NOTES FROM NORM

A Year for Miracles

You’ve heard it before. “It’s a Christmas miracle!” But what exactly is the miracle of Christmas that suggests an expression so astounding? It’s more than just the relief that somehow the whole family got together for a few hours/days and nobody killed each other. Some might say it is that a virgin gives birth to a child. Or maybe it’s that wisemen somehow find their way and Jesus eludes Herod’s wrath and lives to see another day. Others might say, it’s that God chooses to make himself known in a baby of low estate. Perhaps the real miracle is God really does love us after all and that love becomes evident and embodied in the gift of Jesus. And, that this truth happens not once, but again and again, for it is born in us each day.

I hope the “Silent Night” series during the month of December was a blessing to you as much as it was to me and my family. To be honest, I was uncertain about focusing on a song normally reserved for Christmas Eve for an entire month. It might ruin its sacredness somehow. Yet, when our choir closed their anthem “We Need a Silent Night in Here” on that first Sunday, I had chills all over. Our kids have been awed too. They’ve latched onto the carol all month. Every day we lit our advent wreath at home it was with “Silent Night.” They also decided to learn the verse in German. Every time we gathered around the table for a meal, we inevitably sang. We built a massive five-foot snow fort after the snowstorm that cancelled services Dec 9. They even started a ritual of lighting candles at night and processing them outside singing “Stille Nacht” to create a glowing snow fort.

One of the stories, I missed being able to share with you in my message Dec 9th was another “miracle” story associated with Silent Night - this one happened shortly after WWII. So, I thought I’d share it with you through our newsletter. The following is an English translation of an excerpt from a memoir by German soldier, Erhard Schlueter. He was drafted shortly before the end of World War II at age 18 and the Russians captured his division in 1945. He had to spend several years in Russian captivity before eventually being released.

It is December 1946, early afternoon on the day before Christmas. I am a prisoner of war in a labor camp in Russia. It is the second Christmas away from home. A few other German prisoners and I are outside to decorate a giant spruce tree in our courtyard. We are spraying water on its branches. The water freezes immediately in the minus 13 degrees Fahrenheit. It creates beautiful crystals and other bizarre forms. Not far from us, we see a group of men coming out of the kitchen. Just as they are leaving, a potato tumbles out of one prisoner’s pocket. It rolls right toward a guard. The guard picks it up and looks at the man. He searches the other men and finds more potatoes. He calls the warden who seems to have been waiting for another opportunity to make our lives even more miserable. He is in full rage and orders the men to take off the winter coats and boots. The prisoners follow his order. They are thrown into an outer cell – exposing them to the elements. We try to convince the Russian warden to let the men free, at least for Christmas. No luck.

The sun is setting and with her the last bit of warmth. The sky is clear. It is going to be a cold night. We are thinking of the men outside and decide to celebrate Christmas Eve outside with them. All men go outside and form a circle around tree. We light a few candles. It feels almost festive. And for a minute we all forget where we are. Our thoughts are with our families and friends. We are no longer in prison. The Russian warden storms out. He is furious and demands everybody to go back inside. No one moves. He screams again and orders us to go inside immediately. Guards sprint to the scene. Guns are pointing at us. Our German captain tries to reason with the warden. The warden is too enraged. He yells to the guards to prime their guns. Time stops. Thousand thoughts run through my mind. I don’t want to die. Not yet. I am barely 20 years old. I want to live. As I am thinking that, a faint melody breaks the silence. Someone in the midst of us started singing “Silent Night, Holy Night.” Another man joins in and then another and another. By the second verse all seven hundred prisoners pour their hearts into this song. The song transforms my fear into love. It touches the guards who lower their guns. It melts the fury on the warden’s face. We sing the last verse. Then the last note dissolves into the night. We are back in prison again. Completely changed by this beautiful tune and to everyone’s surprise, the warden releases the men from the outer cell. They are still alive. We take them inside and give them warm clothes. We pray and thank God. Tonight we will sleep in heavenly peace.

(continued on page 3)
Weekly/Monthly Happenings at Salem

Burke United Christian Ministries

Join us 1st Tuesday of each month at 3:30 pm as we serve dinner at BUCM. 1st Sundays of each month we encourage you to bring food for their pantry. (305 West Union St.)

www.bucm.net

Prayer Shawl Ministry

Prayer Shawls are tangible reminders of God's love, comfort, and peace. The group meets Monday from 10-11:30 am in the Ed Bldg. All are welcome. If you know who needs a shawl contact Margaret Carswell or Barbara Harbour

Christ Bread

A monthly program for retirees and older adults. Christ Bread will meet January 22 at 11 am in the Fellowship Hall. Bring a dish to share.

Gifts given in Honor or Memory (December)

Katrina Ayers by Mary Ann Propst, Lisa Propst, & Cary Clark
Katrina Ayers by Lynda Woody
Barbara Goines by Lynda Woody
Barbara Goines by Nicole Mull
Barbara Goines by Fred & Kathryn Duckworth
Barbara Goines by Charles & Leota Garrison
Raymond Carswell by Mary & John Anderson
Raymond Carswell by Mildred & Nicole Mull
Jack Carswell by Mary & John Anderson
Jack Carswell by Mildred & Nicole Mull
Kettie Carswell by Mary & John Anderson
Kettie Carswell by Fred & Kathryn Duckworth
Jimmy & Marie Causby by The Causby Family
Norman Garrison by Doris, Chris, & Keith Garrison
Scott Pruett by Robert & Jackie Pruett
David Dale by Rita & Eric Bowman
David Dale by Margaret Carswell
David Dale by Francis C. Dale & Gloria Dale
David Dale by Marilyn Davis
David Dale by Mary Wilson
David Dale by Jerry & Clarice Shuping
David Dale by Dons, Chris, & Keith Garrison
David Dale by Bruce & Kay Pollard
David Dale by Fred & Kathryn Duckworth
David Dale by Sexton & Edith Dale
David Dale by Robert & Jackie Pruett
David Dale by Mildred & Nicole Mull
David Dale by L.P. Dale & Family
David Dale by Mary Ann Propst, Lisa Propst, & Cary Clark
David Dale by Calvin & Cindy Morrison & Leigh Anne & Madison Mann
David Dale by Brenda Ruben
David Dale by Hugh & Linda Dale
David Dale by Bettijoe Harbinson
David Dale by Charles & Leota Garrison
David Dale by Salem Fire Rescue Protection Association
Willie Propst by Mary Ann Propst, Lisa Propst, & Cary Clark
Steve Propst by Mary Ann Propst, Lisa Propst, & Cary Clark
Brian Dale by Mildred & Nicole Mull
Eugene & Mary Dale by Mildred & Nicole Mull
Tessie Mae Dale by Mildred & Nicole Mull
Robert & Louise Garrison by Charles & Leota Garrison
Catherine Duckworth by Jackie L Ward
In honor of Joann & Troy Patton by Linda Duckworth

Our Financial Stewardship For 2018:

Thru December 31 2018

Budgeted Need: $237,900.00
Total Received for Budget: $201,221.04
Ministry Expenses to Date: $200,200.37

Other Ministry Gifts Received to Date:

- Backpack Ministry: $1,525.00
- Building Fund: $7,430.00
- Cemetery: $785.00
- Enola Trail Fund: $14,455.00
- Grant Fund: $1,020.00
- UMCOR: $531.00
- Youth Fund: $1,738.00

The work of Christmas

by Howard Thurman

When the song of the angels is still
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:

To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among people,
To make music in the heart.

RETHINK CHURCH
Miracles aren’t relegated to Christmas. They happen every day. They happen by the power and authority of Jesus. The love of God and the power of the Holy Spirit are ours, gifted to us as children of a grace-filled Father. Don’t be afraid to use them. Don’t be afraid to step out in faith in the authority of Jesus’ name or to lean on the guidance of the Holy Spirit. There is power in the name of Jesus to do marvelous things - miracles of love and courageous acts of resurrection. May you live boldly in the redeeming love of Jesus and may miracles abound in your life and the lives of those around you this year.

Pastor Norm

THANKS & PRAISE Report
Christmas Dinner at Foothills Prison

Special thanks for the financial support and volunteers that resulted in a wonderful Christmas dinner for inmates and staff at Foothills Correctional Facility. You helped to bring some light through Scripture, Fellowship, Music, Love and Caring into a Dark place. Below are some final totals from the project which served dinner 3 nights last month.

Sincerely, Waits Gordon (FUMC)

During December 4-6 -Foothills Prison Dinner:
-Served Dinner To 798 Inmates 180 Staff 52 Volunteers = 1030 Total Meals
-Total Cost for food was $1760.
-52 Total Volunteers served a combined 241 hours
-4 volunteers from SUMC served Dec 4 and Pastor Norm led a devotion

Some SUMC youth finding shelter at the Causby home

Las Posadas Youth Christmas Party
On Dec 16, several of our youth participated in an abbreviated Las Posadas experience. It means “the dwellings” and is a Latino tradition of observing the plight of Mary and Joseph as they searched for shelter that first Christmas. Youth walked to several homes seeking hospitality and were turned away before loading up and traveling to the Causby’s. There they received a gracious welcome, ate dinner, and shared in a few games.

Special thanks to Fred & Amy Causby for hosting us for dinner and those who played along to turn us away (Bill & Connie Voight, Annie Hemmings, and Ronnie Wilson)

Youth Retreat- Jan 25-27
Resurrection is an annual worship and spiritual growth event in Pigeon Forge, TN for nearly 12,000 youth and their leaders celebrating the God of new life. Through music and messages young people encounter the Lord in new and deeper ways. This year features I Am They and Grace Church Pastor, Jorge Acevedo.

Please remember our group and leaders in prayer as they travel and grow together.
www.resurrectionyouth.com

All youth 6th-12th grade are welcome and invited to join us!
NOTE new TIME—5:30pm!
1/13 5:30 pm (Yth Rm)
1/20 (no yth / MLK holiday)
1/25-27– Resurrection, TN
1/27 (Yth return from TN/ no yth mtg)

Youth and parents: Please Check your calendars and contact Norm ASAP about date preference for our summer mission trip. We will be heading to the coastal region for hurricane repair and want as many as possible to experience it!
Options: June 9-15 OR July 28-Aug 3 OR June 30-July 6
The Risk of Incarnation  BY PARKER J. PALMER

(Motivation for a New Year)

As a child growing up in the Methodist Church, the Christmas Eve service always made me teary. Everything about it moved me — the story, the music, the candlelight, the scent of pine, the silent night, the warm presence of family and friends. And for reasons I did not understand, I was touched to the core by the curious claim that “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us”....

We long for words like *love*, *truth*, and *justice* to become flesh and dwell among us. But in our violent world, it’s risky business to wrap our frail flesh around words like those, and we don’t like the odds.

In the Christmas story, God — an airy word if ever there was one! — takes the risk of incarnation. The flesh God chooses is not that of a warrior but of a vulnerable baby, a claim that brought me tears of wonderment when I was young. But my adult knowledge of that infant’s fate — a fate shared by so many who have devoted their lives to love, truth, and justice — brings tears of anger and grief, along with a primal fear of what might happen if I followed suit.

As a Quaker who believes that “there is that of God in everyone,” I know I’m called to share in the risk of incarnation. Amid the world’s dangers, I’m asked to embody my values and beliefs, my identity and integrity, to allow good words to take flesh in me. Constrained by fear, I often fall short — yet I still aspire to incarnate words of life, however imperfectly.

It is a reminder that I’m invited to be born again and again in the shape of my God-given self, born in all the vulnerability of the Christmas story. It’s a story that’s hard to retrieve in a culture that commercializes this holy day nearly to death, and in churches more drawn to triumphalism and ecclesiastical bling than to the riskiness of the real thing. But the story’s simple meaning is clear to “beginner’s mind,” a mind I long to reclaim at age seventy-five.

An infant in a manger is as vulnerable as we get. What an infant needs is not theological debate but nurturing. The same is true of all the good words seeded in our souls that cry out to be embodied in this broken world. If these vulnerable but powerful parts of ourselves are to find the courage to take on flesh — to suffer yet survive and thrive, transforming our lives along with the life of the world — they need the shelter of unconditional love.... What good words wait to be born in us, and how can we love one another in ways that midwife their incarnation?

2019 District Leadership Conference

*Opportunities for church members to grow and sharpen their skills in ministry and discipleship.*

*Sunday, January 6, 2019 / 2:30 - 5 pm / St. Luke's (Hickory)*

Workshop options listed below. Register online at: https://wnc-reg.brtapp.com/2019DistrictLeadershipConference

- **Leading with Purpose** - Leading a local church with the focus on God’s activity
- **Health and Wellness** - Ms. Lisa Mariddaiah, Parish Nurse, First UMC Gastonia
- **Local Church Historian** – For anyone interested in their church’s records and historic documents.
- **A Better Way** – Finding innovative ways to reach new people and live into their mission.
- **Local Church Finance and Stewardship** – Examine 10 most important issues leaders should be most concerned about.
- **Ministry of a Lay Servant and Certified Lay Minister** – Learn about the role and requirements
- **Making Room for One More** -- Explore tensions of being stranger and neighbor and imagine possibilities for reclaiming the spirit of hospitality.
- **Creation Care** – Encourage Christians in their efforts to care for God’s creation, and to be faithful stewards of God’s provision
- **Pastor and Parish** - Seek ways to strengthen communication across the church and serve as good stewards of your pastor’s time and gifts.
Dear Lord, hear our prayers…

Prayers & Concerns: Thomas Ayers, Tonya Brown, James Carswell, Fred Duckworth, Jeanette Dale, Joan Allen, Tom Carlson , Max Pearson, Tony Causby, Gary Whitener, Mark McGhinnis, Keith Ollis, Sandy Becker, Sarah Koon, Sandra Durain

Homebound: Millie Avery, Mildred Mull, Mary Wilson, Jean Jarrell, Charles & Leota Garrison,

Nursing Home Residents:

~Grace Heights– Mable Hoke
~College Pines– Elsie Roper, Avis Williams
~The Brian Center of Spruce Pine– Helen McGee
~Hope Ridge Family Care– Nell Causby

ANNIVERSARIES
11 Max & Nancy Pearson
23 Alan & Joann Byrd
29 Larry & Janet Koon

Nursery / Kids Sunday School Schedule
New schedules have been posted in the nursery and Sunday school classrooms. Please contact another teacher if you need to change a date with someone. Thank you for the ways you teach and care for our children and youth.

CHURCH STAFF
Norm Jones, Jr.—Pastor (rev.norm@alumni.duke.edu)
Virginia Robinson, Dir. of Music (robinsonva62@gmail.com)
Sue Bunch, Pianist (s_bunch@att.net)
Zachary Cagle, Office Admin. (salemumchurch@ymail.com)

Mom’s Coffee
Come as you are to enjoy fellowship, encouragement, and prayer with other mommas who also need a break from the busy day to day! We meet from 8:30-10am at Salem UMC in the Youth room. Childcare is provided in the church nursery.

Thank You
We want to thank the Salem UMC Family that attended our daughter and sister, Katrina Ayers, funeral and those that sent cards and prayers. A special thank you to Pastor Norm for his prayer and Margaret Carswell for the soul and body warming shawl.

Pastor Norm, Thank you and the wonderful people of Salem UMC. I can't describe the joy and appreciation our custodial staff had for the gift cards and notes. Some of them cried. Thank you so much for listening to your heart and being such a blessing!!! Merry Christmas!

Sara LeCroy, Principal, Patton HS

December Mission Giving
Thank you for making our Missions in December so successful! Our UMW loaded an SUV FULL of items for the Pregnancy Care Center. And, you helped prepare over 29 blessing bags for those homeless or on the street!

Thanks be to God and way to go SUMC!
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sun</th>
<th>Mon</th>
<th>Tue</th>
<th>Wed</th>
<th>Thu</th>
<th>Fri</th>
<th>Sat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10:30 am Bible Study (Yth Rm) 7 pm Choir</td>
<td>7 pm UMW Meeting (FH)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8:30—10am Mom’s Coffee</td>
<td>FH Reserved</td>
<td>5 FH Reserved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10:30 am Bible Study (Yth Rm) 7 pm Choir</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Happy New Year!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 pm Staff mtg 6:30 pm Praise Team</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2:30 pm Leadership Training Hickory FH Reserved</td>
<td>10 am Prayer Shawl (Ed Bldg) 6 pm Girl Scout (FH)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10 am Prayer Shawl (Ed Bldg)</td>
<td>10 am Lois Velna 6:30 pm Praise Team</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10:30 am Bible Study (Yth Rm) 7 pm Choir</td>
<td>10:30 am Bible Study (Yth Rm) 7 pm Choir</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4 pm Church Council (Parlor) 5:30 pm Youth</td>
<td>10 am Prayer Shawl (Ed Bldg)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10 am Prayer Shawl (Ed Bldg)</td>
<td>10 am Lois Velna 6:30 pm Praise Team</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>MLK Day</td>
<td>11 am Christ bread (FH) 6:30 pm Praise Team</td>
<td>10:30am Bible Study (Yth Rm) 7 pm Choir</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td>11 am Christ bread (FH) 6:30 pm Praise Team</td>
<td>10:30am Bible Study (Yth Rm) 7 pm Choir</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4 pm Church Council (Parlor) 5:30 pm Youth</td>
<td>10 am Prayer Shawl (Ed Bldg)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 am Prayer Shawl (Ed Bldg)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 am Prayer Shawl (Ed Bldg)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 am Prayer Shawl (Ed Bldg)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 am Prayer Shawl (Ed Bldg)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 am Prayer Shawl (Ed Bldg)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 am Prayer Shawl (Ed Bldg)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 am Prayer Shawl (Ed Bldg)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 am Prayer Shawl (Ed Bldg)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 am Prayer Shawl (Ed Bldg)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 am Prayer Shawl (Ed Bldg)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 am Prayer Shawl (Ed Bldg)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 am Prayer Shawl (Ed Bldg)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 am Prayer Shawl (Ed Bldg)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 am Prayer Shawl (Ed Bldg)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 am Prayer Shawl (Ed Bldg)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 am Prayer Shawl (Ed Bldg)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 am Prayer Shawl (Ed Bldg)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 am Prayer Shawl (Ed Bldg)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Youth return**

No Youth Meeting

Youth in TN