

Dear Saints and Friends of Gregory Memorial,



"Because God's children are human beings – made of flesh and blood – the Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death. Only in this way could he set free all who have lived their lives as slaves to the fear of dying...Since he himself has gone through suffering and testing, he is able to help us when we are being tested."
-Hebrews 2:14-15, 18

Toward the beginning of his book *The Innovative Church: How Leaders and Their Congregations Can Adapt in an Ever-Changing World* (Baker Academic, 2020), Scott Cormode reflects on how all action should be preceded by active listening, so that whatever is done is done to meet the actual need (as opposed to what we might think that need is). And as Christians, part of our listening is not just to one another, but to God. "We listen to God through Scripture, through songs, and through sitting in expectant silence. This listening precedes all action" (page 43).

As I reflect on the beginning of this Advent season, I am struck by two related thoughts: 1) our congregation finds itself in a position of listening as we discern where our energy and faithful risk-taking will be applied in the coming weeks and months, and 2) God took this same approach with humanity when God took on the faithful risk of the incarnation.

Think on it. By an average and previously unnamed young woman, engaged to an average woodcarver, God chose to enter the world which had already been created through God's vision and imagination. In a time that had long been prophesied and dreamt of, but never fully determined, God took on the fullness of what had been dreamt and created. In a way that no one thought could have any meaning or agency, God came into the world to do what none other could do. These were unknown, unprecedented risks! To quote the song made popular by Whitney Houston, "*Who would imagine?*"!

And why? So that God could listen. So that God could know, not just by an all-knowing awareness but by the fullness of experience, just what it is that humanity needs to be able to draw close again to God. Through Jesus, God knows birth, hunger, fragility, dependence on others, loving arms, protective care, a father's support, a mother's voice, the frustrating teasing of

siblings...through Jesus, God knows friendship and laughter, loneliness and being misunderstood, trying to explain new ideas and seeing people put the ideas together on their own...through Jesus, God knows full-well the joys and sorrows of this gift of life we have received, the ups and downs, and all the nuances that tie it together.

All so that God can know us – you and me, our neighbors, the generations that have come before us and the ones that come after us. So that God could know, truly, the human experience and know just what action was needed to enable us to draw close, to overcome the sins and brokenness that separate us from God, and from one another. God chose to listen, and to know. And so God entered into the fullness of humanity in Jesus, knowing birth, and ultimately death.

And, thanks be to God, Life Abundant in the resurrection.

It was a risk unlike any other the universe had yet known. And as we ponder again the imminent arrival of Immanuel, "God-with-Us," we are invited to likewise listen and to then know the faithful risks we might take, for the glory of God.

In these days we will listen to favorite music – carols and hymns and Christmas songs. We will listen to beloved voices – family and friends sharing greetings with us (and yes, some voices of those gone who still speak to our hearts). We will listen to the old, familiar stories, as we tell them anew to one another. In all this listening, may you indeed hear God's voice, in the birth of a newborn king, whisper "you are known, and you are loved."

With you on the journey,
Pastor Jason



WORSHIP INFORMATION FOR DECEMBER, 2020

Sunday, 6 December 2020

“2nd Sunday of Advent” - Liturgical Color: Blue
 1st Reading: Isaiah 40:1-11 * 2nd Reading: Mark 1:1-8
 Sermon: "Life of Comfort"

Sunday, 13 December 2020

“3rd Sunday of Advent” - Liturgical Color: Blue
 1st Reading: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11 * 2nd Reading: John 1:6-8, 19-28
 Sermon: "Life of Relationship"

Sunday, 20 December 2020

“4th Sunday of Advent” - Liturgical Color: Blue
 1st Reading: 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16 * 2nd Reading: Luke 1:26-38
 Sermon: Life of Homemaking"

Sunday, 27 December 2020

“1st Sunday of Christmas” - Liturgical Color: White
 1st Reading: Isaiah 61:10 - 62:3 * 2nd Reading: Luke 2:22-40
 Sermon: "Life as Christmas Morning"



OUR PRAYER IN TIMES OF JOY AND CONCERN...One of our great joys and responsibilities to each other and to God here at Gregory Memorial is the regular practice of praying for each other and our community.

<p>Amy Townson, Josh Ingram’s sister Mary Chadwick & Adelaide "Shorty" Smith, "Dink" Armstrong’s sisters (health issues) Evelyn Lichvar, her brother, Martin, & her son, Rick (health issues) Becky Scott Smith Russell Heiser, Ingrid Phoenix’s grandson (health issues) Butch Meade, Glenda Mayhew’s brother Steve “Dee” Shortt, Kim Helmer Shortt’s husband (health issue) Verne & Clara Smith Peggy Allen Eddie Frankenstein Grace Cibula Etta Holc Jerry Hasky (health issue) Kay Recher, daughter-in-law of Ron & Judy Recher (head-on crash in Oklahoma) Melvin Huff, Marguerite Bishop's friend (health issues) Pam Henry, Mary Holc’s family member Sandra Elder, Kelly Knupp's mother (health issues)</p>	<p>Velma Allen (health issues) Adele Linkenhoker, Barbara Taliaferro's friend (health concerns) Jane & Bob Jones (health issues) Junie "Bug" Treaster (recovering from surgery) Lee Harsh, Valerie Harsh's brother-in-law (health issue) Rev. Paul Luthman, previously our pastor (recovering from surgery) Sharon Reed & family, Susan Shockley's co-worker (health issue) Jennifer Caldwell, friend of Grace Cibula (health issue) Reese Etheridge, Wayne Powers' uncle (health issue) Randy Warthan (health issue) Inez Paul, Mary Holc's mother (health issue, rehab) Floyd M. Brown, Sr. (SRMC, health issues) Pam Landrum, Doris Harmison's daughter (orthopedic issue) Trevor Fine, Susan Shockley's neighbor's son (health issue) Traci Wells, Glenda Mayhew's friend (health issue) Morgan Ingram The Rolley Family, Marguerite Bishop's friends (health issues) Larry Johnson (gall bladder surgery) Jeanette Shady, Linda Brown's aunt (health issues)</p>
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"It's not what's under the Christmas tree that matters, but who's around it." Charlie Brown, from A Charlie Brown Christmas



AS WE MOVE FORWARD IN WORSHIP...

Although we are still in the midst of the global pandemic, we have begun to "re-gather" in worship, with some specific considerations in mind and practice.

Please note the following:

- ~ Worship continues each Sunday at 11:00 a.m.
- ~ On-line worship offerings will continue via Zoom (Meeting ID: 756-330-772, Passcode 6300) and Facebook Live From the church's Facebook page; or those without reliable internet may dial 1-253-215-8782 and enter Meeting ID# 756-330-772, Passcode 6300.
- ~ If you are experiencing fever or other symptoms/illness, please stay home and worship with us virtually.
- ~ If you feel comfortable doing so, you may join us in person with the following considerations:
 - Cloth masks are still in effect for public spaces. If you plan to join us in person, please join us as well in wearing a mask for the health of us all.
 - Please make liberal use of the hand sanitizer placed at each entrance to the Sanctuary.
 - Family units are asked to keep physical distance of 6 feet. Pews are marked off for this.
 - Worship information will be available on the weekly "bulletin" handout. This will also be available digitally on the church website for those who wish to worship from home.

Above all and through all, remember this: Jesus loves you and loves us; we are not abandoned; this will last some time, but is still temporary in the grand scheme of life; the more we do our part the quicker we will be on the other side of it.

Love and Peace to You All!

A Few Tips To Enhance Your Virtual Worship Experience

- Turn off all other electronics and devices;
- Have your Bible ready to read along with the morning's scripture;
- Light a candle to represent Christ's Light during the service.

Celebrating Communion

We will celebrate communion on the first Sunday in December, December 6. If you are worshipping in-person, the elements will be prepared ahead of time and made available to you as an individual serving. If you are worshipping with us at home/on-line, I invite you to have ready during these services a bit of bread and juice, so that you may commune with us in Spirit, as well!


***Christmas Eve Service** - There will be one Christmas Eve service this year, held at 7:00 p.m. Subject to change due to public safety conditions, the service is planned to be in-person and online, such as we have been recently engaged in worship.

***Stay tuned! We are planning an Advent event of "Parking Lot Carols"** for (hopefully) the 3rd Sunday of Advent (Dec. 13). During the worship service, we will move from the Sanctuary to the parking lot where we will be able to sing more fully some of our favorite carols of the Season. This will be a weather-contingent event, so if need be, it will be incorporated into the following Sunday (Dec. 20).

HOLIDAY OFFICE HOURS

Christmas Week: Mon., Tues., Wed. (12/21, 12/22, 12/23); 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.

THOSE WHO SERVE – DECEMBER, 2020

 GATEKEEPER: TBA	DEC. 6 + 2 nd Sun. in Advent	DEC. 13 3 rd Sun. in Advent	DEC. 20 4 th Sun. in Advent	DEC. 27 ** 1 st Sun. after Christmas Day
Ushers	Charles Smyth Austin Smyth Morgan Ingram Josh Ingram	Bobby Allen Donna Allen Larry Johnson	Wayne Powers Brenda Bond Glenda Mayhew Les Mayhew	Sheila Fields Marguerite Bishop Valerie Harsh
Announcements	Mary Kay Schroeter	Larry Johnson	Rose Scott	Larry Johnson
Nursery	Sheila Field Mary Kay Schroeter*	Jennifer Smyth Charles Smyth	Lind Johnson Patsy Johnson*	Valerie Harsh Sandy Hunter*
Counting				

+ Communion Sunday

* if in Choir, member goes to Nursery (if needed) after Choral anthem

** 5 Cents a Meal Offering

TO BRIGHTEN YOUR DAY

10 HOLIDAY EATING TIPS

1. Avoid carrot sticks. Anyone who puts carrots on a holiday buffet able knows nothing of the Christmas spirit. In fact, if you see carrots, leave immediately. Go next door, where they're serving rum balls.

2. Drink as much eggnog as you can...and quickly! Like fine single-malt scotch, it's rare. In fact, it's even rarer than single-malt scotch. You can't find it any other time of year but now. *So drink up!* Who cares that it has 10,000 calories in every sip? It's not as if you're going to turn into an eggnog-a-holic or something. It's a treat. Enjoy it. Have one for me. Have two. It's later than you think. It's Christmas!

3. If something comes with gravy, use it. That's the whole point of gravy. Gravy does not stand alone. Pour it on. Make a volcano out of your mashed potatoes. Fill it with gravy. Eat the volcano.

4. As for mashed potatoes, always ask if they're made with skim milk or whole milk. If it's skim, pass.

Why bother? It's like buying a sports car with an automatic transmission.

5. Do not have a snack before going to a party in an effort to control your eating. The whole point of going to a Christmas party is to eat other people's food for free. And lots of it. *Hello?!!!*

6. Under no circumstances should you exercise between now and New Year's. You can do that in January when you have nothing else to do. This is the time for long naps, which you'll need after circling the buffet table while carrying a 10-pound plate of food and that vat of eggnog.

7. If you come across something really good at a buffet table, like frosted Christmas cookies in the shape and size of Santa, position yourself near them and don't budge. Have as many as you can before becoming the center of attention. They're like a beautiful pair of shoes. If you leave them behind, you're never going to see them again.

8. Same for pies. Apple. Pumpkin. Mincemeat. Have a slice of each. Or, if you don't like mincemeat, have two

apples and one pumpkin. Always have three. When else do you get to have more than one dessert? Hello?

9. Did someone mention fruitcake? Granted, it's loaded with the mandatory, celebratory calories, but avoid it at all cost. I mean, have some standards.

10. One final tip: If you don't feel terrible when you leave the party or get up from the table, you haven't been paying attention. Re-read tips; start over, but hurry...January is just around the corner. Remember this motto to live by:

"Life should NOT be a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in an attractive and well-preserved body, but rather to skid-in sideways, chocolate in one hand, eggnog in the other, body thoroughly used up, totally worn out and screaming, "WOO HOO what a ride!"



DECEMBER, 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 1p Circle 7p Cong. Care Com. 7p Christian Ed Com. 7p Facilities Com.	2	3 11a Poinsettia Order goes to florist	4	5
6 2nd Sunday in Advent 9:45a Sunday School 11a Worship service 11a Holy Communion	7	8 7p Missions Com. 7p Outreach Com.	9	10	11 Poinsettias to be delivered	12
13 3rd Sunday in Advent 9:45a Sunday School 11a Worship service "Parking Lot Carols"	14	15	16	17 2p News articles due 2p Church Cleaning 7p Stewardship & Finance Com.	18	19
20 4th Sunday in Advent 9:45a Sunday School 11a Worship service 12p Session meeting	21 Church Office Open	22 Church Office Open	23 Church Office Open 2p Newsletter out 2p Church Cleaning	24 CHRISTMAS EVE Church office closed 7:00p Christmas Eve Service	25 CHRISTMAS DAY	26
27 9:45a Sunday School 11a Worship service 11a 5 Cents-a-Meal Offering	28	29	30	31 2p Church Cleaning 2p Committee reports due	NEW YEAR'S DAY	

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Gregory Memorial Presbyterian Church
6300 Courthouse Road ~ PO Box 182
Prince George, VA 23875-0182

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DECEMBER NEWSLETTER



COME AND JOIN US!
Sunday School 9:45 A.M.
WWW.GREGORYMEMORIAL.ORG

We're on: Facebook.com/gmpcva
Worship 11:00 A.M.