



# NORTHMINSTER *Life*

## 2021 Advent Sounds of the Season

### December 5 - Lessons & Carols

Join us and bring a friend for this annual worship service of scripture and song, led by our music director, Sandy Smith.

### December 12 - 3rd Sunday of Advent

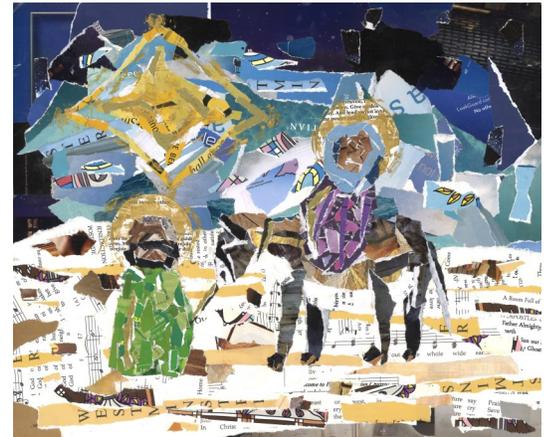
This Sunday, we will celebrate this Sunday with the simplicity of the shepherds.

### December 19 - 4th Sunday of Advent

Experience the trumpeting sounds of the Angels bringing the word of Christ's coming with the Colony IV Brass Quintet

### December 24 - Christmas Eve

Our annual Christmas Eve candlelight communion service will begin with a harp prelude from Calista Koch at 5:30pm. The worship service will begin at 6:00.



## ALTERNATIVE CHRISTMAS FAIR

- **The annual Alternative Christmas Fair is a unique way to give a gift that "gives" twice. By giving a donation in any amount to any or all of the supported ministries, you will be given a card to gift to a friend or family member, letting them know you have given a donation in their honor.**

Join us immediately following the Lessons & Carols service on Sunday, December 5th for this wonderful event.  
You may also give by mail or online.

**Thornwell  
Loaves & Fishes  
Habitat for Humanity**

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## Have a Very Daring Christmas

With each Christmas comes four sets of familiar New Testament characters: some shepherds, a father, some sages, and a mother. I suspect we annually underestimate just how daring their stories invite us to become.

*This season, dare to believe that your otherwise diminutive position in the world matters to God.* A chief challenge of modern living is the daily overload of painful world news coupled with the reality that 99.9 percent of it is beyond our control. I am not the president-elect, the pope, or a prince. What can I (we) do about a sickly Sudanese child halfway around the world? Yet remember the witness of our annual Advent friends the shepherds, working third shift on a hillside full of sheep. In a world of Herod the Greats and other massive political realities, our shepherd friends remain nameless throughout history; yet it is they, not he, for whom the heavens are opened and God's angels deliver their wonderfully disruptive news. "What's this?" ask the nervous pastors and elders, "God is supposed to work through the proper channels! We have an appointment in the temple come Saturday, right?" Yet *there* is their God, alive and well out on the dodgy end of town, conscripting nameless herders into the ministry of good-news-telling. Shepherds? Dare to believe there is work for us all to do.

*This season, dare to risk public disrepute for the sake of some worthy calling.* How often do we sense a divine not in this or that new direction, a slight Spirit-filled push toward a scruffy neighbor in need, or some growing sense of call to bold new action in the world. But who wants to appear the fool? Who wants to disrupt the social patterns that have worked so well for us for so long? So instead we lay low, dressed in the warm sweater of other's esteem. Yet remember the witness of our brother Joseph, who nine months from December find himself in a real pickle: a pregnant fiancée and high-minded neighbors. But in the middle of the night, he is given a provocative invitation from a messenger to move *through* the disgrace, not around it. God asks him to trust that some larger effort of goodness and grace is afoot - a ministry that will, in the end, vindicate all the public mumbling. Neighbors and their opinions come and go; the love-summons of the gospel remains for us all. Do it.

*This season, dare to imagine that there is treasure worth seeking beyond what can be procured on Black Friday or Cyber Monday.* Here we are, called to practice a spirit-filled ministry in a time when Big Box greeters are trampled to death in the mad rush toward "everyday low prices." How much is a life worth these days? Indeed, these are strange times for us Christians on this continent: On the one hand, we are the very people who most know how to celebrate that the material treasures of this world are God's created-good-gifts. We know the Giver and thus we name the gifts, so we should be the last people on the block who are scrooge-ish about material matters. But on the other hand, you and I make our profession in a time of *hyper*-abundance. Christians around the world must hold to this faith under a tyranny of oppressive powers; we hold the faith under the tyranny of Sam's, Hobby Lobby, and Amazon.com. What's real treasure when credit comes cheap? Can one find one's life at the bottom of a bargain bin? What does it profit a people to secure gifts for everyone on your list, only to sequester the soul of your family? Remember our wise travelers "from the east," who for reasons no one will ever truly understand set out on a journey for some treasure more substantial than what already fills their coffers. In the end, even these elites from the east seem willing — wanting! — to lay down serious coin at the feet of an otherwise lower-class child to whom such astounding promises are attached. This season, dare to believe that you will find your God-given life in the unlikeliest of places ... like a Bethlehem barn.

*This season, dare to imagine that the barren places in your life are the seedbeds for God's next act of newness.* Families sometimes falter. Marriages grow cold. Hearts are held captive, rubber-banded to broken events decades in the past. Our lives are a curious concoction of grace and wilderness. Is it any wonder that some among us come to the end of their ropes, unable to imagine anything new under the sun? Yet remember our sister Mary, the Christ-mother, whose understandable metaphysical doubt at the news of her pregnancy is met with an angel's assurance that "nothing is impossible with God." What a risky narrative we steward: an unwed teenage mother conscripted to surrogate the divine. It's a tale so provocative it irritates "family value" hawks and fierce feminists alike. I say, let the scandal of Mary's life-filled-womb rock us from our religious slumbers; let it summon you to imagine what impossible new thing God might do amid the lifeless, wilderness places of your life. Don't get hung up on the biology of her virginity (as the church has done for centuries). Think as the Bible thinks: Mary the Virgin is one more willing-but-unable servant in a long line of Biblical characters wherein God makes a way where there was no way before. It cannot be; it was. There was no life; there was life. He was dead; he is risen. Dare to believe there can be a bright Easter morning on your twilight Christmas Eve.

Have a very daring Christmas. You are loved.



## Do this in remembrance of me.

This Christmas Eve, we share in the blessing of communion together at our candlelight service. Harp prelude, including our livestream of the service, will begin at 5:30pm. Worship will begin at 6:00.

## NOVEMBER WOMEN'S RETREAT

Rev. Dr. Lisa Hickman led our wonderful 2-day fall Women's Retreat in November, entitled PRAYING THE LIFE CYCLE. All the generations of our church were represented, and four new friends joined us from Forsyth Presbyterian Church.



## 2022 ELDER INSTALLATION BREAKFAST

If you are a former or current Northminster Elder, you will soon be receiving an invitation to our annual elder installation breakfast to be held on Sunday, January 9th at 8:30am. We will hear the statements of faith of our new elders elect: Barbara Fatkin, Jinny McDuffie, Ray Mosely, Michael Napier, and Genny Whitaker.

## THANK YOU, CHURCH FAMILY

Words are powerless to express my gratitude to the Congregational Care Committee team. It has been an honor and pleasure serving as an elder/chair of this essential part of Northminster. The past 24 months have been challenging and we never wavered. I commend each of you for walking with me, supporting me and always stepping in to offer your hands without hesitation. May your life be filled with hope and joy for helping me carry each other and our church members' burdens during my tenure. All my love and thanks to you.  
Serving others in Christ, Sandra Ridgeway

Thank you for thinking of me on my 90th birthday. Your cards and comments were so special and much appreciated.  
Love and Blessings, Jean Fleisch

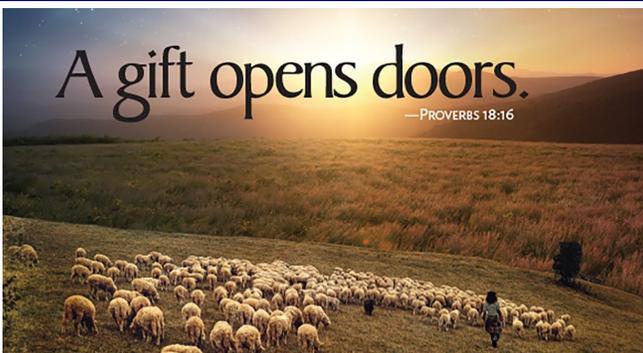
## GIVING OUR YOUTH AN OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE

Are you living alone and have some chores or tasks with which some of our young men in the church could help? The young adult males in our youth group want to lend a hand one Sunday afternoon a month. Speak to Pastor Ralph if you have ideas or needs.

## SIMPLY STEWARDSHIP

Thank you to all who have prayerfully considered your giving for 2022 and turned in your pledge card. We trust that God will continue to bless Northminster in ways beyond our understanding. Having your pledge simply helps our finance committee to budget for the upcoming year, ensuring we are being good stewards of your gifts, given to further God's kingdom. If you have not yet turned in your pledge card, please consider doing so as soon as possible, as the finance committee is beginning meetings for the 2022 budget.

## DECEMBER SPECIAL OFFERING - CHRISTMAS JOY



Each year during the Advent and Christmas season, we turn our eyes to Bethlehem and celebrate the wondrous gift of Jesus Christ, our Savior. God has blessed the church with incredible leadership in every time and place, but those leaders often need to be supported by their communities as well. This Offering addresses the support needed by some of our leaders, including supporting leadership development for communities of color and providing support for Presbyterian church workers in their time on need.



## GOOD SAMARITAN

The scripture tells us to "love your neighbor as yourself." What better way could you love your neighbor than helping them in times of need. The Good Samaritan Offering does this for the needs in our community and for the needs of our congregation. **In the month of October, Centenary used some of our contributions to assist seven different families with their power bill. Two of the families had car expenses; another family has reduction in income because of husband's death and another family got behind because of the cost of caring for 3 grandchildren. Four other families were assisted with their rent. One of these renters had to leave work to care for her mother who has since passed. She is now back at work and hopes to be back to work full time in the near future.** Thank you for your generous support of the needy people in our community!



## GLOVES FOR THE HOMELESS

This year, your donations to gloves for the homeless, totaling \$735, has purchased 440 pairs of gloves. If you would still like to donate towards this mission, you may send your gift by mail or through the Sunday offering. Please note "Gloves" in the memo line. We thank you again for your generosity in helping Northminster support our community and give to those in need.

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Dec 5 - Gail Walker  
Dec 12 - Hannah Denny  
Dec 17 - Roland Hill  
Dec 30 - Eric Roddenberry

Dec 6 - Frenchie Bowen  
Dec 13 - Abby Smith  
Dec 18 - Jeanne Roddenberry

Dec 11 - Janet Kelly  
Dec 15 - Mary Alice Wilson  
Dec 22 - Sharon Sulkers