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December 2022

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### *Steve's Slant*

It's been a tale of two seasons this year, as we have entered the early stages of the holidays and of our Advent preparations.

On the one hand, we enjoyed a beautiful Thanksgiving Harvest Display on the Sunday before Thanksgiving, and on the following Sunday, as well.

On Thanksgiving Day, we opened our Fellowship Hall and welcomed all comers to join us for a traditional meal with all the trimmings, the first time we've been able to do that since November 2019. Some forty people gathered for what proved to be a wonderful time of good food, good fellowship and thanksgiving.

Last Sunday we marked our entrance into Advent with the lighting of the first candle in our Advent wreath.

All of that, each of these things, felt festive and fun. Each one, a meaningful part of this lovely holiday season.

It's also true that each of these planned events and welcome occasions played out over a backdrop of unplanned events and unwelcome occasions: an unexpected open-heart surgery, done (successfully—praise God!) on an emergent basis; the sudden death of a beloved grandfather; a fractured hip; a significant and necessary change in the living situation of our two Afghan refugees.

Of course we also said farewell to Joel last Sunday, a difficult loss for us on the first Sunday of what is always the busiest and most beautiful season of the year, musically. (I'm happy to report that we have found talented musicians to play for all of our events and worship services through Christmas.)

All of these latter events were a bracing reminder that Christmas does not exempt us from the sometimes hard, unwelcome realities of life.

Nor should it. As wonderful as the Christmas season can be, starting in Advent, as magical as it can be -- and it can be, even for grownups, as beautiful as the season can be, as beautiful and the season is, the story of the first Christmas is not an escapist fantasy.

I should say the stories, plural, of the first Christmas, as each of the gospel writers tells this beloved tale a bit differently.

There is danger in the story. There is real risk. Genuine hardship. Severe disruption. Even violence.

But in the end the Christ child is born. That creche and that star and those bright angels and those freezing cold shepherds and those strange, exotic magi are all a reminder of the overarching message of Christmas: that God became flesh in the only way that was possible by being born among us, as one of us.

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**December Birthdays!**

Hythe Hamilton	Dec. 5	Doug Orr	Dec. 9
Jon Hettrick	Dec. 12	Darrell Spencer	Dec. 14
Emily Pulsifer	Dec. 15	Tacci Smith	Dec. 22
Andy Daugherty	Dec. 30	Sandy Brauer	Dec. 31
Derron Daugherty	Dec. 31		



The Warren Wilson Book Group would like to invite any interested readers to our next meeting in the Fellowship Hall on Thursday, December 8. Bring your own lunch to enjoy from 12-12:30. At 12:30 Kathryn will lead our discussion of *The Weight of Ink* by Rachel Kadish.

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**OUR HEALING PRAYERS GO OUT TO:** The Hamilton family, on Dr. Will Hamilton’s death; Walt Roberts, Fran & Burnace’s son; Houston Huggins, Beth Meriwether’s brother; Kip Smith, Tacci’s father; Pat Crumpler; Milt and Sandee Butterworth, and family; Shane Reece, Nancy Garrison’s son; Pat Wilson’s son, Kell; Bartley and Phyllis Spencer, Sandy Brauer’s brother and sister in law; Erika Lytle; Jackie Ligon Cole; Rick Garrison; Fran Roberts’ sister-in-law, Linda Briggs; Flo Bishop; Jon Hettrick and his family; Jon’s mother, Marjorie Hettrick; Mark Laabs, friend of the Griswolds; Kim Reece, daughter of Nancy and Rick Garrison.



**END OF YEAR GIFTS:**

If you plan to make a year-end gift, please note these deadlines. To have your gifts counted as 2022 income, you must postmark your checks (or deliver them to the church) by December 31. For online gifts, the Presbyterian Foundation must process the payment by December 31.

Thank you for all you have done, are doing, and will do for the ministry of Warren Wilson Presbyterian Church.

# united by love **TOGETHER** we serve

From your Stewardship Ministry Team

Thank you, thank you, thank you!! The Warren Wilson Presbyterian congregation really knows how to come together! We are filled with gratitude for each of you; **we've nearly reached our goal**. The Budgeting Ministry Team met this week to see how "the numbers" may need to be tweaked before a "final budget" goes to session for approval. If you've meant to send in your commitment, but have just gotten too busy, there's still time. It's very easy to do on-line, if you'd care to do so electronically and safely. And you can mail your commitment card to the church office or leave it in the offering plate.

Once again our many thanks! The Stewardship Team

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## **Please Give! Daily Change Funds Critically Low!**

Our "Daily Change" fund (formerly "**Nickel a Meal**") is at a critically low point. This affects the PWNC Hunger Committee's ability to fund grant requests received bi-annually from agencies across our Presbytery. Fall funding requests will be reviewed soon, so we need your help to replenish the fund!

Please encourage your members to contribute to this worthwhile cause! Consider taking up a special offering during Sunday worship in the coming weeks, or designate 5th Sundays as an opportunity for this collection. As your church is looking towards ministry plans for next year, consider making it a staple in your annual budget. Please help us replenish the fund! Give the change you want to see in the world.

*Steve's Slant continued...*

In the end, that is what makes Christmas, Christmas: the revelation that Christ is Emmanuel, God with us and for us. That is what makes the story so wonderful, so beautiful, so hopeful, so joyful: the knowledge that in our struggles God is with us and for us.

In times of danger and hardship, God is with us and for us.

In our sorrows, our griefs, or losses, God is with us and for us.

In hospital rooms and operating rooms and waiting rooms, God is with us and for us.

In the sanctuary, when we sing our favorite carols, God is with us and for us.

In our homes, when we gather 'round that Christmas tree to share our gift with one another, God is with us and for us.

Gloria in excelsis Deo!

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## CHRISTMAS JOY: LIVING THE CALL TO CONNECT

As a lifelong advocate of the connectional nature of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Rev. Ben Franklin Whitfield never expected that this denominational doctrine would one day prove indispensable to him at his own time of greatest need.

Ben, honorably retired since 2007 in the Presbytery of Wabash Valley, suffered a stroke in January 2021.

After a hospital stay followed by a period of rehabilitation, he was released into the care of his loving wife, Helen, and allowed to return home.

Facing financial hardships after a lifetime in ministry serving primarily rural congregations with limited budgets, the Whitfields received support from the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions, part of our Presbyterian connectional system. The Assistance Program provides need-based grants to help active and retired plan members and their families in times of financial crisis. The Whitfields received immediate help from an Emergency Assistance grant and long-term help from a monthly Housing Supplement for Retirees receiving Home Health Care.



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The support the Whitfields receive is made possible, in part, by the Christmas Joy Offering, a Presbyterian tradition since the 1930s, which distributes gifts equally to the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions and to Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color.

As he recovers, Ben — who had earlier served as a teacher in the Chicago Public Schools, where he met his wife — is currently working toward regaining enough strength to start tutoring out of their home.

“How greatly we understand the uniqueness of the Presbyterian Church in its call to help people as Christ commands. And now, having so carefully laid out the importance of giving to the Christmas Joy Offering in the rural area congregations where Ben was pastor, we are so grateful to directly benefit from such financial assistance in our great need since Ben’s stroke,” said Helen.

Through our gifts to the Christmas Joy Offering, we honor and celebrate leaders — retired pastors, church workers and their families — who faithfully guided and led us but now find themselves in critical financial need because of changing health situations or emergency circumstances. Our gifts restore hope and stability. Please give whatever you can; for when we all do a little, it adds up to a lot.



Our church will be collecting this offering on Sunday, December 18.

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## **HABITAT FOR HUMANITY NEWS**

### **THIS YEAR'S HOUSE OF FAITH IS NOW A FAMILY'S HOME**

On the afternoon of Nov. 16, Asheville Area Habitat for Humanity held a ceremonial key passing event with the owners, sponsors and volunteers for three recently completed homes in West Asheville's New Heights community.

Earlier in the month, one of the owners, Jesse Coffey, and his three children had moved in to this year's House of Faith which 13 WWPC members helped build by volunteering at the job site for a day or half a day in May and June.



**The 2022 Asheville Area Habitat for Humanity House of Faith**



**House of Faith Homeowner Jesse Coffey holding his infant son, Peter, along with his daughters Sadie and Zoey at the key passing event. Also in the photo are Sabrina Presnell Rockoff of law firm McGuire Woods and Bissette that sponsored the house in memory of Susan Barbour, Jesse's mother Sharon, and Fred Barbour.**

Asheville Area Habitat has also announced the construction of the 2023 House of Faith is scheduled to start next June, and that it will be located in the Glenn Bridge Rd. area in Arden.



“The Hanging of the Greens”  
Many hands helped on Dec. 2.



Even the student crew joined in the fun!

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### DECEMBER EVENTS:

December 4, Second Sunday of Advent 11:00 a.m. Chapel

December 7, Cookies and Carols 7:30 p.m. Chapel

December 11, Third Sunday of Advent 11:00 a.m. Chapel

Brief Congregational meeting

Wassail Celebration in 12 :15 Fellowship Hall

December 18, Fourth Sunday of Advent 11:00 a.m. Chapel

Craft Celebration 12:15 Fellowship Hall

December 24, Christmas Eve

Family Friendly Candles & Crèche 7:00 p.m. Chapel

December 25, Christmas Service 11:00 Chapel with Hymn Sing

And hot chocolate!

## Unexpected by Ann Weems

Even now we simply do not expect  
to find a deity in a stable.

Somehow the setting is all wrong:  
the swaddling clothes too plain,  
the manger too common for the likes of a Savior,  
the straw inelegant,  
the animals, reeking and noisy,  
the whole scene too ordinary for our taste.

And the cast of characters is no better.

With the possible exception of the kings,  
who among them is fit for this night?  
the shepherds? certainly too crude,  
the carpenter too rough,  
the girl too young.

And the baby!

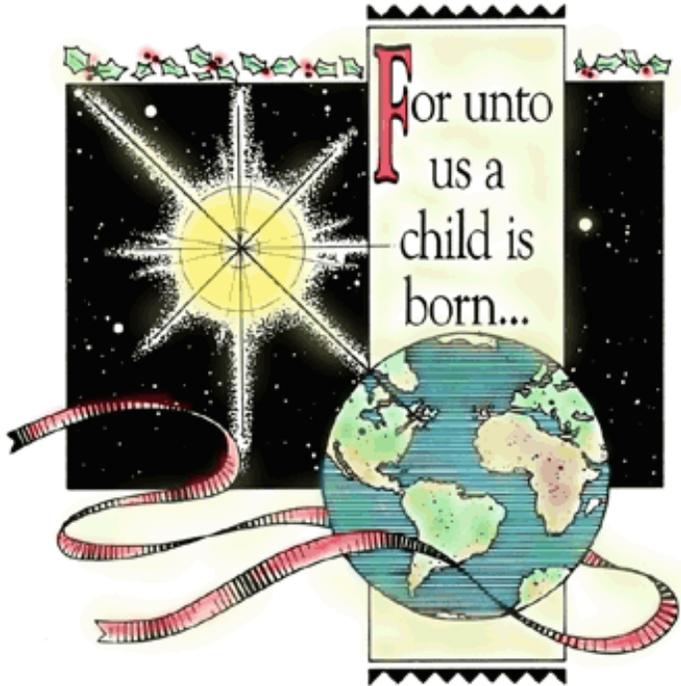
Whoever expected a baby?

Whoever expected the advent of God in a helpless child?

Had the Messiah arrived in the blazing light of the glory  
of a legion of angels wielding golden swords,  
the whole world would have been conquered for Christ  
right then and there

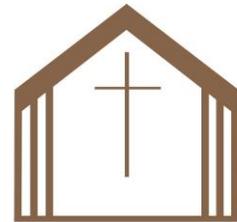
and we in the church-to say nothing of the world!-  
wouldn't have so much trouble today.

Even now we simply do not expect  
to face the world armed with



At Warren Wilson Presbyterian Church we are mothers and fathers, single and married, gay and straight, young and old, black and white, prosperous and poor, uncertain and sure, broken and whole - and everything in between. Together we are the many faces of humanity, yet as a joyful, caring and loving community of faith, we are committed in our diversity to be one in Christ!

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**Warren Wilson**  
**PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

*The Extended Family*