

Bedford Presbyterian Church

105 West Main Street, Bedford, Virginia
From 1844 to 2020 (176 Years)



Week of December 20th

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 for those that are uncomfortable to attend service.

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.

Please be in prayer for the end of the coronavirus and healing for those affected by it.



Bedford Presbyterian Church
serving Christ since 1844

A Biblically Guided Christian Community,

Loving God, Loving Others,

Serving the World & Growing Disciples

The Approach to God

One: The peace of Christ be with you

All: **And Also with you**

Prelude

"On This Day, Earth Shall Sing"

Tone Chimes

Words of Welcome and Announcements.

- Our Christmas Eve service will now be online instead of in the Sanctuary. While the video will be ready anytime on Christmas Eve, if you wish, let us join together to at 7 pm. Follow the email link, or go to either Facebook or YouTube to follow the service.
- Prayer time will follow the service in the fellowship hall
- Something More will not meet for the next two weeks.
- For other announcements, be sure to read the emailed version of the weekly bulletin.

Lighting of Advent Candle- Love Candle

The Van Dykes

Speaker 1: Once God's plan was a mystery, hidden from our sight. Now God has disclosed what was kept secret for so very long, He has brought it out in the light. In the brighter light on this fourth Sunday in Advent, may we see more clearly the glory of God in Christ and sing of the steadfast love of the Lord forever.

Speaker 2: Today we light the candles of HOPE, PEACE, JOY and now LOVE because our promised Savior is coming to fill our hearts and one day our whole world with the love of God.

Speaker 3: "With my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations. I declare that your steadfast love is established forever; your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens" (Psalm 89:1b-2).

All four Advent candles are lit.

Congregation: Dear God, Your faithfulness has been great, leading us to this day of anticipation and celebration. May the glorious light of Your steadfast love shine brightly in us and through us, that all may give You praise and glory. In the Savior's name we pray. Amen.

Advent Hymn

"Once In Royal David's City"

Praise Team

Prayer of Confession: Advent

Dear God, Your angels promised us good news and urged peace among all. But we know that many people still suffer, in our own town and around the world. Please forgive us for those times, when we ourselves have hurt others, or held back that which we should have shared. This Sunday, having lit the candles of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love, help us to embody all of these in our own life; joyfully living in hope, striving for peace on Earth and in our neighborhoods and sharing Your love in all that we do. This we ask in the name of Jesus, Your gift of light given for us all.

Assurance of Pardon: Isaiah 9: 2-7

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness — on them light has shined. For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onwards and for evermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

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 Be to the Father”

Proclaiming the Word of God

Time for all God’s Children

Special Music

“What Child is This?”

Ella & Maggie

Scripture

Micah 5: 2-5, Luke 1: 39-55

Sermon:

Holy Leaping Babies!

Encore performance of a 1997 message at Center Presbyterian Church Midway, PA, original source unknown

And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord. (vs. 46)

Forgive me the “Batman-style” title for today’s thoughts – too much ill-spent youthful time in front of the TV, I guess – but in thinking through these verses I could not escape the image of John the Baptist doing a jig inside his mother’s womb as he senses the Messiah’s approach. For indeed, that is what John had been especially created for, to announce the coming of the Messiah and being filled with the Holy Spirit even then, he figured why wait to be born, he might as well get on with his announcing task; since he could not yet speak, dancing would have to do – now that is what I call enthusiasm for the job.

Indeed, all of today’s message is filled with singing and dancing: John dances, Elizabeth shouts, Mary sings and then finally, Jesus sings about the dance which He came to do. I guess all this singing and dancing at Christmas is appropriate – there must be something in such physical expressions of joy that brings us closer to God’s heart.

Sometimes I am tempted to ask: Does God really care about what happens in His world? Is God concerned about what happens to you and me down here? Well, Mary answers that question for us. Mary was a person for whom the reality of God burned brightly, someone with the absolute conviction, that God cared both about this world and that God cared deeply about what happened to her: Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Also, today on the Fourth Sunday of Advent, we hear the words of Micah, the prophet, who says,
O Bethlehem ... from you shall come forth for me

*one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days.
And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord,
in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God... (Mic 5:2-4).*

That was the prophecy that Mary's pregnancy with Jesus, was finally going to bring to pass! Speaking to the angel, Mary sounds so brave "**Here I am the servant of the Lord, let it be with me according to your word**" (vs. 38). Was Mary even aware at that time of the hardship of the shame, the gossip that would come with this special birth? Well let those things come in their time, but these days at least were for dancing with joy for the future – which the unborn John was soon to remind both women of.

Having heard the decree of Gabrielle, what was Mary to do now? Probably Mary had heard about Elizabeth's miraculous pregnancy and her husband Zechariah's written assertions that this was a sign from God. So Mary travels several days' journey to a little village in the hill country of Judea to visit her cousin, who was now 6-months pregnant. Gazing upon the Crèche scene, we get little sense of the predicament that God's "blessing" had placed Mary in. Hopefully, Elizabeth could help Mary sort out her own part in this promise and its difficult circumstances. Which Elizabeth DOES WITH JOY! Like her son, who is already heralding the Messiah, the mother of John welcomes the mother of Jesus with a shout of praise.

Can you visualize the scene? Pregnant Elizabeth, older, well established, a city woman and the wife of a priest, rising to greet her younger country cousin saying, "**blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me that the mother of my Lord comes to me?**"

Mary, after embracing her cousin, also filled with the Holy Spirit, says, "**My Soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.**"

The village where Elizabeth lived still stands high on a hillside just outside of Jerusalem. It is called En Karim today. It looks more a Christmas scene than any other place in Israel; heavily wooded with evergreen trees, as the wind murmurs through their branches, the air is filled with the fragrance of pine.

As I try to visualize the meeting there between Mary and Elizabeth, I hope that the village of that day was just as beautiful, quiet and fragrant. And I hope that the setting reinforced Mary's joy. We who know the rest of the story know that '**joy**' was at best going to be a transient condition in Joseph and Mary's life.

Mary's words, "*My Soul magnifies the Lord and my Spirit rejoices in God my Savior,*" must have overflowed from a marvelous vision of God deep within her, that transformed her fears to warmth, comfort and peace that came straight from the heart of God – which hopefully somehow prepared her for the days to come.

Although we have been schooled by years of Christmas pageants and countless singings of "gentle Mary laid her child," **to think of Mary as soft and mild**, the biblical picture is quite different. Mary's song, known as the *Magnificat*, after the first word of her speech in Jerome's Latin translation, offers little succor to the comfortable and powerful. Mary is as demur as dynamite, as mild as three-alarm chili!

It is at her cousin, Elizabeth's home that Mary sings this song. Normally, nothing could be more commonplace than a conversation between two pregnant women, two first-time mothers. And yet this conversation is anything but ordinary baby talk. First there was Elizabeth, the aged wife of a priest whose son, a prophet from birth, would head off into the wilderness to live the life of an itinerant holy man calling for all to repent.

Did Elizabeth have any idea of the untimely death her own son would face?

Did Mary have any idea of the heartbreak that was in store for her?

But both women knew and trusted in God's care – and thus both could sing in spite of their son's tragic futures.

We dare not lose sight of Mary's situation either, she was probably 14 or 15, the normal age of marriage in those days, engaged but still a virgin, not yet married to Joseph. Consider the chances of her story being believed, that she had been visited by an angel who announced to her she would have a child of the Holy Spirit, who would be the Savior of the world. Let any pregnant girl try that one on her parents. Surely the neighbors would say that Joseph had taken advantage of her. Or, if he were not the father, Joseph should have been furious and had every right to break off the engagement.

No matter how she tried to color it, Mary was a young woman just emerging from adolescence who was in a bad situation. No wonder Mary, before showing signs of being with child, rushed off to be with her cousin Elizabeth, the one person who would believe her extraordinary story of divine intervention.

The therapy worked, for Elizabeth confirmed immediately Mary's special status as mother to be of the Lord by singing:

"Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb . . . And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord"

Mary's "Magnificat," demonstrates the wisdom of God's choice. Notice that Mary turns Elizabeth's accolades around -- it matters not what *she* has done. *My soul **magnifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.*** What matters is what God has done and whether God gets the praise.

Mary stayed three months with Elizabeth, just long enough to help with John's birth and then she returned home to face her own music. And to make some; in the book of Hebrews Jesus sings: "*Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me ...See, I have come to do your will, O God*". . . **to abolish the first order to establish the second** (10:5-9).

Selecting a poor teenager with no status or economic power, God was announcing a shake-up in the way things ordinarily happen in this world – as Jesus said to abolish the first order in order to establish the second. As author Tom Carlisle wrote:

It is only Mary, just Mary the insignificant, the unknown who is known of God. Her low estate rocks kingdoms then and now. (*Beginning with Mary, p.7.*)

The God who called her, the God who is the father of Jesus, is the one who turns the world topsy-turvy, upside down: He has *scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly, he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty*" (vss. 51-53).

So, this is no gentle Mary who sings here, but a Mary whose word proclaims God's breaking into life, in ways that shatter old assumptions and undermine conventional authority.

There is something nettlesome about those people who understand God this way; something that makes them a threat to those who would usurp the prerogatives of God; not only the Hitlers and Husseins of the world, but also to those politicians or business leaders who think that in quotas, politics, or "a booming economy" will be the salvation of the world.

Mary's song reminds us that God's people refuse to say what always shall be, or that the way the world is structured, is the way God wants it. They keep relating to a power that goes beyond human power. They do not just ask whether a thing can be done. They ask, "Is it right? Is it in God's plan?"

We miss the thrust of the text if we reduce Mary's "Magnificat" to a guilt-producing demand to consider the "**lowly**" the "**hungry**." We must do that of course. There is something essential – especially at Christmas – about, in God's name, looking to serve the last, the least, the lost. But the Magnificat goes beyond guilt to offer a hope beyond the now. We would be considered hopelessly naïve, if we believed Mary's song represented present reality.

- We do not necessarily see the **powerful being brought down from their thrones**...although, yes, we have seen a succession of empire makers come and go: both national, congregational, and collegiate.
- Or **the rich being sent empty away** ... although, yes, occasionally even the Donald Trumps and Michael Vicks have had to file for bankruptcy.

Mary's song thus does not describe the world as it is most of the time. It is instead a song of hope, of promise, of a future re-creation of the world.

The world continues to try to live in its self-imposed darkness, but God keeps breaking through in faraway places like Bethlehem, Ethiopia, Korea and even in the most restrictive of places like China, Iraq and Cuba (all three of which are having quite a revival in spite of their Governments' attempts to keep God out).

But nevertheless, the kingdom while living in individuals, is still not yet fully here, like the candles of Christmas eve, we are merely points of light – made more beautiful and brilliant – by shining in an otherwise dark atmosphere. The world lives in darkness, its songs are dreary. The Prince of Darkness says "adjust, adapt, get along, accept this as reality." But the Magnificat urges on us restlessness with the world 'as it is,' because it sings of the ultimate triumph of God.

We experience that sense of longing for something more in a variety of ways. But sometimes that longing sparks in us faith's gift of imagination, which creates a new world for us, a world that turns our values upside down. Perhaps this Christmas will bring something more than just another celebration for you. Advent will become adventure. Mary's son will create in your imaginations a vision of a turned-upside-down world where God's values will reign and the promise will pull us out of the ordinary into God's extraordinary reordering of life.

And finally we come to Jesus himself. While John may have danced in his mother's womb, Jesus has been dancing since the foundation of the world. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit dancing to a theme of creation, salvation, redemption and restoration.

Now on earth and found in human form, Jesus looks up to heaven and sings:

"Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired – but a body you have prepared for me! In burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure – but see I am come to do your will O God"

In Christmas, the seed of Easter has been planted "the boy-child Jesus had come for to die – for poor ornery people like you and like I." But like his mother Mary, his aunt Elizabeth, his cousin John, this was a dance of life and death that Jesus was willing to leave in the trust of God the Father. For as the Apostle Paul later phrased it, "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

Twenty five years ago, **Michael Flagtly**, the Irish dancer of world renown, put together a road show entitled, **"The Lord of the Dance."** In this show, he sought to prove, as he claimed and he very well may have been, that he was the greatest dancer alive – if not of all time. Throughout this show, the theme is a simple melody which we would recognize as the tune to the shaker hymn **"Simple gifts."**

Something always bothered me about that because the show, **"The Lord of the Dance,"** is anything but simple and it is driven by everything but humility. And where did he get that title, **"The Lord of the Dance?"** Then I remembered a 1960's song written by Sydney Carter and sung by every Christian youth group in my day titled, "Lord of the Dance," sung to the melody of "Simple Gifts," but **the Lord it celebrates is Jesus Christ and the dance it is talking about is a dance that has gone on since the beginning of time.**

You may not consider it much of a Christmas gift – but I would like to share the song with you. (please chorus as you catch the tune).

LORD OF THE DANCE

By Sydney Carter, e1963. Copyright assigned 1968 to Galliard Ltd. All rights reserved. R

I danced in the morning, When the world was begun,
And I danced in the moon, And the stars and the sun,
And I came down from heaven, and I danced on the earth
In Bethlehem I had my birth.

Refrain:

Dance then wherever you may be, I am the Lord of the Dance said He
And I'll lead you all, Wherever you may be,
And I'll lead you all, In the dance said He.

Some thirty-three years after their birth both John and Jesus will be killed by evil men seeking to silence their voice. Mary's heart will be crushed (and if Elizabeth were still around, so also would hers) but that is a future event for them and a future celebration for us – since Jesus wisely advised us to *"seek first his kingdom and let tomorrow take care of itself"* (Matt. 6:33-34). So today, let us join with the dancing babies and their singing mothers to celebrate the coming of the Messiah. Merry Christmas!

Response to the Word of God

Special Music

"Twas in the Moon of Wintertime"

Tone Chimes

Sharing of Joys and Concerns

Prayers of the People

As we conclude this season of Advent, we give thanks for the gift of Jesus, whom You sent into our world to seek us out, to save us and to share with us Your family. This Christmas season, as in Your name, we seek out the last, the least, the lost. Bless all that which we share, that such might show Your love for those who come to hear about Jesus, for those who need food, shelter and clothing, for those who need healing and for those who need to find their way back home to You. Amen.

Lord's Prayer- *Now let us pray together the prayer our Lord taught us*

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.

Hymn

"O Little Town of Bethlehem"

Praise Team

The Sending Forth

Benediction

This Christmas and all year long, may you be filled with the wonder of Mary, the obedience of Joseph, the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the determination of the magi and the peace of the Christ child. Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, bless You now and forever.

Postlude

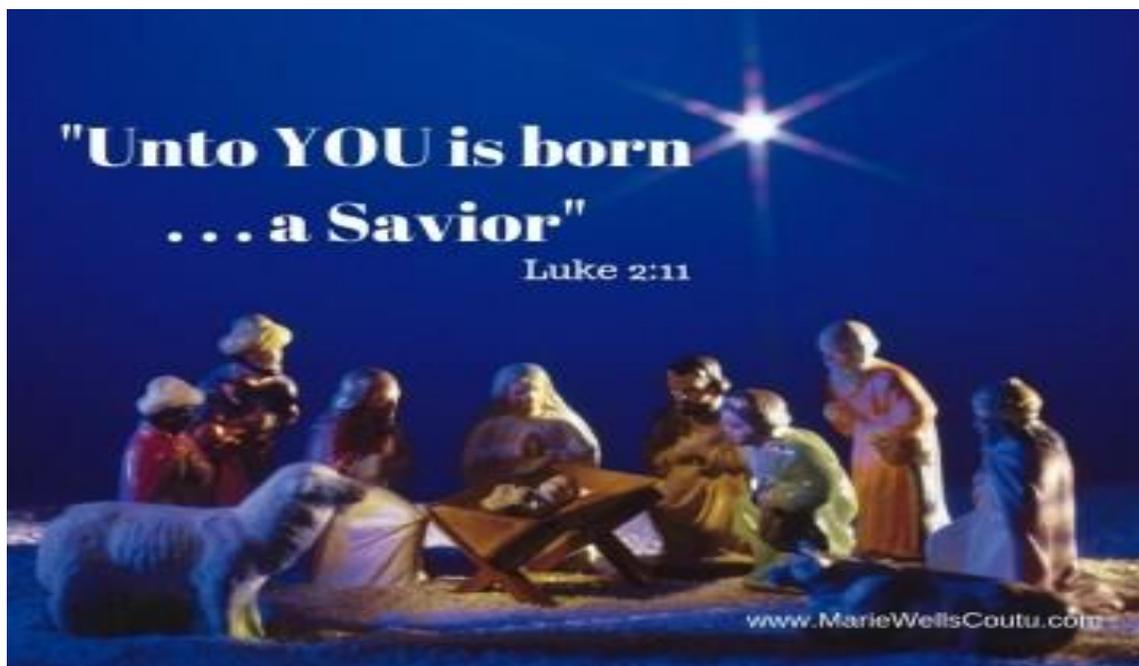
"Come, All Ye Shepherds"

Gordon Young



The Poinsettias in the Sanctuary are donated by the Fellowship Committee for your enjoyment during this Christmas Season.

The Christmas Eve Service will be online, YouTube or Facebook, instead of in-person. Available anytime on Christmas Eve, but if you wish, let us join together online at 7pm.



Joys- December 20th

Joy – Patty has finished treatments and mom, Doris is home

Joy – seeing Al Toney in service

Concerns- December 20th

Avery: Rev. Frank and for Tinkie who has dementia

Barnes: Kim Hedrick- (friend) health issues

Eunice- sciatica, torn rotator cuff, doing better

Blair: Katy Neel- (LHS student) lymphoma- chemo

Boone: Jim Hedrick - (friend) recovering from partial lung removal

Judy Jockets- (sister's friend) lung cancer

Jim Cutler- (LHS teacher) stage 4 lung cancer

Dennis S.- terminal pancreatic cancer

Casdorph: friend who had quadruple bypasses

That lost dog will come home

Compter: two brothers- unbelievers

Prayers for friends to come to the Lord

Bob- (friend) Parkinson's

Michael Compter-(brother) heart failure

Mary & Steve- (friends) travel mercies for Mary, Steve in poor health

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

Janice Campbell-(friend) under hospice care

Ryan- (grandson) searching for his faith

Diddams: Lois- in hospital, waiting on tests

Dills: Katy Neel- lymphoma- chemo

Fleming: family dealing with addiction and self- esteem

Steve Trombecky- (friend) home recovering

Christina- (daughter) lives in Covid hotspot

Peter Klaus- (brother) motorcycle accident

Foster: Joyce Abbott- (former member) cancer

Mike Milton- (friend Donna Cone's brother) tested positive

Marian Kelly- (friend) breast cancer, mother's caretaker

Goodman: Randall Sales-(SRHS coach) cancer

Katherine Saunders- (Hugh's daughter) hospice

Grigg: Danny Miller- (co-worker) bladder cancer

Heinrich: Steven - (grandson) autoimmune disorder

Barbara Lore- (Helen's sister) heart problems

Koch: Doris- home

Kuhn- Kibbey: Nancy Milton- (friend) cancer, Alzheimer's

Dot- idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, wet macular degeneration

Grandson- alcoholism

Dan Withers- (friend) inoperative cancer

Great granddaughter has covid

Mauser: Joyce Reese- (friend) health problems

Steven-(son's boss) going blind

Norma Jean- (Gayle's sister) medical issues

McManis: (sister) Janet Darnold- covid and in hospital

Meyers: Patty- colon cancer, finished treatments

Richard & Kathleen Michael, (Boy Scout master) both not feeling well, Richard tested positive for covid

Mitchell: Bill- radiation treatments, prognosis great

Morris: all law enforcement, firefighters and all other first responders

Forensic scientists who deal with crime

Doris Jean Coble- (cousin) in nursing home

Murphree: Gracie & Lee- Honduras hurricane recovery

Saunders: (Ronnie) Colin Bridges- (grandson)

Scott- (son-in-law) doing well, still undergoing chemo

Scheurer: Jim Hedrick-(friend) cancer, partial lung removed

Bob Lindell-(friend) prostate cancer

Sonny- (son) colon cancer

Sandy- heart episode

Smith: Dorothy Smith (John's mother) moved into assisted living; pray she comes to the Lord

Bill Walker- (Sonya's father) late stage Parkinson's

Marie Walker- (Sonya's mother) tests on brain tumors

Stetson: David Wykle- lymphoma

Clay Ramsey- thyroid cancer

Dr. Fessler- went blind

Stevens: Jackie Landis- heart problems

Mike Elliston- asthma

Zeb Cunningham- firefighter- has covid

First responders dealing with wildfires

Toney: Karen Hyde-(friend) bladder cancer

Cal Rice- (former pastor) bone cancer, refused treatment

Judy-weak, but doing better

Al- doing well

Van Dyke: Donna Mannel- (friend) MS

Families that are separated

Wilkerson: Ricky Wilkerson-(Dan's cousin) cancer

Prayers for all front line workers, Drs, nurses, first responders

Prayers for our nation, our President and President elect

Prayers for those dealing with loneliness

Prayers for healing the divisive spirit among our leaders/nation

Prayers for an end of the coronavirus and healing for those infected

Prayers for our divided country and the violence occurring

Prayers to speak and listen to those who are different

January 2121

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1 <i>Happy New Year's</i>	2
3 <i>10 am Service Communion Prayer Time</i>	4 <i>Quilters, 6 pm</i>	5 <i>Something More, 3 pm.</i>	6	7	8	9
10 <i>10 am Service 5 ¢ a Meal Prayer Time</i>	11 <i>Quilters, 6 pm Shepherd's Table</i>	12 <i>Something More, 3 pm.</i>	13	14	15	16
17 <i>10 am Service Session Prayer Time</i>	18 <i>Quilters, 6 pm</i>	19 <i>Something More. 3 pm</i>	20	21	22	23
24 <i>10 am Service Prayer Time</i>	25 <i>Quilters, 6 pm</i>	26 <i>Something More, 3 pm</i>	27	28	29	30
31 <i>10 am Service Prayer Time</i>						



Three more ways to support Bedford Presbyterian this Christmas



CREDIT CARD! -- If you wish to make a donation to the Church using your credit card, go to the Bedford Presbyterian Website and look for the **DONATE** button. Donations through the website will be charged a 2% processing fee by the Presbyterian Foundation.

CLICK for more information: <https://www.bedfordpresbyva.org/donate.html>



SHOP ONLINE! – on your web browser or cell phone app shop at Amazon Smile (smile.amazon.com). Register Bedford Presbyterian as your charity of choice and Amazon will .5% of your entire eligible purchase price to the church.

CLICK for more information: <https://smile.amazon.com/>



SHOP IN THE STORE – Link your Kroger Card to Bedford Presbyterian Church as your charity of choice and a percentage of all your purchases will be contributed to the church.

Click for more information: <https://www.kroger.com/i/community/community-rewards>

It's not much.... but every little bit helps.



Capital Campaign

The funds raised by the 175th campaign are nearly depleted and a new campaign “Moving in Faith” has begun to address some exterior maintenance and repair issues, as well as some interior lighting upgrades. Some items are critical such as painting the steeple. Others, like new doors to the fellowship hall and sanctuary are not so critical but will soon become so. Our goal is \$45,000.00 over the next two years. Move forward in faith and give to the “Moving in Faith” capital campaign.

**Thank you for continuing to send in your contributions and pledges.
You can mail your pledge or contribution (also 5 ¢ a meal and Heifer) or you
can drop by the office, Mon-Thurs between 8 am - 4pm.**

Activities for week of December 20th

Sunday: 10 am Worship

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Session

Prayer Time after service in the fellowship hall

Monday: Quilters- 6 pm

Tuesday: NO Something more until January 5th

Thursday: Christmas Eve service online, YouTube, Facebook

Friday: He Is Born! Merry Christmas!

Sunday: December 27th

10 am Worship

Prayer Time after service in the fellowship hall

December Birthdays

Kathy Chryssikos - 24

Jade Creasy - 28

Gayle Mauser - 30

December Anniversaries

Roy & Libby Monk- 20

Here's a list of our shut-ins, please take time to send a card or
give them a call, to let them know you are thinking of them.

Covid Shut-ins

Mr. & Mrs. Roy Cram
Mr. & Mrs. Lester Heinrich
Mr. & Mrs. Dick Kibbey
Mr. & Mrs. Al Mauser
Mr. & Mrs. Ron Morris
Mr. & Mrs. Harold Neal
Ms. Lynne Palmer
Mrs. Christine Riley
Mrs. Judy Toney
Ms. Gloria Saunders
Mr. Ronnie Saunders
Ms. Mary Wilkes

Long Term Shut-ins

Anne Arthur
Rev. Frank & Tinkie Avery
Pat Clarke
Janet Eagler
Ann Fowler
Dorinda Hopkins
Doris Koch
Anna Latimer
Ruby Page