. He asked the congregation's organist to compose a melody so that the boys and girls of his church could sing it during their Christmas program. It was called "O Little Town of Bethlehem."

This morning as we look forward to the celebration of Christ's birth let's talk about Bethlehem and the many ways in which it is described in God's Word. Thumbing through the Scriptures, we find that one of the earliest references to Bethlehem is found in the little book of Ruth. Just four chapters long, it tells the story of Naomi and her daughter-in-law Ruth. Naomi and her husband had left Bethlehem years ago during a famine and had moved to Moab. Now her husband and both of her two sons were dead. Naomi wanted to go home. Both of her sons had taken wives in that foreign land and one of them, Ruth, begged to return with her mother-in-law. Pleading with Naomi, she had said, "Ask me not to leave you, or to return from following after you. For where you go, I will go; and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people and your God my God" (Ruth 1:16). Arriving back in Bethlehem they were destitute. They didn't even have anything to eat. So Naomi told Ruth to go into the fields and collect the stalks of barley that the harvesters had dropped. Those who worked in the fields had been told to leave a little extra behind for the poor. It was a custom dating back to the days of Moses. Going into one of these fields just outside of Bethlehem, Ruth met Boaz. He owned the field and was impressed by Ruth's devotion to her mother-in-law, Naomi. He may have also been impressed by her lovely appearance. In any case, I think you know what happened. They fell deeply in love and were soon married. That marriage produced a son named Obed, who was the grandfather of David, the most famous king of ancient Israel. Furthermore if you trace the lineage of David down through the centuries as recorded in the gospels, you will discover that Ruth was also an ancestor of Joseph, the earthly father of Jesus. So one of the ways we might describe Bethlehem is to call it the **Town of Love**. It was descriptive of Ruth's love for her husband, her love of her mother-in-law, Naomi, and most importantly of all her love for the God who had provided such a gracious and warm welcome when she arrived in Bethlehem.

There's also another name by which Bethlehem might be called. In the sixteenth chapter of the book of 1 Samuel in the Old Testament, the Lord spoke to Samuel, one of ancient Israel's most renowned religious leaders. It was a time of political upheaval. Saul, the king of Israel had disobeyed God and consequently became a tyrant. He was no longer fit to rule over Israel. So the Lord told Samuel to go to Bethlehem and anoint a new king, one of the sons of a man named Jesse. Arriving in the town, Samuel called the people together to offer a sacrifice unto the Lord. Plotting the overthrow of a sitting monarch was dangerous business and best conducted in a religious setting. Following the sacrifice, a festive meal was served for everyone to enjoy. It was a perfect opportunity for Samuel to look over the sons of Jesse and see which one the Lord had selected. However, each time he inquired of the Lord, "Is this the one you wish for me to anoint as the next king of Israel?" the Lord responded by saying, "No." Frustrated, Samuel asked Jesse if he had any more sons. Jesse replied, "I almost forgot. There's one more. He's out in the fields watching over the sheep." "Bring him here," Samuel demanded. When he arrived Samuel looked upon a handsome young man with a youthful complexion. The Lord whispered in his ear, "He's the one." Taking a horn of oil, Samuel anointed David right then and there in front of his father and all of his brothers. From that

moment on David was filled with the Spirit of God. Furthermore, years later during his reign, God promised David that the scepter of royal authority would never depart from His family. So another name for Bethlehem might be the **Town of Royalty**.

There's a third way in which Bethlehem might be identified. It's found within a rather short book of Old Testament prophecy known as Micah. Micah lived during a time when the Jewish people were facing a dangerous adversary, the mighty Assyrian Empire. It had already swallowed up a number of neighboring kingdoms and it looked like the little country of Judea was next on the list. Nevertheless, God gave Micah a message of hope and reassurance regarding the future. The little town of Bethlehem would once again become the birthplace of a king. "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times" Micah 5:2. God would raise up a new ruler just as he had done in the days of David, but this ruler would be far greater than any earthly king. He would possess a divine origin. He would be God's Son, born to impoverished parents in a little village so obscure that it needed an additional name, "Ephrathah," to distinguish it from all of the other towns that were also known as Bethlehem. The word "Ephrathah" means *fruitful* and refers to the bountiful harvests that Bethlehem was known for. But it is also a reminder that Bethlehem would be fruitful in another way. It would be the **Town of Promise**. It would be the birthplace of the Savior of mankind. Throughout the centuries that followed His birth, this Savior would reap a rich harvest of men and women and boys and girls who had entrusted their lives into His care.

A fourth way in which Bethlehem might be known is, of course, associated with this season of the year. In the Gospel of Luke we are told that Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken throughout the entire Roman world and that everyone should return to their hometowns to be registered. For Joseph and Mary, to whom he was engaged, this required a long and rigorous journey because his ancestral home was Bethlehem. It would take them about a week, walking the hundred miles or so from Nazareth in the north to the town of Bethlehem just south of Jerusalem. It would have been especially difficult for Mary, since she was nearing the end of her pregnancy. Even if Joseph had been able to acquire a donkey for Mary to ride on, it would have been an exhausting trip. However, when they arrived more difficulties awaited them. There was no place to stay, no accommodations anywhere for a family expecting their first child. As Luke informs us in his Gospel, "While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her first-born son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn" (Luke 2:6-7). It was not a very auspicious place for the arrival of the Savior of the world, a rude stable in a small town, His first bed a wooden trough where they fed the animals, His first visitors a group of smelly shepherds who said that they had been informed of His birth by a choir of angels. Nevertheless, everything that God had promised, dating all the way back to the days of Ruth, had now come to pass. Bethlehem had become the **Town of Fulfillment**.

So there are many ways, many additional names by which Bethlehem can be identified—the town of love, the town of royalty, the town of promise, the town of fulfillment. All of them tell us something about the birthplace of Jesus that is both lovely and endearing. None of them, however, are as meaningful as the name which it was originally given, the town or in the original Hebrew, the "house or place of bread." That name above all other possible names describes its finest attribute, especially during this Christmas season. Bethlehem was not just the place where bountiful crops were grown. It was the place from which the **Bread of Life** originated. During earthly ministry, this is what Jesus said about Himself. Speaking to those who wished to witness additional miracles, like the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus told them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me will never go hungry, and he who believes in Me will never be thirsty" (John 6:35). Their ancestors had been provided with life sustaining bread called "manna" when they wandered in the wilderness during their sojourn to the promised land of God. Now, however, something even more wonderful was being offered, heavenly bread. It was the kind of bread that would prepare and

sustain for their journey into eternity. It was not the kind of bread that you can consume physically. Rather it was the kind of bread that arises out of a faith relationship with the Son of God. To believe and entrust one's life into the Savior's care was the only way to partake of this bread. As Jesus, Himself said, "For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in Him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day" (John 6:40).

Never was there a more fitting place for the Son of God to be born than the town of Bethlehem. Truly, it was the **Town of Bread**.

RESPONSE TO THE WORD OF GOD

Hymn

"O Little Town of Bethlehem"

Hymn 180

Reaffirmation of Faith

James and Cynthia Brunot

Apostles' Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord: who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. On the third day He rose from the dead; He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Doxology

"Doxology on Advent"

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Lord and Giver of all good things, the magi travelled for miles to bring the Christ child the first Christmas presents. So may we, too, remember with thankful hearts the love that comes with each present we open. We also thank You for the love You have for each of us, and we thank You for the many gifts that You give us, especially the gift of our Savior, Jesus Christ. 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

"From Heaven Above"

Wilbur Held

The flowers are given to the Glory of God and memory of Edward and Virginia Fleming and Anthony and Mary Capiraso, the parents of James and Ann Marie Fleming

Dear Beloved, Thank you for faithful support of the warming shelter ministry. Your partnership and support makes the work of the church possible. Please visit the shelter when you can.

Peace, Tim Brooks, SJCWS

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	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>				

Concerns- December 15th

- Avery:** Tinkie, hospice care
- Barefoot:** Jim, home, continues 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
- Boone:** niece undergoing radiation treatments
- Brunot:** Jim's brother Bill, completed chemo
- Callahan:** Mary Jane (friend) in remission
Steve Chaffin (friend) blood clots
- Compter:** Jeannie, Seth (both friend) health issues
- 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
- Easter:** Jim (brother) cancer
- Fleming:** Dominick (Ann Marie's brother) heart surgery successful,
Previous pastor heart surgery
- 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:** (friend) Tommy Atkinson stroke
- Goodman:** Friend Betty is near death
- Grigg:** Beth Falwell- starting cancer treatments
Chris Mays- diabetic complications
Friend in Peru medevac to US
- Grubb:** John cancer
- Hann:** Alice's brother, congestive heart failure, cancer
- Harris:** Jim, back pain
Judy- shoulder replaced
- Heinrich:** Steven - (grandson) autoimmune disorder
Barbara Lore- (Helen's sister) heart problems
- Kuhn-Kibbey:** Dot reinjured her back
Sarah McCabe Oakes,(friend) amputation leg, pelvis
- Lambert:** Margaret sciatica pain, arthritis
- Linton:** Candy (Parker'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

Granddaughter had a seizure

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

Rutledge: friend in Hawaii health issues

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 is back in hospital in LA

Morgan (nephew) life decisions

Cook at Shepherd's Table, baby in NICU

Tom Foster breathing issues

Stevens: Jackie Landis- heart problems

Earl Carter- health issues

Matt- lung cancer

All Virginia towns impacted by hurricane

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 15th

Sunday: 10 am Worship
3rd Sunday of Advent
Abendmusik 7 pm

Sunday: December 22nd
10 am Worship
4th Sunday of Advent
First Responders Christmas Tree decorating

December Birthdays

Bill Mitchell - 17
Shawn Webb - 18
Gayle Mauser - 30

December Anniversaries

Roy & Libby Monk - 20

*Abendmusik- DON'T GET
December 15th at 7 pm*

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