

ARDEN FOCUS

*Following Christ, proclaiming his praises,
and engaging our community with his grace.*

DECEMBER 2023

Merry in Christ

Pastor Paul at our recent Thanksgiving service, reminded us to “Make a joyful noise to the **Lord**, all the earth! Serve the Lord with gladness! Come into his presence with singing!” Psalm 100:1-2 Why? “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” John 1:14 Now, that is why we sing joyfully and gladly this Christmas.

I did not bear testimony at our Thanksgiving service, but I would like to do so now. Four lists follow bellow. Please make a loud noise over each. By HIS Grace, (our riches in Christ Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit) in 2023, Arden church has been able to assist in bringing the Gospel to **students at** WCU, App. State, UNCA, UGA, WNC & Eastern Tennessee high schools. And through ISI we have touched campuses throughout the USA and abroad. Thank you Lord, for Andrew & Trish, Andrew & Kate, Alec & Riley, Danny, Jeff & Caroline, Ed & Vicki, Jack & Diana, and Scott and Brooke.

The Lord also has used us to **partner with ministries** in Cherokee, Simpsonville, Springfield, Charlotte, Atlanta, and various reservations in North America, South America, Europe, Africa and Worldwide via ThirdMil. Again, this includes real friends like, Bill & Suzanne S., Ruth & Scott, Roger & Laura, Nathan & Lori, Gabe & Jennifer, Philip & Sandy, Jim & Carin, Gary & Anita, Tom & Lucy, and Bill & Susan C.

Specific countries to which we help shine the light of Christ include: Japan, UK, Haiti/Dominican Republic, Senegal, Mexico, Peru, Turkey, Belarus, India, Azerbaijan, Myanmar, and Ukraine. The torch bearers to these nations include: Gary & Lois, Brooks and Riva, Esaie & Natacha, Donnie & Kara, Charlie & Bonita, Keith & Ruth, Pastor Yavuz, Pastor Vladimir, Apam, Thial & Annie, and Andrew.

Lastly, there are mercy ministries of MAPS, Mustard Seed, ABCCM, Alongside Families, and SKY in Ukraine. And a few of these hands of mercy include Kristi, Sandy, Bridget & David, Scott, Sheila, etc.

Real people supported by a real church...you!

Thank you for your prayers and faithful giving as you support Faith Promise and Mercy ministries of Arden Presbyterian Church.

Merry in Christ every day,
Pastor James



When looking at the Christmas narrative, the supernatural events surrounding Jesus' birth dominate our focus. As we read the beginning of the gospels of Matthew and Luke, it is very easy to freeze Joseph, Mary, the Shepherds, and others into two-dimensional characters witnessing angelic messages and spirit-filled dreams. It is helpful to remember that they were flesh and blood people and that most of their life details are not recorded in Scripture. Like us, they lived in a fallen world and felt the effects of sin in their hearts, in their relationships, and in their culture. Unlike us, they were at the epicenter of the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy as God entered the world as a baby.

Mary and Joseph were betrothed. They were anticipating a married life together and the hopeful blessings of a future family when God intervened.

Mary will bear the Son of God and Joseph will raise the child as his own. The day to day implications of that sentence are not in the gospels, but Mary and Joseph had to live life with one another in the midst of people who continued to assume Mary's infidelity and Joseph's concession to dishonor.

The shepherds were living and working in the fields. Considered ceremonially unclean because of their work, they had come to terms with their limited and low status in society when God spoke joy into their weary lives. The angelic proclamation of the birth of Jesus is given to these men and they are brought near to the Son of God in worship. Their knowledge of this miraculous birth did not change the social system in which they lived. Their excitement to share the good news likely increased the frequency of their experiences of social disapproval. For the rest of their lives they had to choose between the weariness of their daily circumstances and their memory of the joy from the night of Jesus' birth.

God coming to us in the flesh changes everything about our perspective, though our circumstances often continue in difficulty. Relationships are broken; cancer ravages a loved one; good friends move far away; children and parents lock in conflict. Life just doesn't turn out as we would plan, but that is very often when God reveals His presence. We grow weary as faith and fear battle for ownership of our hearts.

As Mary, Joseph, and the Shepherds learned, no life works out as expected, but the Lord is at work. The question before us is not whether we will grow weary in this life, but rather how will we respond and pursue joy **when** we do?

I hope you will join us on December 10 at 7:00 p.m. for our Christmas program as we explore the joy of Christmas through word, music, and song! Childcare is available for Kindergarten and younger and we will have a reception in the multipurpose room afterwards!

- Anthony

RECEPTION SIGN-UP LINK

"Repeat the sounding joy" in fellowship and celebration! Please bring 2 dozen of your favorite handheld Christmas treats (cookie, candy, tart, etc.), or one of the beverage items listed (at link above) to the multipurpose room kitchen on December 10. Items may be dropped off Sunday morning or 5:00 and after.

If your treats are allergen-free, please comment there and label them: Free of (nuts, peanuts, dairy, eggs, gluten, dyes, etc.). You can review the available slots at the link above and click on the button to sign up. Thank you!

Prison Fellowship Angel Tree Christmas 2023



Thank you for a wonderful beginning to our Angel Tree Project. Having 26 of our 35 angels adopted and many caregiver cards and donations given are evidence of the loving spirit in our church. Have you ever pondered the thought that WE the church are the tangible representation of Christ? As we reach out in love, in this case to both the prisoner and their families, we share Jesus' LOVE and the WORD that tells us to act as His vessels of pouring blessings on others.

How can you be a vessel? We still need angels to be adopted, caregiver cards and donations to cover food purchases. All gifts and food purchases are due at the church on Sunday December 10. Delivery day will be Saturday, December 16 at 9:30. Fifteen driver teams are needed. What a joyful way to be involved in service is the sharing of these gifts and speaking Christ into the prisoner family lives. These gifts are not being given in the name of Arden Pres but rather in the name of the incarcerated adult. Sadly almost 50% of these are mothers this year.

So please pick up a flier at the Angel Tree counter or take one from one of our youth or adults handing them out this week. Note that food items are specific and assigned to the first letter of your last name, in order to make the food boxes the same. We expect to provide food for 17 families. Other important information AND the opportunity to sign up for serving are included on the flier.

We are seeking your prayers for hearts to be open to and changed through the Gospel message presented in this project by both those serving and those being served.



Pastoral Search Committee Update

Dear congregation....

Your Senior Pastor Search Committee wants you to know how much we value your prayers and your support. Your words of encouragement, and your patience and understanding are vital to us as we forge ahead on the task that God has given to us. We are joyful to be serving Him, and His church, but admittedly, the search does have its peaks and valleys.

One way you can partner with us in our efforts to seek God's will for us, in terms of searching for the pastor he has for us, is to join with the Search Team as they pray each day. The Team is using the [Prayer Prompts sheet](#) daily. The Prayer Prompts on the sheet are numbered 1 - 29. If it's the 3rd of December, the Team all prays at some point during the day using prompt #3; if it's the 11th of the month, we use prompt #11, etc. When we get to days 30 & 31, you can use a general prayer for the search process.

There are [Prayer Prompt sheets](#) are also at the welcome center or you can ask Jim for a copy. We highly covet you praying with us! Thank you!!

Your Senior Pastor Search Team,

Jim Aldrich, Jack Brinkley, Kathy Clark, Kenneth Dupee, Daniel Jensen, Nicki Kennedy, and John Paschall



Sewing Sisters made 101 Christmas stockings this year for the ABCCM Christmas Angel program.



Women's Ministry

Fellowship Lunch!

Let's meet for lunch!

Thursday, January 25

11:30 AM

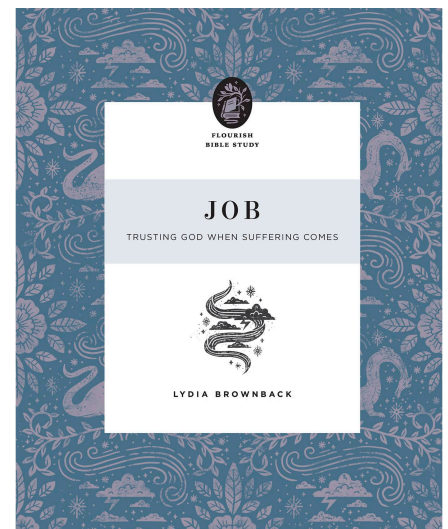
Piazza (74-A, Reynolds Community)

Winter Ladies Bible Study

Job--Trusting God When Suffering Comes

- Tuesday morning class begins February 6
- Monday evening class begins February 12

Lydia Brownback's excellent study guide will be available for \$10 in the welcome center in mid January or in class.q



Call to Prayer: House of Prayer , part 2

Power Line Prayer from Tandemprayer.org

May Our Prayer Lives Please You

Father, fill us with both the desire and the will to grow in our prayer lives, to have lives that are characterized by effective, fervent prayer. (Psalm 37:4; James 5:16b; Matthew 6:9-13) I ask this for (name your church and any others you are praying for)...

Father, You seek those who will worship You in spirit and in truth. May our prayers be filled with such worship. May we be willing to come to You as dependent children, praying expectantly and in faith. You know what we need and desire to give even more than what we've asked. (John 4:23; Matthew 6:9; Mark 11:24; Matthew 7:7-8; 6:8; 7:9-11)

Faithful to Pray

May we be faithful intercessors. Keep us from sinning by failing to pray for others. May we humble ourselves and pray, seek Your face and turn from our wicked ways, so that You will hear us. (Ephesians 6:18; 1 Samuel 12:23; Isaiah 62:6; 2 Chronicles 7:14)

Keep us faithful to pray for those in authority and for the lost—especially for the Jews and for the peace of Jerusalem. Help us to pray as we should for the Lord of the harvest to send workers into the fields. (1 Timothy 2:1-4; Romans 10:1; Psalm 122:6; Luke 10:2)

When we don't know what to pray for others, lead us to trust Your Spirit to help us in our weakness and intercede for us. Help us to be willing to fast, to pray without ceasing, and not give up. (Romans 8:26-27; Acts 14:23; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; Psalm 141:2)

May we give thanks to You in and for all things. That requires a great measure of faith—help our faith to grow, so that we might please You. May we know You as One who rewards such faith. Reward us by making us a house of prayer for all nations. (Philippians 4:6; Ephesians 5:20; Hebrews 11:6; Mark 11:17)

Priests in the Royal Priesthood

Father, Your Word tells us that we are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to You. (1 Peter 2:9) Help us to live up to our calling. I ask for (name your church and any others you are praying for)...

Holy Father, we are never more like Christ than when we intercede, for He is our great high priest, who is now at Your right hand interceding for us. Help us to approach Your throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (Hebrews 4:14; Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; 1 Peter 2:9; Hebrews 4:16)

Father, we've been consecrated in our role as intercessor priests; as Aaron and others in the Old Testament were cleansed and sprinkled with the blood of a lamb, we are cleansed by the blood of Christ. They were anointed with oil; we've been anointed by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. (Exodus 29:4, 21, 7)

Cleanse Us from Our Sins

Even so, as the priests of the Old Testament had to wash their hands and feet before coming into Your presence in the Holy of Holies, so must we first confess our sins. We ask, as David did, that You wash away all our iniquity and cleanse us from our sin. (Exodus 30:19-20; Psalm 51:2) As we intercede before Your throne, may we pray with our mind and with our spirit, and in the Spirit—on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. Keep us alert and always praying for all the saints. (1 Corinthians 14:15; Ephesians 6:18)

May our faith grow more and more, and the love we have for each other increase. May we never tire of doing what is right—living and praying as priests in a royal priesthood, a spiritual house of prayer. (2 Thessalonians 1:3; 2 Thessalonians 3:5, 13; 1 Peter 2:5)

December 2023 Prayer Calendar

APC Ministry Partners

01. Dr. Apam Vashum - India / Trinity School of Theology
02. David & Bridget Walls - WNC / New Direction Mustard Seed
03. Gary & Lois Watanabe - Japan / MTW
04. West Africa Reformed Mission - West Africa
05. Donnie & Kara - West Africa / MTW
06. Tom & Lucy Wright - Africa/Haiti/USA - MTW
07. Pastor Yavuz - Middle East / Asia Minor Partnership
08. Philip & Sandy Baron - Cru
09. Jack & Diana Brinkley - WNC / Sports Outreach
10. Kristi Brown / Sandy Mahar - WNC / MAPS
11. Brooks & Riva Cain - Japan / MTW
12. Bill & Susan Carr - North America / MTW
13. Garry & Anita Chambers - Caribbean / MTW
14. Alec & Riley Cotton - Appalachian State University / RUF
15. Charles & Bonita Davidson - Mexico / MTW
16. Michelle DeLeon - Philippines / MTW
17. Kate Anderson Donnell - Western Carolina University / RUF
18. Roger & Laura Dye - Latin America - Cru / Family Life
19. Esaie & Natacha Etienne - Haiti / MTW
20. Nathan & Lori Francis - Hope Community Church, SC / MNA
21. Jim & Carin - USA / MTW
22. Ed & Vicki Germann - International Students, Inc. / USA
23. Scott & Ruth Hill - Cherokee / MTW
24. Joel & Cindy Hylton - USA / Serge
25. Carol Sue Jensen - UNC-A / International Students Ministry
26. Chris & Janna Lee - Central Asia / MTW
27. Gabe & Jennifer Malloy - MA / MNA
28. David & Marcia - Western Europe / MTW
29. Scott & Brooke McMinn - TN / Young Life
30. Vladimir Nikitenko - Belarus / Belarus Christian Ministry
31. Keith & Ruth Powlison - Peru / MTW



The Coming of the King

A Scripture Writing Plan for Advent

Write out the selected Scripture in a notebook or journal. Then write a 2-3 sentence response to what you have written--i.e., praise, thanksgiving, observations, or questions you may have.

December 1—Genesis 3:15-16

December 2—Deuteronomy 18:15-19

December 3—Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

December 4—Isaiah 7:10-14

December 5—Isaiah 40:9-11

December 6—Isaiah 42:1-4

December 7—Isaiah 49:6-7

December 8—Isaiah 53:1-6

December 9—Isaiah 53:7-9

December 10—Isaiah 53:10-12

December 11—Isaiah 61:1-3

December 12—Jeremiah 23:5-6

December 13—Micah 5:2-5a

December 14—Zechariah 9:9-10

December 15—Luke 1:50-55

December 16—Luke 1:67-75

December 17—Luke 2:25-32

December 18—John 1:1-5

December 19—John 1:9-14

December 20—Colossians 1:15-20

December 21—Hebrews 1:1-4

December 22—Hebrews 1:5-9

December 23—Hebrews 1:10-14

December 24—1 John 1:1-5

December 25—Revelation 5:9-13



ADVENT

THE NEED FOR A SAVIOR

THE PROMISE OF A SAVIOR



THE BIRTH OF A SAVIOR



VISUALTHEOLOGY

A Visual Theology Advent Reading Calendar

<https://www.challies.com/visual-theology/a-visual-theology-advent-reading-calendar-for-your-family/>