

Bedford Presbyterian Church

105 West Main Street, Bedford, Virginia

From 1844 to 2024 (180 Years)

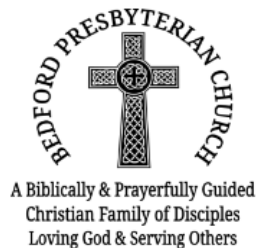


Week of December 22nd

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

“Silent Night”

Marianne Kim

Words of Welcome

Lighting of the Advent Candle

John & Judy Blair

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Reader 1: Today we relight the first three candles of the Advent Wreath — the candles of **HOPE**, **PEACE** and **JOY**. Now we light the fourth candle of Advent. This is the candle of **LOVE**. Jesus demonstrated self-giving love in His ministry as the Good Shepherd. Advent is a time for kindness, thinking of others and sharing with others. It is a time to love as God loved us by giving us His most precious gift. As God is love, let us be love also.

(Light 4 candles)

Reader 2: From the Gospel of John we hear: “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:34-35

All: Teach us to love, O Lord. May we always remember to put You first as we follow Christ’s footsteps, that we may know Your love and show it in our lives. As we prepare for our celebration of Jesus’ birth, also fill our hearts with love for the world, that all may know Your love and the one whom You have sent, Your son, our Savior. Amen.

**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”

Bill Rutledge

PROCLAIMING THE WORD OF GOD

Introduction to Scripture

Scripture

Luke 2: 8-14

Anthem

“O Come, Little Children”

David Giardinieri

Sermon

The Angels of Christmas

During the Christmas season families frequently display a nativity scene similar to the one on the communion table this morning. Placed in a cozy stable, you will always find Mary and Joseph and the baby Jesus. There will also be several shepherds along with some sheep and usually three wise men and a few camels. But if that's all there is, something is missing. You can't portray the birth of Christ without mentioning the angels of Christmas. They are everywhere!

Here's a brief summary of their various appearances. The angel Gabriel appears to Zechariah at the temple in Jerusalem to inform him that he will be the father of John the Baptist. A little later Gabriel visits Mary in Nazareth of Galilee to let her know that she will be the mother of the Christ Child. Then Joseph, Mary's fiancé, is visited by an angel while he is sleeping. In that dream the angel tells him to proceed with the marriage because the child that she will bear is from the Holy Spirit. Months later on the night of Christ's birth, a choir of angels announces His birth to a group of startled shepherds in the fields of Bethlehem and finally once again in a dream Joseph is warned to take his family and flee to Egypt. As you can see, God's angels are quite busy, appearing over and over again throughout the Christmas story.

So this morning let's see if we can come to a better understanding of angels, who they are and if they are still making their presence known in our day and time. Mentioned nearly three hundred times throughout the Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation, angels are described in a variety of ways. This is what the Bible says. First of all it tells us that angels were created by God. He made them. Psalm 148 is a hymn of praise. All that God has created is called upon to honor Him and that includes the angels. Verse two declares, "Praise Him, all His angels, praise Him all His heavenly hosts." The second thing that we learn is that angels have been around for a long, long time. This is what Job discovered in the thirty-eighth chapter of the book that bears his name. During an ongoing conversation with God regarding all the suffering he had endured, the Lord asked Job a question, "Where were you when I created the earth and laid out its foundations? Where were you at the moment of creation when the stars sang together and the angels shouted for joy" (Job 38:4-7)? In other words, even before the earth came into being, God had already created the angels and they looked on with joyous excitement as it was brought into existence.

The Scriptures also tell us that angels are spiritual beings. They never die. On one occasion Jesus was asked if people in heaven were married. This is what He said, "The people of this age marry and are given in marriage, but the men and women who are worthy to rise from death and live in the age to come do not marry. They are like the angels and cannot die" (Luke 20:34-36). So angels are different from human beings. They are God's special creation. They do not enter into personal relationships with one another like we do and they do not live under the restraints of time and space which we must endure. Furthermore, for the most part they are invisible. They go about their business without us recognizing their presence. When they do make themselves known unto us, it is always an experience that is unforgettably awesome. In the days of Elisha, the prophet, an entire regiment of soldiers from Syria had been sent to capture him. Seeing this multitude, Elisha's servant was petrified. Elisha, however, was not afraid. He saw something that his servant could not visualize. He asked God to open the eyes of his servant so that he too could see the army of angels that had been sent to protect them. Now clearly seeing what had been previously invisible, the servant realized that the hillsides were filled with angelic horses and chariots of fire (2 Kings 6:17).

The Bible tells us some other things about angels. It says that they are stronger and wiser than human beings and that they are highly organized like the ranks of an army. One of them, Michael, is identified as an archangel in the book of Jude in the New Testament. Others are described as standing before the throne of God constantly lifting their voices in praise as recorded in the sixth chapter of the book of Isaiah. There are also vast multitudes of angels. In the book of Revelation the writer, John, says, "Again I looked, and I heard angels, thousands and tens of thousands of them" (Revelation 5:11). Finally, the Scriptures tell

us that although angels were created holy, some of them rebelled against God and were cast out of heaven. Their leader was Satan, the devil and he has continued to stir up trouble here ever since.

Without a doubt the Scriptures tell us over and over again that angels are real. In fact, the writer of the book of Hebrews tells us that they have a special responsibility. He says, "Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation" (Hebrews 1:14)? In other words, angels are the Lord's servants, sent to encourage and help God's people. Besides honoring and praising the Lord, they are commissioned by God to make their presence known unto us in three specific ways.

First, they are God's messengers. In fact, the word "angel" means messenger. That was certainly true with regards to the birth of Christ and it was true in two distinctly different ways. When the angel Gabriel greeted Mary, he informed her of what God was getting ready to do in her life. By the power of his Spirit, she would become the mother of the Christ child (Luke 1:30-33). Later when an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream, the message was a little different. This time it was not what God was going to do, but rather what the Lord wanted him to do. The angel told him, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 1:20). The same is true for us regarding any angelic messages that might come our way. Sometimes it will be to inform us of what He's up to, what He's going to do. Sometimes the message will contain instructions as to what He wants us to do. Either way, angels are God's messengers.

Angels have the responsibility of protecting God's people from harm. Do you remember the story in the book of Acts when Peter was imprisoned? Herod was preparing to execute him the next day. But that night an angel awakened him while he was sleeping. The chains that were binding him fell from his wrists. The angel told him to get dressed and then he led Peter out of the prison, the gates swinging wide open as they made their departure. Peter was so confused by what had just happened, that at first, he couldn't believe he was really free. Maybe it was just a vision that he had imagined. But standing there on the street outside of the prison, he realized that he had been the subject of an angelic rescue. He said, "Now I know without a doubt that the Lord sent His angel and rescued me from Herod's clutches and from everything that the Jewish people were anticipating" (Acts 12:11). Sometimes God's angels rescue us from harm.

Finally, angels reveal the presence and the power of God. That's what happened when the angel of the Lord revealed Himself to Moses at Mount Sinai. The angel of the Lord appeared in a bush that was on fire, but which was not consumed by the flames of that fire. Turning aside to see this unusual, angelically inspired sight, the Lord then spoke to Moses, telling him first to take off his sandals because he was standing on holy ground. Then He proceeded to tell Moses that He had a special job for him to do. After explaining why the time had come to rescue the Israelites from their slavery, the Lord said to Moses, "So now, go, I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt" (Exodus 3:10). So sometimes God chooses angels to get our attention, to make His presence known, so that we can undertake a mission with His strength and purpose which would otherwise be impossible for us to perform.

Down through the years, I have collected a sizeable number of accounts regarding angelic visitations. One of them is a remarkable narrative in Billy Graham's book *Angels*. A missionary family was saved from hostile villagers who saw tall warriors, dressed in shining garments, guarding their home with drawn swords on the evening of the attack. Another account was shared by an Israeli tour guide during our family's visit to the Holy Land years ago. It was reported that the Syrians had fled from their positions on the Golan Heights in northern Israel because they saw huge white tanks advancing on their positions. However, that was impossible. The Israelis didn't possess any white tanks. In fact, there were no tanks at all in that sector of the conflict.

One of the most remarkable accounts and the one with which I will close this message occurred a little closer to home. A father and mother and their two children were camping at Big Bear Lake in California. While sitting around the campfire the father read from the Bible and asked God to protect them during their camping trip. He then took a picture of the family just before five men roared up on motorcycles demanding that they hand over their valuables. But before the family could empty their pockets, the five men suddenly became agitated, hopped on their bikes and took off. The family wondered what in the world was going on until they returned home and had the pictures in their camera developed. This is what they saw.

As the Scriptures so beautifully remind us, "For God will give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. They shall bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone" (Psalm 91:11-12).

RESPONSE TO THE WORD OF GOD

Worship Song

"Offering (Christmas Version)"

Paul Baloche

Affirmation of Faith

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 on Advent"

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***

"Angels We Have Heard on High"

Hymn 188

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.

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 5 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 22nd

Joy- Judy Harris- son living in Australia home for Christmas

Joy- Christy able to watch son perform in Philadelphia

Joy- Ellen- Tom doing better

Joy- Bill & Deanna for the spectacular Abendmusik

Concerns- December 22nd

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

Concern about drones in New Jersey

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 went well

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- prayers for family on passing

Chris Mays- diabetic complications

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 22nd

- Sunday: 10 am Worship
4th Sunday of Advent
First Responders Christmas Tree decorating
- Tuesday: Christmas Eve Candlelight Service, 5 pm
- Sunday: December 29th
10 am Worship

December Birthdays

Gayle Mauser – 30

January Birthdays

Gerald DeWitt - 4
Christy Boone - 8
Cynthia Brunot- 13

January Anniversaries

Bill and Janet Yodis - 24

Thank you for your continued support

BPC Financial Snapshot						
General Operations Contribution Income			General Operations Expense			
	Forecast	Actual	YTD Ahead/(Behind)	Monthly Expense Target	Actual Expenses	YTD (Over)/Under Spent
Nov 2024	\$ 16,740.00	\$ 14,385.04	\$ 18,223.74	\$ 17,534.05	\$ 10,851.51	\$ 65,618.55



Clerk's Corner



- Keep our Pastoral Nominating Committee in prayer: Judy Blair, Nick DeWitt, James Fleming, Deanna Rutledge, Dave Stetson, Paul VanDyke (Chair), and Shawn Webb.
 - Welcome our new members, Jim and Cindy Brunot.
 - Thank you, Dianne and Donna, for the beautiful decorations in the sanctuary.
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- I am biased, but what a beautiful Abendmusik this year. Thank you, Bill and Deanna, for all your hard work.
 - For the past two months, First Fruits has exceeded our monthly budget for missions.
 - All approved technology acquisitions have been purchased and installed. Decommissioning and recycling the old systems has started. Old computers will be made available on first come first serve basis.
 - Operational Christmas Child was a great success, increasing our boxes from 44 in 2023 to 100 this year. Thank you, Michelle, for leading this effort.
 - Suds and Showers operated through Dec 19th, with 57 people using it. Warming Shelter will be open when temperatures fall below 32 degrees. Warming shelter needs volunteers!
 - Important Dates: Jan 12th - Installation of new Church officers and Stated Session meeting; January 26th - presentation on state of church with reports from Elders and review of 2025 budget.