

Dear Saints and Friends of Gregory Memorial,

“OH, WONDROUS NAME, BY PROPHETS HEARD” by Fanny Crosby (1886) (vv. 1 and 2)

*Oh, wondrous name, by prophets heard long years before his birth; they saw him coming from afar, the Prince of Peace on earth.
The Wonderful! The Counselor! The Great and Mighty Lord! The everlasting Prince of Peace! The King, the Son of God!
Oh, glorious name the angels praise and ransomed saints adore, the name above all other names, our refuge evermore.*

HOW DO WE KNOW JESUS WAS BORN DECEMBER 25TH? WHERE DID WE GET EPIPHANY AND ADVENT?

Have you ever wondered how it was we got December 25th as the date of Jesus’ birth? How did a feast commemorating and honoring Jesus’ birth come into being? And then, there’s the question of Epiphany and Advent: When and where did they originate? **Questions, so many questions!**



The gradual development of the Christian seasons of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany reflected how the early Church was maturing for Jews and Gentiles: Gentiles from many cultures were being evangelized, with most believing the Body of Christ would exist for an indeterminate length of time. Holding to this belief, having an annual celebration of Christmas (“Christ’s Mass”) helped believers from different cultures build their lives around their belief of the Incarnation.

But observing December 25th as Jesus’ birthday wasn’t just a simple invention. Rather, it evolved over hundreds of years from worship festivals that started mid-Second Century guided by the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John). In those days, Christians celebrated their martyrs’ days of death as “birthdays” in the Afterlife. Thus, as believers gathered at meals commemorating anniversaries of their martyrs’ deaths, they celebrated the martyrs’ “true” birthdays into the Afterlife. This practice, along with the establishment of Easter, encouraged a growing curiosity to find an actual date to celebrate Christ’s birth in Bethlehem.

So here’s how December 25 entered the discussion: In Jewish tradition, ancient scholars listed great figures as being born and died on the same calendar day (just like with Christian martyrs). Working backward from that date, they hoped to determine Jesus’ birthday by finding a date for his crucifixion near the time of Jewish Passover. Some scholars settled on using the date March 25, which is the spring equinox on the Julian calendar and it’s also when pagans marked the anniversary of the world’s creation. The Christians, however, instead celebrated Jesus as the new Adam and harbinger of Re-creation. In a

variation of this, other scholars took March 25 to be the date of Jesus’ conception in the womb, which put his birth nine months later and occurring on December 25—the winter solstice when the sun is weakest, but growing in strength and symbolic of a newborn child.

Celebrating Christ’s birthday on December 25 became popular as it directly opposed pagan feasts that were being celebrated during that same time. The cult of Deus Sol Invictus (the Unconquered Sun God) celebrated the Sun’s birthday on that day, coinciding with the December 25th birthday of a Persian virility deity, Mithra, revered by Roman soldiers. And there was the pagan Roman Festival of Saturnalia (December 17 to 23), a week of vigorous drinking, eating, sexual misconduct, and the overturning of social and even gender roles. So it was that in the interest of ditching pagan and replacing with Christian, December 25 got the “thumbs up” and gradually took root for celebrating the day of Christ’s birth.

Epiphany and Advent. Early in the Third Century, the Roman church settled on this date, spreading it through the empire by the Fourth Century. But it was not without the resistance of the Jerusalem church, which kept the traditional Eastern date of January 6 for Christmas until about 575 AD.

As January 6 transitioned to become “Epiphany” (a/k/a “Little Christmas”) marking the date of the Magi’s visit and Jesus’ baptism by John, the Christmas season was filled out with Epiphany. In Fourth-century Gallic and Spanish churches, baptism candidates prepared for baptism to occur on Epiphany, but this time was moved ahead on the calendar to become a preparatory period for Christmas by the Sixth Century. In northern Italy and Rome, it was called “Advent” (“coming” or “arrival”), a time of expectancy and preparation for the celebration of Jesus birth, the first coming of Christ.

Source: excerpt; Robert Kruschwitz, “The Birth of Christmas (Christmas & Epiphany), A Series in Faith & Ethics, The Center for Christian Ethics; Christian_Reflection@ Baylor.edu, 2011.

To share an article for publication in THE HERALD, please send it to the church email: office@gregorymemorial.org or drop it off in the church office door mailbox.

WORSHIP INFORMATION FOR DECEMBER, 2022

Sunday, 4 December 2022

"2nd Sunday of Advent" " - Liturgical Color: Purple/Blue
 Guest Preacher: Rev. Clay Macaulay

Sunday, 11 December 2022

"3rd Sunday of Advent" " - Liturgical Color: Purple/Blue
 Service by Church Laity
 Special Music by "Streets of Gold" Gospel Group

Sunday, 18 December 2022

"4th Sunday of Advent" " - Liturgical Color: Purple/Blue
 Guest Preacher: Rev. Charles Philips

Sunday, 25 December 2022

"Nativity of the Lord" / "Christmas Day" - Liturgical Color: White
 Guest Preacher: Rev. Dr. Charles E. Bagwell



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. Please let the church office know if any updates to this list are needed.

Families, persons, entities impacted by Hurricane Ian
 People of Ukraine
 Amy Townson, Josh Ingram's sister
 Becky Scott Smith
 Russell Heiser, Ingrid Phoenix's grandson (health issues)
 Butch Meade, Glenda Mayhew's brother
 Verne & Clara Smith
 Peggy & Dennis Allen
 Eddie Frankenstein
 Grace Cibula
 Etta Holc
 Jerry Hasky (health issue)
 Lee Harsh, Valerie Harsh's brother-in-law (health issue)
 Jennifer Caldwell, friend of Grace Cibula (health issue)
 Reese Etheridge, Wayne Powers' uncle (health issue)
 Dana Etheridge, Wayne Powers' cousin (health issue)
 Randy Warthan (health issue)
 Traci Wells, Glenda Mayhew's friend (health issue)
 Larry Brown of Chesterfield, Larry Johnson's friend
 (health issue)

Billy Hudson, friend of Dianna Lykins Flaherty, Mary
 Lykins' daughter
 Renee' Renier, Diana Flaherty's long-time friend
 (health issue)
 Emily Henry, Mary Holc's sister (health issue)
 Charlie Perkins (health issue)
 Chris Ashby, Wayne Powers' granddaughter
 Brittney's husband (health issues)
 Judy Recher (problem with knee)
 Barbara Taliaferro
 Ruth Figg (Petersburg Home for Ladies)
 Billy Robertson (recent health issue)
 Shirley MacNeill (recent health issue)
 Inez Paul, Mary Holc's mother (rehab., Riverview
 on the Appomattox)
 Paula McDaniel, Pam Elder's sister (health issue,
 St. Francis Hospital)

CELEBRATING HOLY COMMUNION

Our 2022 schedule for Holy Communion provides that we celebrate Holy Communion on the first Sunday in even-numbered months.

We will celebrate our next Holy Communion on **Sunday, December 4 "Second Sunday of Advent."** We are continuing with the practice of passing the communion elements among the pews.

HOLY COMMUNION SCHEDULE FOR 2022

February 6, 2022
April 3, 2022

July 5, 2022
August 7, 2022

October 2, 2022
December 4, 2022

A CHRISTMAS CREED

I believe ... in the One whose spirit glorified a little town; and whose spirit still brings music to persons all over the world, in towns both large and small.

I believe ... in the One for whom the crowded inn could find no room, and I confess that my heart still sometimes wants to exclude Christ from my life today.

I believe ... in Jesus Christ and in the beauty of the gospel begun in Bethlehem.

I believe ... in the One who the rulers of the earth ignored and the proud could never understand; whose life was among common people, whose welcome came from persons of hungry hearts.

I believe ... in the One who proclaimed the love of God to be invincible.

I believe ... in the One whose cradle was a mother's arms, whose modest home in Nazareth had love for its only wealth, who looked at persons and made them see what God's love saw in them, who by love brought sinners back to purity, and lifted human weakness up to meet the strength of God.

I confess ... my ever-lasting need of God: The need of forgiveness for our selfishness and greed, the need of new life for empty souls, the need of love for hearts grown cold.

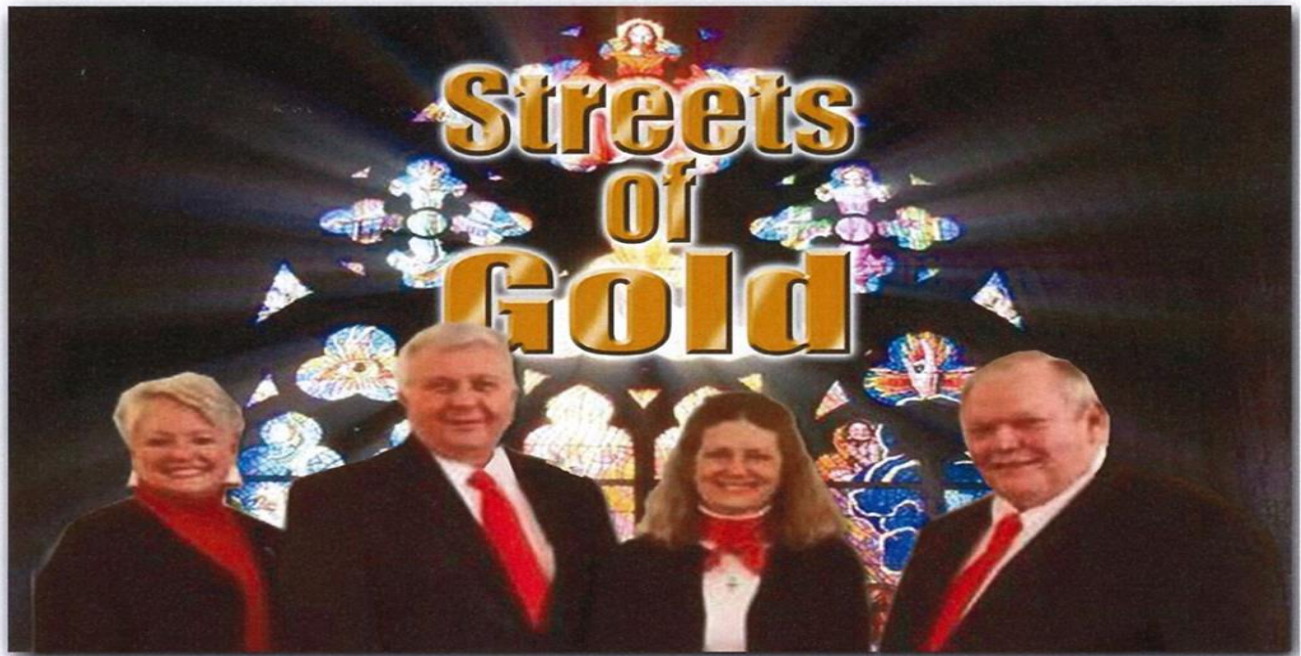
I believe ... in God who gives us the best of Himself.

I believe ... in Jesus, the Son of the Living God, born in Bethlehem this night, for me and for the world.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

"Cookies 'n' Cocoa!" will be hosted by Faith Committee at 3 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 3 in the church Fellowship Hall after the PG Christmas Parade, serving pre-packaged cookies and cocoa that Lisa Brown will shop for. Monetary donations are sought for purchase of the items. Please see Lisa Brown (804.926.0991) or Sandy Hunter (804.731.0082).

Angel Tree – Faith Committee will host this year's Angel Tree in the Narthex for a family recommended by Dept. of Social Services (mom with 4 kids). The Christmas ornament tags will be available on the tree Dec. 4. All gifts have the ornament the tag attached and must be left not wrapped, but placed in gift bags, and placed under the tree by Dec. 18. [*Sandy Hunter, Faith Committee Chm.*]



Appearing in Concert

AT GREGORY MEMORIAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Date: Sunday, December 11, 2022

Time: 11:00 A.M.

**Come and hear Streets of Gold
perform many of your gospel
favorites!**

www.streetsofgoldgospel.com

757-621-9852

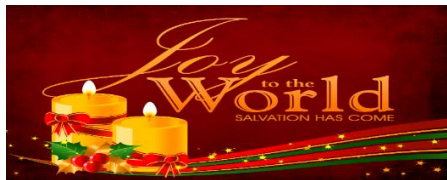
DECEMBER, 2022

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 6a Clean Church	2	3 3p "Cookies 'n' Cocoa" in Fellowship Hall after PG Christmas Parade
4 2nd Sunday of Advent 9:30a Sunday School 11a Worship service & Holy Communion Guest preacher: Rev. Clay Macaulay Last day to order Christmas Poinsettias	5 11a Place Poinsettia order with Florist before 11a	6 7p Cong. Care Cmte	7	8 6a Clean Church	9	10
11 3rd Sunday of Advent 9:30a Sunday School 11a Worship service <i>*Special Music by "Streets of Gold" Gospel Group</i>	12 6p Crater BSA Order of Arrow Karakona Ch19, Nawakwa Ldg3 (Fellowship Hall Reception Area, Kitchen, Meeting/Dining Rm)	13 1p Circle (Location: TBA)	14 6p BSA Tr900 Honor Court Ord. of Arrow (Sanctuary; Fellowship Hall Reception Area, kitchen, Mtg/Dining Rm)	15 6a Clean Church 2p News articles due 7p Faith Cmte 7p Finance Cmte	16	17
18 4th Sunday of Advent 9:30a Sunday School 11a Worship service > 5 Cents Meal Offering > Christmas Joy Offering Guest preacher: Rev. Charles Philips 12p Session Meeting Moderator: Rev. Philips	19	20	21	22 6a Clean Church 2p Newsletter out	23	24 Christmas Eve 4:30p Family Service of Lessons & Carols
25 "Nativity of the Lord" / "Christmas Day" 9:30a Sunday School 11a Worship service Guest preacher: Rev. Dr. Charles E. Bagwell	26	27	28	29 6a Church Cleaning	30	31 New Year's Eve 2p Cmte reports due

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

STAMP

--- --- ---
DECEMBER NEWSLETTER



COME AND JOIN US!
Sunday School 9:30 A.M.

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