



# The Looking Tree

*Love lives here, Love flows from here...* **December 2023**

*Hello Members and Friends of Head of Christiana,*



Pastor Hilary Livingston

## **Advent Hope—Powerful Prayer!**

In December, we will be observing Advent, a season of four weeks when we prepare our hearts for the celebration of the birth of Jesus the Christ at Christmas. The word “Advent” means “coming” – it is a season of preparing for the coming of Christ to earth. During this season, we read verses from the prophets who foretold of the Christ’s coming in ancient times. We light candles, one for each week of the Advent season. As the days grow darker and colder, Advent symbolically reminds us that God is shining his light into our troubled and fallen world. All that is shrouded in the darkness of sin, suffering, violence, fear and death will soon be flooded with the light of Christ’s love and redemption.

Advent prepares us once again for Christ’s first coming to earth as a humble baby born in a manger. Yet, Advent also points forward to Christ’s second coming, when he will come in judgment and triumph. Advent reminds us that we are living in this painful period between Christ’s first and second coming – the “already” and the “not yet.” We affirm that Christ is already present with us, yet the world is still clearly not as it ought to be. We hear stories on the evening news about wars, mass shootings, terrorist attacks, devastating natural disasters, and many other terrible things. We see that our society is still bitterly divided over cultural and political issues. Advent is a season that gives us hope that God is working to put the world right – bringing God’s kingdom down to earth.

Advent reminds us that God did not leave us alone in our troubled world, but sent his only Son, Jesus the Christ to redeem and heal us. Advent gives us hope as we wait for the Lord’s full redemption at the end of the age. Advent also gives us the courage to act on this hope, working for goodness and justice in our world here and now, until God’s reign is fully realized. The call of the church is to live into this Advent hope, working with God in the Spirit’s power to bring about his kingdom purposes for love, justice, and mercy in our community.

This Advent season, I’m challenging our church to pray a prayer for power – specifically God’s power to renew our church and renew our lives so that God’s love can shine forth into our hurting world. Details on this prayer challenge and how to participate are in this newsletter. I will also be sharing details from the pulpit during this Advent season. Please join me in praying for God’s transforming power to be active in our lives, in our church, and in our community.

“I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may perceive what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come.” – *Ephesians 1:16-2*

*Watch and pray this Advent season!*

*Pastor Hilary*



## ADVENT PRAYER CHALLENGE

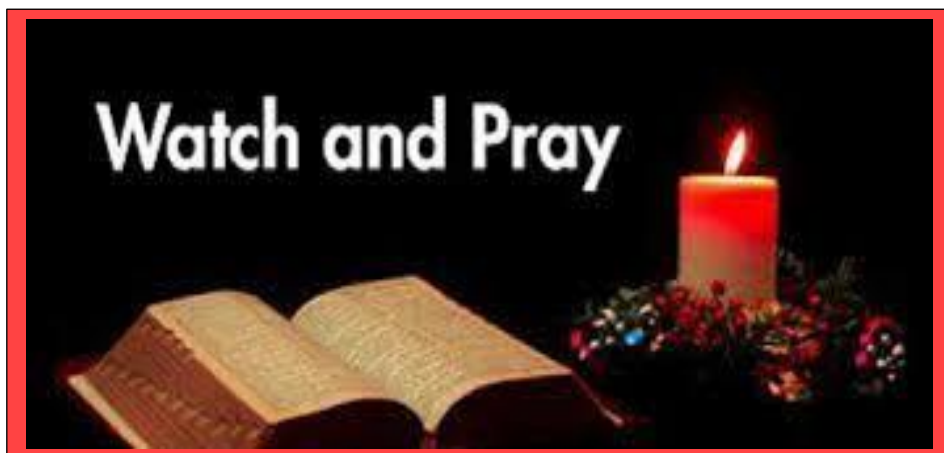
During the Advent season, we are called to “watch and pray” for Jesus’ presence as we await his return in glory. God wants us to experience Jesus’ power here and now, in our lives and in the life of our church.

Beginning December 1st, pray for our church using the “Power Prayer” adapted from Ephesians 1:15-19 (The Message Version):

*Dear Lord, thank you for the solid trust you have given us in the Master Jesus and your outpouring of love to all of us as we seek to follow Jesus. I give thanks continually for this church and all who gather here for worship. God of our Master, Jesus Christ, God of glory, make us intelligent and discerning in knowing Christ personally, our eyes focused and clear, so that we can see exactly what it is Christ is calling us to do in our church and in our community. Let us grasp the immensity of this glorious way of life he has for us as his followers - the utter extravagance of his work in us who trust him—endless energy, boundless strength! We pray this in Christ’s powerful name, Amen.*

Pray this prayer each day until Christmas Day – December 25th (you can keep praying it after Christmas as well!)

*Watch and pray...see how God answers this prayer!*





## *Christmas Worship at HoC*

Since Christmas Eve falls on a Sunday this year, the session has decided to adjust the liturgical calendar in November and December to better accommodate the needs of our congregation during the holiday season. We are moving up the liturgical calendar one week beginning in mid-November. This will give us the opportunity to observe the four weeks of Advent and Christmas Eve, each on their own Sundays.

### **Liturgical schedule for November/December worship:**

**Sunday, November 19th – Christ the King Sunday**

**Sunday, November 26th – First Sunday in Advent**

**Sunday, December 3rd – Second Sunday in Advent**

**Sunday, December 10th – Third Sunday in Advent**

**Sunday, December 17th – Fourth Sunday in Advent**

**Sunday, December 24th – Christmas Eve**  
**(Evening candlelight service only – No morning service)**

**Sunday, December 31st – (Virtual worship only)**

**Café gathering in Fellowship Hall (watch the virtual service together on the big TV)**

**PLEASE NOTE:** There will be **NO MORNING SERVICE** on Christmas Eve, Sunday, December 24th. We will have our traditional Christmas Eve candlelight service of lessons and carols in the evening at 7:30 PM in the sanctuary.

On Sunday, December 31st, there will be **VIRTUAL WORSHIP ONLY**, with a café church gathering in the Fellowship Hall for those who wish to watch the virtual service together on the big TV.

# HoC HAPPENINGS



## *Giving Opportunities at HoC*

As is our tradition, we will once again be collecting your donations of Hats, Mittens/Gloves and Scarves for the Cecil County Help Center. Your donations of these much-needed items will help keep folks in need warmer this winter. Donations must be in by December 10<sup>th</sup>.

We are also collecting men's flannel shirts (size large and extra-large) which will be given to Cecil County Men's Shelter benefitting the homeless (must be in by Dec. 10) and to Warriors Helping Warriors veterans (must be in by Dec. 10<sup>th</sup>). **Please box and wrap the shirt(s).**

Thank you for your continued support and generosity. Merry Christmas!



We will be collecting the **Christmas Joy offering** from **December 1<sup>st</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup>**.



This denominational offering addresses the support needed by some of our leaders, including supporting leadership development for communities of color, and providing support for Presbyterian Church workers in their time of need.

The Offering distributes gifts equally to the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions and to Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color.

Envelopes are in the pews, or you can donate online using our online giving platform at <https://hocpc.org/give/> - Select "Christmas Joy"



# What Makes Christmas

*by Rosemarie White*

Christmas is a very beautiful season, but it can also be a very depressing, sad season for others.

It is a season to prepare oneself for the coming of the Christ child into our life and to carry that light within our hearts throughout the year. The warmth of the light that comes from Him flows through us. Now we need to tend that flame and feed it so it does not burn out within us.

Sharing with others in the Christmas season makes the holidays so much richer. Baking cookies and singing brings smiles to our faces, as we follow our days that bring us closer to that blessed event.

Looking around, you see the many faces that look sad and forlorn. They cannot catch this spirit that takes the world over in the shopping frenzy. They do not have a dime to spare to buy a toy for their children or a warm coat. How will they manage to put food on the table? Yes, they're also awaiting Christ into their heart, and they pray that He will find a way to help them get out of that tight grip of worthlessness so they too can enjoy the holidays with celebrations.

Families are very important during this time. Children radiate, and with their excitement bring us all into the spirit of sharing. Love flows freely and you can catch it as you pass by if you are open to it, otherwise it will just fly right over you. The Christmas season is a holy season, but it has become very commercial and the reason for the celebration is ignored by the majority of people.

Lord, we as Christians need to ban together and make this day a loving sharing day, helping people in need and being kind to one another. We should show the loving spirit that flows through each of us, since God is in our midst.





## ELKTON COMMUNITY KITCHEN'S ANNUAL CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON



Once again we've been offered the opportunity to contribute cookies for the annual Elkton Kitchen Christmas luncheon on December 22<sup>nd</sup>. We're hoping to provide 25 dozen cookies, packed in sealed sandwich bags containing four cookies each.

Please help us continue this HOC tradition by signing up now! Contact Alex Oakes or Debbie Reeves to put your name on the list of cookie volunteers.



## ADVENT SEASON at HoC



# Decorating for Christmas!

We need volunteers to help us **decorate the church for the Christmas season!**

Please join us **after worship on Sunday, December 3<sup>rd</sup>** to help us put up the sanctuary Christmas tree, Mitten tree in the narthex, crèche, garlands and more.

We will also need help **un-decorating the church** to prepare for the new liturgical season **after worship on Sunday, January 7<sup>th</sup>**. Let Pastor Hilary know if you can help!

*Thanks for your help!*



# VACATION

Pastor Hilary will be **on vacation/study leave from December 25<sup>th</sup> through January 1<sup>st</sup>**. Please contact one of our deacons for pastoral care emergencies.

## HoC Congregational Meeting Sunday, December 10, 2023 following worship

HoC members, a congregational meeting will be held immediately following worship on Sunday, December 10, 2023 for the following purposes:

- Electing officers for 2024
- Receiving the session-approved budget for 2024
- Approving the pastor's terms of call for 2024




All members are strongly encouraged to attend this meeting. If you have any questions about the business items at this meeting, please contact Pastor Hilary or Katie Gillespie, Clerk of Session.

*Thank you for participating!*



We will be hosting an exciting visit from Santa on Saturday, December 9<sup>th</sup> from 11am to 1:00pm here at our church. Children will meet Santa, enjoy yummy hot chocolate, cookies, candy canes, and even a present! You won't want to miss this special event so please join us with your family and friends!

# Newark Community Band Concert



HAPPY  
*Holidays*



**2023 Holiday Concert**

Under the Direction of Mr. David Harris

Wednesday, December 6, 2023, at 7:00pm  
Newark Senior Center 200 White Chapel Drive,  
Newark, DE

Sunday December 10, 2023, at 3:00pm  
First Presbyterian Church - 292 West Main St. Newark, DE

Let it Snow! Let it Snow!  
Let it Snow!

A Fireside Christmas

A Christmas Festival

Rhapsody for Hanukkah  
(The Festival of Lights)

Sleigh Ride

Troika

Overture to a Winter  
Festival

A Canadian Brass  
Christmas Suite

Rocking Carol

Christmas in Vienna

Auld Lang Syne

We Wish You a Merry  
Christmas



<http://NewarkCommunityBand.com> - [Administrator@NewarkCommunityBand.com](mailto:Administrator@NewarkCommunityBand.com)

# *A Christmas Miracle*

*By Rosemarie White*

It was a cold December day; the Christmas holiday was fast-approaching. Everywhere you looked, you could observe people hustling from one store to another. The bargains-catching rush was on. Looking at the shoppers, you could not see the sparkle in their eyes for this beautiful season that was approaching. Did they forget what Christmas is all about?

There, at the street corner, stood a young man. He held a sign stating that he would work for a meal. The cars just drove by him and the people looked the other way. Later, on that same corner, stood a woman; she was heavy with child. You could see she was cold and shivering as she begged for money for her family. In the three hours that she stood there, she met some generous people who opened their wallets and bestowed her with enough money so the family of four could spend a night at a motel. She also found out that in this town there was a soup kitchen where they could enjoy a hot meal tomorrow. But for today, some apples would have to do. Oh, how she looked forward to a hot bath. Mathew, her husband, gave the boys their bath and tucked them into their bed. That is when she took the opportunity to enjoy the hot bath water that was a luxury and a special gift.

Later that evening as they were bundled up in their bed covered in warm blankets, she felt teardrops running down her cheeks. Her thankful heart was overcome by the generosity of strangers who provided this room, this bed, and the luxury of a hot bath. In this moment, she knew that God had provided for them and would during their time of homelessness. They needed to pray and trust that Mathew would find a job. Tomorrow was another day. The two boys, Adam and Lucas, would attend school and there they would receive their lunch. She would check out the soup kitchen and visit a few churches in town.

Snow had fallen through the night, and the world looked changed. The boys were really excited to see the trees dressed in white as they walked to school from the motel. Their footprints made an imprint in the snow—joy was found in something so simple! They were lucky they had nice warm coats, since they did know a few children who were not as lucky as them. Mathew watched as the boys entered school and then he headed toward the Home Depot to see if they needed extra help. He had worked at J. C. Penney's in the summer while he was attending the university. Mathew wondered how come everything in his life changed and why they lost everything. One bad investment and a crooked scheme is what brought them here. Lizabeth, his wife, had held them together with her deep belief in God and in him.

At Home Depot, as he approached the counter to apply, a stranger in a business suit watched him. Walking right towards him, he offered him a job in his warehouse. How did he know that

I needed a job? Was this an angel of God bringing them together? Yes, he accepted, and left with this angel to see where he would be working.

While Mathew had walked the boys to school before going to Home Depot to apply for a job, Lizabeth had visited the church nearby. There she explained their situation to the priest, who called a friend who would be glad to offer employment to Mathew. That is how Frank Bloom found Mathew at Home Depot. God was nearby.

Lizabeth and Mathew were overjoyed that night as they informed their two sons that soon they would be in their own rooms again and off the streets.

A few days before Christmas, they found the perfect apartment. When the congregation of the church learned their dilemma, they came and helped furnish the apartment with love. Then, on Christmas day, a tiny little girl with rosy cheeks blessed the family. The boys were delighted to have a little sister as their Christmas gift!



### The Looking Tree

Please remember that the first issue of our newsletter is a double issue covering January and February because our Annual Report is being prepared in February.

The deadline is set at Tuesday, January 9<sup>th</sup>, so have your items to me by then, or let me know if you have something coming so I can hold space.

Thanks for your support! Happy New Year!

# Word Search



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 T O P P E R P I N E W I H R E D R  
 O T E V I T S E F C O G R E R N E  
 F R E S H C U T E O D H A T A A E  
 D D N A T S I G T R G T T A I L N  
 O S N A O F R H A A N S S W V R I  
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 C I S T A L A A S R E R G A R E E  
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ANGEL	GARLAND	REAL	TOPPER
ARTIFICIAL	GIFTS	SCENT	TRADITION
BRANCHES	GREEN	SETTING UP	TREE FARM
CANDY CANES	LARGE	SKIRT	TREE LOT
CELEBRATION	LIGHTS	SMALL	TRUNK
DECEMBER	NEEDLES	SPRUCE	WATER
DECORATE	ORNAMENTS	STAND	YEARLY
DECORATIONS	PINE	STAR	
FESTIVE	PRESENTS	TAKING DOWN	
FRESH CUT	PURCHASE	TINSEL	

Merry Christmas

# HOC CALENDAR — Dec. & Jan. Happenings



Friday	Dec	01	7:00pm	Mission & Outreach Commission (Zoom)
Saturday	Dec	02	10a-2pm	Crafting To-Gather (Cookie Decorating)
Sunday	Dec	03		Second Sunday of Advent / Decorate Sanctuary, (
Sunday	Dec	1-24		Christmas Joy Offering
Tuesday	Dec	05	★ EARLY	LOOKING TREE DEADLINE ★
Wednesday	Dec	06	7:00pm	Newark Community Band Concert (Nwk Senior Center)
Saturday	Dec	09	11-1:00pm	Visit with Santa
Sunday	Dec	10	12:00pm	Congregational Meeting
Sunday	Dec	10		Third Sunday of Advent
Sunday	Dec	10	3:00pm	Newark Community Band Concert (1 <sup>st</sup> Presby Church)
Sunday	Dec	17		Fourth Sunday of Advent
Sunday	Dec	24	7:30pm	Candlelight Christmas Eve Service (No Morning Service)
Monday	Dec	25		MERRY CHRISTMAS
Sunday	Dec	31	11:00am	Café Church Service (pre-recorded)—in Fellowship Hall
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Monday	Jan	01		***HAPPY NEW YEAR***
Sunday	Jan	07		Ordination & Installation of Officers
Sunday	Jan	07	12:30pm	Un-decorating the church
Monday	Jan	08	7:00pm	Session (in-person)
Tuesday	Jan	09		LOOKING TREE DEADLINE
Monday	Jan	15	7:00pm	Admin & Finance (via Zoom)
Sunday	Jan	21		Annual Reports due to Nancy
Monday	Jan	29	7:30pm	Worship Commission (via Zoom)



## DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS



Dec 5 Nicole Gill  
Dec 21 Andre Gill  
Dec 28 Annabelle Huffman  
Dec 28 Jillian Gillespie

