

To the Saints and Friends of Gregory Memorial:

BETTER THAN A HALLMARK CHRISTMAS

Let's take the best holiday movie we've ever seen—one that drew us in, hanging on every word until the end, moment after moment filled with drama, suspense, sentiment and a sprinkling of danger: Sounds a lot like a Hallmark Christmas movie, am I right?

Many of us grew up hearing the Christmas story, but sometimes the wonder is lost in the retelling (like when we watch "It's a Wonderful Life" for the umpteenth time!) But for now, let's grab the popcorn, sit back, close our eyes, and in our minds, watch "the greatest story ever told" unfold, guided by six hidden lessons.

1. God offers forgiveness for all.

"There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit." [Isaiah 11:1-2]

The message, woven throughout the Christmas story, is "God and sinners reconciled." While we don't get to choose our lineage, God chose Christ's human ancestry right from David's seed. God picked David—a man after God's own heart, and but still, he was David, the man who had committed the sin of adultery. This speaks to our Father's abundant mercy! The Messiah descended from a royal human bloodline riddled with human frailty. But Christ's heavenly ancestry rang perfect, pure, and holy. This is the ministry of reconciliation. God sent Emmanuel—(a/k/a "God with us"), to "save His people from their sins"; *no matter who we are, or what we've done.*

2. Christ will be our shepherd.

"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly hosts praising God and saying: 'Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!'" [Luke 2:13-14]

Shepherds were looked down on in Bethlehem society. People didn't exactly rub elbows with them at social events. But God's message was clear—this hope was for ALL people, including shepherds! There is another reason

why the angelic appearance to the shepherds is important. Ezekiel 34:15, *"I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down," says the Lord God*", is just one of many passages in the Old Testament referring to Christ as our Shepherd. Christ came not just to bestow peace, but also to lead us. What a comfort!

3. God can perform the impossible.

"And Mary said, 'My soul magnifies the Lord, And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; for behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed. For He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name. and His mercy is on those who fear Him from generation to generation." [Luke 1:46-50]

Cousins Mary and Elizabeth each had miraculous reasons to rejoice! God had honored their everyday faithfulness by granting them pregnancies that seemed impossible: one, an old woman of 80 years; the other, a virgin. As the angel said to Mary when announcing that she would conceive in holiness, *"For nothing shall be impossible with God."*

4. God provides in his own way.

"So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." [Luke 2:6-7]

And don't forget that Mary was on a trip! Not only that, she couldn't even find a decent room in which to have her baby! She also had to lay him down in the place where the animals fed from. But God used Mary, an unwed, betrothed teenage girl, to deliver His Christmas gift in a barn while she was on a trip. Yet, he provided in His way, in His time.

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WORSHIP INFORMATION FOR DECEMBER, 2023

Sunday, 3 December, 2023 – Holy Communion

“1st Sunday in Advent - Liturgical Color: Purple /Blue
 Guest Preacher: Rev. Marvin Daniel

Sunday, 10 December, 2023

“2nd Sunday in Advent” – Liturgical Color: Purple /Blue
 Guest Preacher: TBA

Sunday, 17 December, 2023 – No Church at Gregory Memorial today

“3rd Sunday in Advent”
 *** Christmas Cantata Worship Service at Trinity UMC ***

Sunday, 24 December, 2023

“Christmas Eve”
 “4th Sunday in Advent” – Liturgical Color: Purple /Blue
 Guest Preacher: Rev. Dr. Charles E. Bagwell

Sunday, 31 December, 2023

“1st Sunday of Christmas” – Liturgical Color: White
 Guest Preacher: Rev. Charles Philips



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.

<p>First-responders, world-wide Families, persons, communities affected by weather disasters & gun violence Those affected by the October 2023 Israeli-Hamas War in Gaza People & Sovereign Country of Ukraine; Russian citizens conscripted into war Those in our community suffering from illness/loss/grief/hardship 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 Eddie Frankenstein Etta Holc Jerry & Ruby Hasky (health issues) Lee Harsh, Valerie Harsh's brother-in-law (health issue) Reese Etheridge, Wayne Powers' uncle (health issue) Dana Etheridge, Wayne Powers' cousin (health issue) Larry Brown of Chesterfield, Larry Johnson's friend (health issue) Billy Hudson, friend of Dianna L. Flaherty, Mary Lykins' daughter</p>	<p>Renee' Renier, Diana Flaherty's long-time friend (health issue) Emily Henry, Mary Holc’s sister (health issue) Charlie Perkins (health issue) Paula McDaniel, Pam Elder's sister (health issue) Tara Foster (recovering at home from surgery: kidney stones) Grace Cibula (recovering at home; health issues) Moneka Suprenant, Susan Shockley’s & Sandy Eickmeyer’s friend (brain injury) John Carl Allen (recovering, orthopedic surgery) Mary Kay & Mike Schroeter (health issues) Dr. Joseph Hillier of Matoaca (dentist, ret.), Lykins family friend (recovering from fall) Alex Courtney of Florence, SC, business associate of Dianna L. Flaherty, Mary Lykins' daughter (injured, vehicle accident) Peggy & Dennis Allen (health issues; Peggy: Petersburg Home for Ladies, Rm #18) Corey Whelan, Pat Hunter’s grandson (on-going health issue) Judy Recher (health issue) Shirley MacNeill (health issues; recovering at home)</p>
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5. God grants us peace when we wait on him.

"But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart." [Luke 2:19]

Mary had just experienced unexpected excitement and she was probably experiencing protective, maternal instincts. We tend to gloss over the stable birth, forgetting how traumatizing that would be for an expectant mom. But you can be sure that Mary, a female, probably fretted over this. She recalled the angel's words to her. "Blessed are you among women", "Son of God", and "Nothing shall be impossible with God" were now fulfilled. This was really happening, and she needed time to catch up to the ramifications for her son; her family.

6. God is in control of leadership and world events.

"When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born." [Matthew 2:3-4]

Herod was jealous, and God knew it; in fact, God allowed the wise men to go straight to this pompous king in search of the Real King. Why? Because God, the Creator, set that star in the sky, pointing the wise men to Bethlehem. But then—nothing. No directions. They had lost sight of the star. The drama increased.

"Surely the king would know! He could tell them where the child-king was!" So they thought. Instead, the jealous king sought to find the child and destroy him. In every twist of the story surrounding Christ's birth, God's hand overrules. Our God, who made the earth, sky, and stars, had a plan.

Today our world is in much the same, chaotic state as back in Herod's day; we worry about the future. It's hard, trusting a God we cannot see, while perplexing events unfold. But God is in control, and peace lies in resting in the Prince of Peace.

As the shepherds returned to the sheep-dotted hillside, they carried with them a joy they'd never known. The wise men experienced God's sovereignty in directing them safely home.

Our personal God used each character in the story to reveal these hidden truths. But if we're not careful—we'll miss them. We can rest and reflect like Mary, assured that God knows our story, and that He has a plan. We can't explain it all, but we know the One Who guided that star.

And, like most Hallmark movies, this one has a happy ending—albeit a complex one: Even though we are a sinful people, God regards our lowliness, desiring to forgive us and "shepherd" us through life. And the happy ending?

***He came to bring us inner peace,
no matter our circumstances.***

Source: <https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/bible-study/6-lessons-hidden-in-the-christmas-story.html>, Ruthie Gray, author

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Holy Communion – Sunday, Dec. 3, 2023.

Congratulations to our new church officers:

Class of 2024 : Blake Bishop (pt. term: ends/31/2024)

Class of 2026: Mary Holc, Sandy Hunter, Bill Shill

(3-yr. term: 1/1/2024-12/31/2026)

Trustee: Gail R. Hare (3-yr. term: 1/1/2024-12/31/2026)

Christmas Poinsettias – Cost: \$15 includes delivery; use order forms in Sunday bulletins and on Narthex table. Please make your checks payable to "Gregory Memorial." Deadline is Dec. 3.

"Cookies & Cocoa" - Faith Committee is accepting monetary donations to cover cost of cookies and cocoa for the Christmas "Open House" in the Fellowship Hall after Christmas Parade on Saturday, Dec. 2. Volunteers to set-up and serve the treats are asked to arrive at the Fellowship Hall by 2:30 p.m.

Angel Tree - Our church will again sponsor a family for Christmas using our "Angel Tree." The Angel

Tree will be set up in the Narthex beginning Sunday, November 26. Please take an item (or more!) off the tree and return it with not-wrapped gifts by Sunday, Dec. 10, 2023.

Christmas Cards Box - Everyone will have the opportunity to share the joy of Christmas thru giving of Christmas cards to one another while saving on postage. Bring your cards to church beginning Sunday, December 3. A box will be provided in the Narthex to collect the cards. The cards will be distributed on Sunday, Dec. 10, 2023.

No church at Gregory on Sunday, Dec. 17. The congregation is invited to attend Trinity UMC's Christmas Cantata during worship service that begins at 11:15 a.m. Trinity UMC, 10021 County Drive in Disputanta.

Stated Session Meeting – No Stated Session Meeting in December.

HOLY COMMUNION SCHEDULE FOR 2024

February 4, 2024
April 7, 2024

June 9, 2024
August 4, 2024

October 13, 2024
December 1, 2024

ANNOUNCERS FOR SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICES

December 3 Susan Shockley	December 10 Rose Scott	December 17 Donald Hunter	December 24 Patsy Johnson	December 31 Sandy Hunter
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I AM CHRISTMAS

By Rev. C. W. Thompson

I am Christmas. I was born in Bethlehem 2023 years ago. My only birth certificate was a manger in a cattle stall, and those wise men who came by to see me. The blood of redemption flows through my veins because I offer salvation to the sinner whether poor, rich, young, old, slave or free. I am many things to many people.

I am Christmas!

I am a host of living souls who believe in me and many who have given their lives for the cause I champion. I am Moses, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I stood on Mt. Sinai and gave the commandments which were felt through history. I am the prophets, the judges, kings and noblemen.

I am also the story that they told. I remember the children of Israel in Egyptian bondage and led them through the wilderness, across the sands of the desert, across the Red Sea down to the Dead Sea, to the top of Mt. Nebo and into the Promised Lands. ***I am Christmas!***

I am Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. I am Joseph, John the Baptist, Peter, Paul and James. Yes, I'm a part of the great past present and future.

I am a host of angels singing at the birth of the greatest, the wisest, and the most noble. I am the star of Bethlehem, the Rose of Sharon, the Bright and Morning Star. I am a great book written through the inspiration of the all-present, all-knowing and Almighty.

I remember Pentecost, Mars Hill, Cyprus, Galilee, Palestine, Jerusalem and Patmos. When duty called I went and there I began to work.

I'm Stephen, Saul, David and the 12 disciples and yes, I'm Peter, Paul, Pilot, and Judas Iscariot. These I remember vividly. I'm the cry of a new born baby, the laugh of a carefree youngster. I'm the thrill of a young girl

on her graduation night---the excitement of her first date. I'm the principles that keep her clean and pure within I'm the food for the hungry child in Vietnam. The comfort for the mother and father who've lost a soldier in battle.

I'm Christmas!

I'm Billy Graham, Dwight L. Moody, Billy Sunday and Peter Marshall.

I'm the message behind every pulpit dedicated to the good of mankind. I'm the charity for the poor, the blind, the crippled and the helpless. You can see me in the spring when life comes to the dead earth, in the fall when the brown leaves fall, the winter when the white blanket covers a naked earth and you can see me in the sunshine of a clear summer day. ***I am Christmas!***

I'm the gaiety of the flickering lights at Christmas time, the thrill of the busy shoppers and the gift for the world. I never wrote a book, but more books have been written about me than all others put together.

I never owned a piece of property nor a bank account; yet the whole world belongs to me.


I'm the Messiah, the bread of life, the Savior of mankind, the Lamb of God. ***I'm Christmas.***

I'm the little drummer boy in rags begging for his survival, I'm the rhyme of a poem, the peal of the church bells and the voice of a thousand choirs as they lift up their voices in chorus.

I am Christmas!



DECEMBER

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p>Dec. 17: No church at GMPC: Trinity UMC Christmas Cantata Worship Service. Starts at 11:15 a.m.</p>					<p>1 2p Worship Cmte meets to decorate church</p>	<p>2 3p "Cookies & Cocoa" in Fellowship Hall after Christmas Parade; Volunteers be there 2:30 pm</p>
<p>3 1st Sunday in Advent "HOPE"</p> <p>9:30a Sunday School</p> <p>11a Worship service & Holy Communion</p> <p>Guest preacher: Rev. Marvin Daniel</p> <p><u>Last day Order Poinsettias</u></p>	<p>4</p> <p>11a Deadline to place Poinsettia order with florist</p>	<p>5</p>	<p>6</p> <p>7p Faith Cmte</p>	<p>7</p> <p>6a Clean Church</p> <p>6p BSA Cub Pack 910 (Fellowship Hall multiple rooms)</p>	<p>8</p>	<p>9</p>
<p>10 2nd Sunday in Advent "PEACE"</p> <p>9:30a Sunday School</p> <p>10:30a Called Session Mtg</p> <p>11a Worship service & Service of Installation</p> <p>Guest preacher: Rev. Marvin Daniel</p> <p><u>Christmas Cards out</u></p> <p><u>Last day Angel Tree gifts</u></p>	<p>11</p> <p>6p BSA Crater Karakona Ch19, Nawakwa Lodge3 (Fellowship Hall multiple rms)</p>	<p>12</p> <p>12p Circle (Location: S. Shockley's)</p> <p>7p Finance Cmte</p>	<p>13</p>	<p>14</p> <p>6a Clean Church</p>	<p>15</p>	<p>16</p>
<p>17 3rd Sunday in Advent "JOY"</p> <p>NO CHURCH AT GMPC</p> <p>11:15a Christmas Cantata Worship Service at Trinity UMC 10021 County Drive, Disputanta, Va.</p>	<p>18</p>	<p>19</p> <p>6p GSA Tr. 5000 (Fellowship Hall multiple rms)</p>	<p>20</p> <p>6p BSA Tr 900 (Fellowship Hall multiple rms)</p>	<p>21</p> <p>6a Clean Church</p> <p>Poinsettias delivered today</p> <p>2p Newsletter articles due</p> <p>6p BSA Cub Pack 910 (Fellowship Hall multiple rms)</p>	<p>22</p>	<p>23</p>
<p>24 4th Sunday in Advent "LOVE"; Christmas Eve</p> <p>9:30a Sunday School</p> <p>11a Worship service ➤ 5 Cents Meal Offering ➤ Christmas Joy Offering</p> <p>Guest preacher: Rev. Dr. Charles E. Bagwell</p>	<p>25 Christmas Day</p> 	<p>26</p>	<p>27</p>	<p>28</p> <p>6a Clean Church</p> <p>2p Newsletter out</p>	<p>29</p>	<p>30</p> <p>2p Committee reports due</p>
<p>31 New Year's Eve</p> <p>9:30a Sunday School</p> <p>11a Worship service ➤ Local Emergency Aid Offering</p> <p>Guest preacher: Rev. Charles Philips</p>						

Gregory Memorial Presbyterian Church
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STAMP

DECEMBER NEWSLETTER



COME AND JOIN US!
Sunday School 9:30 A.M.
Worship 11:00 A.M.

We're on: [Facebook.com/gmpcva](https://www.facebook.com/gmpcva)