

Eastminster Eagle

Volume 40, Issue 12

December 2023



Dear Eastminster Members and Friends,

Advent is coming! Here are five reasons to embrace the season of Advent:

1) The culture we live in has virtually no interest in Advent. You won't find Advent Wreaths lining the shelves at Wal-Mart. Or music playing about the second coming of Christ on the radio. There's no war on advent talk on the news shows. And this is good news because it means that it is a much more spiritually pure season.

2) Advent offers an antidote for the instant gratification bug that our culture has caught. In the midst of what has become an incredibly self-indulgent season of more, more, more, and now, now, now, advent is about patiently waiting. It is a practice of the embrace of longing. We learn to wait with growing anticipation. We make ourselves so hungry for Christ that we began to want his presence and his ways above the things of this world.

3) Advent teaches us to be at peace when the world is not. Peace comes from knowing that everything is going to be alright in the end. Christ will come. It does not mean that we are passive in the face of evil. It means that we work toward peace with the sure knowledge of success. It's less like treading water and more like swimming knowing that the shore is near.

4) In a "need to know" world, Advent points us toward mystery. There is a reality beyond our grasp and comprehension that we brush with if we are paying attention. God is mixing and mingling with us in strange and mysterious ways. But we must be open to the possibility of things happening that we can't and won't understand.

5) In a world that values speed, Advent invites us to slow down. Yes, there is a time for fast action, but there is also a time to take it slow. Slowing down allows us to take stock of our lives and to consider things more carefully. It allows us to experience wonder. When we rush we miss the good stuff. Sometimes I think we are in such a hurry that we don't even really know where we are going. Going slow allows us to consider where we are, where we've come from, and where we are going.

Take a road less travelled this December and enjoy the ride!

Christ is coming!

Pastor Paul





PCHAS Luncheon *Thursday, November 9*

Eastminster was well represented at the annual Presbyterian Children's Homes and Services (PCHAS) fundraising luncheon held on

November 9th at the Lincoln Center Double Tree Hotel. The theme for this year's luncheon was "hope grows here."

Jamie Iglesias, a former single parent family client, spoke to her experience when PCHAS rescued her family after her marriage dissolved. She had three children and you know part of the rest of the story. A highly polished, poised and very confident young woman spoke from her heart – and there were few dry eyes in that 250+ gathering. How proud and happy PCHAS staff must have been of this fine example of their efforts in fulfilling their goals outlined below.

Sometimes we fall into habits of saying...yeah, yeah, yeah—I'm familiar with this or that organization—church-related or not. However, here's a refresher on why PCHAS is vital to our continued mission work in Presbyterian ministries.

The PCHAS Way – With faithful support from individuals, churches and foundations, PCHAS serves nearly 4,500 children and families across three states (Texas, Louisiana, and Missouri) every year. As stewards of this trust and support, they follow these tenets of excellence to

ensure families achieve self-sufficiency and children are placed into loving, permanent homes.

The PCHAS Mission – PCHAS provides Christ-centered care and support to children and families in need.

The PCHAS Vision – PCHAS believes that the most powerful way to help children is by strengthening their families. They accomplish this by living into their philosophy of care which is to be family centered, strength focused, and goal driven.

The PCHAS Values – PCHAS is a faith-based Christian organization which strives to serve like Jesus. They meet their clients where they are and treat them with respect. They focus on their clients' strengths rather than their problems. And they encourage their clients to focus on their future rather than their past. When they do this well, they help children and families find hope and know the love of God.

Thank you -- Vicki, Judy, Miatta, Lorna, Philis, Kathy, Jo, Denise, Christine, and Chandra



Autopsy of a Deceased Church: 12 Ways to Keep Yours Alive, by Thom S. Rainer

A Short Book Review: by Tom Pappas

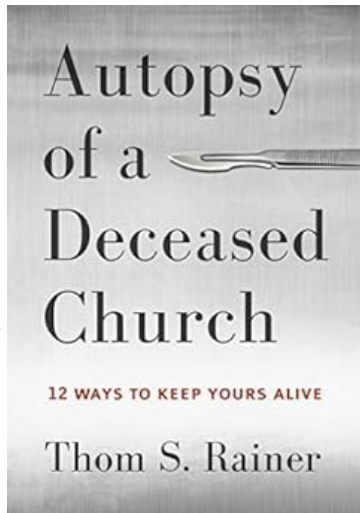
Mainstream churches are dwindling and dying all over America. This was a huge trend even before COVID. COVID made it worse. Everyone is worried. Everyone fingers a different cause and Rainer, a respected researcher, pastor, and consultant on church growth, puts forth this book of his ideas.

This book, published in 2014, was handed out of the Presbytery offices in 2020. We taught it two falls ago in Fred's Sunday School class. Its premise is very straight forward.

Churches decline when they lose the clarity of their Christian purpose. Churches decline when they cease to look like the neighborhood around them. Churches decline when the well-being of their membership becomes more important than the purpose of their community efforts (inward vs. outward).

This small book, 102 pages in length, is an easy read that makes a lot of sense and is directly applicable to our Eastminster experience. The title is a little gloomy, but the book is really a prescriptive for things a church can do to keep from dying. Some chapter titles better illustrate how this book is so insightful: "The Past is the Hero," "The Church Refused to Look Like the Community," "The Great Commission Becomes the Great Omission," "The Church Had No Clear Purpose," and "Is There Hope for the Dying Church? Twelve Responses."

This book uses examples that are both Biblical and common sense. The writer is very knowledgeable, but he keeps the ideas very simple. It should only take 2 or 3 hours to read, but it



could be a great Sunday School series for 4 to 6 weeks. It will also simply and directly help you examine your faith.

Amidst all the noise and conjecture about mainstream church decline, this book is a simple, powerful prescriptive. Get it and read it. Talk about it. I even have an extra copy. It will be well worth your time.

Youth Connection: Finding Your Voice, Camp Gilmont

Abbygayle, Karmyn and Kathy spent November 3-5 at Camp Gilmont. The theme for the weekend was *Finding Your Voice*. We enjoyed our small group time and doing four

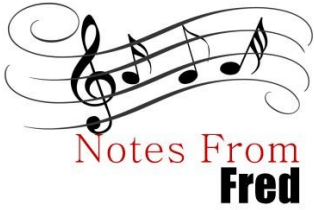


d i f f e r e n t service projects. We made blankets, put together lunch bags for FPC

Garland's weekly food ministry, we put together Christmas activity bags for PCHAS, and we made string art cards to go to Nursing Homes. The weather was perfect!

We enjoyed ax throwing, canoeing and hiking. It was a fun weekend for all of us.





For me and many others, one of our favorite Christmas Carols/hymns is *Away in a Manager* found in *Glory To God Hymnal* #115. When Robert Gonzales, violinist, plays the introduction during Lessons and Carols, immediately memories of Christmases past come flooding into my mind, memories of family, most of whom are in the heavenly place, and Christmas with my own children when they were young.

Somehow, Martin Luther has been credited by some as the author and composer, and that he sang it to his children at bedtime. But this is false. Hymnologist Fred Gealy (1894-1976) said, "Evidence suggests that it is wholly an American product." Carlton Young, hymnologist and my hymnology teacher, notes in the *United Methodist Hymnal* that the only German version is clearly a translation from the English as the metrics are not natural to the German language.

The hymn first appeared with two stanzas in *Little Children's Book for Schools and Families*, a Sunday school collection published in 1885 by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in North America. The third stanza first appeared unattributed in Gabriel's *Vineyard Songs* (1892), compiled by gospel composer Charles H. Gabriel (1856-1932) composer of *His Eye is on the Sparrow* GTG #661 and many others. Gealy conjectured, "the song may have been contributed by an editor or publisher who thought the two narrative stanzas needed to be supplemented by a prayer."

So how did the 16th-century German reformer Martin Luther get credit with the hymn? The false association of Luther and

Away in a Manager came from James R. Murray (1841-1905) in his *Dainty Songs for Little Lads and Lasses* (1887) when he called it "Luther's Cradle Hymn" and claimed it was sung by Luther for his children and still sung by German mothers to their "little ones." No one has uncovered an original German version by Luther.

The verses still have meaning today. All of us, adults and children, can pray/sing the third stanza prayer as we live our lives following the teachings of Jesus in the chaotic world.

*Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask thee to stay close
by me forever and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in thy tender care
and fit us for heaven to live with thee there.*



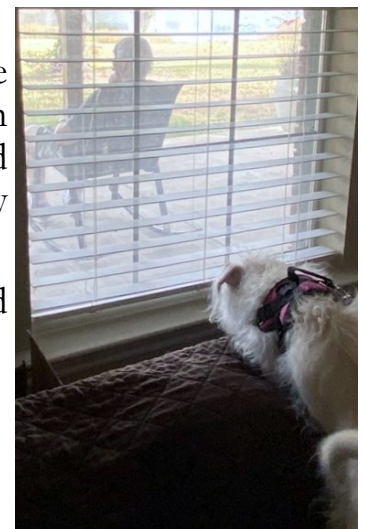
THANKS TO ALL

Thanks to all who had a part in giving the nice patio rockers. They are very comfortable and I have been able to use mine several times.

The picture is of me with our dog Joon wishing she could join me. (Photo by Julie Watkins.)

Thanks again and God bless.

Fred





Step Out of Your Boat!

The Stewardship Luncheon on November 5 was a huge success! There were at least 35 hungry folks and 12 crockpots full of delicious soups, stews and chili, and we enjoyed them with salad, cake and Tony Bennett's homemade cornbread. The response to the new method of turning in the time and talent forms was positive, 20 forms were turned in that day and 8 were completed online saving the church postage and getting the information to the committees right away. The 2024 budget was received, 3 elders and a trustee were elected to the class of 2026, and 4 members were approved to serve on the 2024 nominating committee. Our pledges received to date are \$207,180 which is 75% of the 2024 budgeted pledge revenue of \$278,000. The Stewardship Committee extends thanks to everyone who attended, provided food, and committed to step out of their boats in 2024 to the Glory of God!



Saturday Morning Breakfast

Saturday Morning Breakfast continues to faithfully and successfully fulfill its dual missions of feeding and clothing the less fortunate and being a part of the community in and around Eastminster.

Our numbers are consistently good:

	<i>Servers</i>	<i>Guests</i>	<i>Total</i>
10/21/23	18	77	95
10/28/23	22	40	62
11/4/23	11	67	78
11/11/23	10	54	64
11/18/23	14	61	75

On Saturday, November 18, the menu of eggs, sausage, and pancakes was augmented by oatmeal with all the goodies. It was very popular and we were out by 9:20. Donuts have also been making an appearance for the last 2 ½ months. We started with 2-3 dozen. Now we are at 4 dozen and we run out by 9:00(ish).

Clothing continues to be very, very popular. Our guests come in and the first thing they do is go to the clothing rack. They do this even before sitting down to get served breakfast. A special shouted thank you to Christine and Darlene who manage to sort, fold, and display our donated clothing items so that we never quite seem to run out. Also, a special thanks to all our congregation members and other friends who bring in items every week.

Along those lines, I want to share two very special stories with you.

First is the story of the Impeccable Pig. The Impeccable Pig is a group of clothing stores owned by Laura Robbins and her daughter, Jennifer. The Robbins lives in East Dallas and Jennifer graduated from Woodrow. We know Laura and her husband Bryan (a retired diving coach) from SMU. Bryan coached Michele and they have been friends of ours since the late 70s. Michele was visiting recently and Laura asked what she had been doing. Michele told

her about church choir, Pleasant Grove Food Pantry, and the Saturday Morning Breakfast. Next thing we know, Laura has donated 5 boxes of clothing from the Impeccable Pig's warehouse. She has also volunteered at the Pleasant Grove Food Pantry.

Next is the story of little feet and small shoes. Two Saturdays ago, one of our guests who is on the street was looking through the clothing rack for shoes (yes, we have shoes!) that fit her very small feet. She could not find any and was quite disappointed. Chelly (Blair's sister) has been volunteering for quite awhile, heard and brought a pair of small shoes this week that appear to fit our guest.

Now I believe that both Laura and Chelly would be embarrassed that I mentioned them (maybe even mad at me because of that). But their efforts are an important example for each of us. You see, we are not leading world changing movements or preaching from the street corner. But we are doing exactly what Christ talked about in Matthew 25. So show up, help however you can. You may not change the world, but you are changing somebody's life. That's also what good neighbors do in their community.

Tom

P.S. Don't forget to bring books. The book rack is starting to run low.

The elves at work decorating the Sanctuary!



Thank you, elves!

Elizabeth, an older relative of Mary the mother of Jesus, was miraculously pregnant at the same time as Mary. What was the name of Elizabeth's husband?

- A. Aaron
- B. Zechariah
- C. Joseph
- D. Simeon



Answer: B (See Luke 1:5, 39-41.)

Did I remember
to take the price
tag off my gift?



Heather

One pastor was sharing the Nativity story when he bumped the button on his singing Christmas tie, which didn't have a mute button. So congregants had to listen to the entire verse and chorus of "Jingle Bells."

A child discovered a live mouse in his chocolate-filled gift bag on Christmas Eve. Although the creature jumped out and scurried out the door, worshipers saw it return for the next service.

After flames were distributed for the candlelight service, a pastor said, "Now that we're all good and lit..." causing laughter throughout the pews.

Scripture Readings for December

1 Pss. 84; 148	12 Pss. 33; 146	23 Pss. 90; 149
2 Pss. 63; 149	13 Pss. 50; 147:1-11	24 Pss. 24; 150
3 Pss. 24; 150	14 Pss. 18:1-20; 147:12-20	25 Pss. 2; 145
4 Pss. 122; 145	15 Pss. 102; 148	26 Pss. 116; 146
5 Pss. 33; 146	16 Pss. 90; 149	27 Pss. 34; 147:1-11
6 Pss. 50; 147:1-11	17 Pss. 24; 150	28 Pss. 2; 147:12-20
7 Pss. 18:1-20; 147:12-20	18 Pss. 122; 145	29 Pss. 96; 148
8 Pss. 102; 148	19 Pss. 33; 146	30 Pss. 93; 149
9 Pss. 90; 149	20 Pss. 50; 147:1-11	31 Pss. 98; 150
10 Pss. 24; 150	21 Pss. 18:1-20; 147:12-20	
11 Pss. 122; 145	22 Pss. 102; 148	



Your Light has come

In the introduction to his book *For All God's Worth*, theologian N.T. Wright says, "Christmas is God lighting a candle, and you don't light a

candle in a room that's already full of sunlight. You light a candle in a room that's so murky that the candle, when lit, reveals just how bad things really are. The light shines in the darkness, says St. John, and the darkness has not overcome it."

For that reason, Wright explains, Christmas isn't a dream or a momentary escape but reality. And the same is true for Christianity. "Either Jesus is the Lord of the world and all reality makes sense in his life, or he is dangerously irrelevant to the problems and possibilities of today's world," he adds. "There is no middle ground. Either Jesus was, and is, the Word of God, or he, and the stories Christians tell about him, are lies."



Visiting Church Family

Left: Vicki Lynn Cook, Jim Lee, and Bonnie Lucas.

Right: Vicki Lynn Cook and Bettye Clark



Advent meanings

During Advent, which begins this year on December 3, many churches and families use wreaths to symbolize watchfulness and increasing joy as Christmas approaches. Colors for the candles vary, with some traditions using blue (for hope or creation) and others preferring purple (for royalty, humility or penitence).

The four candles that each represent a week in Advent also signify hope, peace, joy and love. (The third candle is often pink.) In the center is the white Christ candle, representing Jesus as the light of the world. That candle is lit on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

The round, green Advent wreath has special meaning of its own. It symbolizes eternal life and the unending love of God, who sent his only Son to earth to die in our place.



December Sermons and Scripture

1st Sunday of Advent—12-3-23: Isaiah 64:1-9, Mark 13:24-37
Hope: "Jesus Christ Is Coming to Town"

2nd Sunday of Advent—12-10-23: Isaiah 40:1-11, 2 Peter 3:8-15a
Peace: "Waiting on the World to Change"

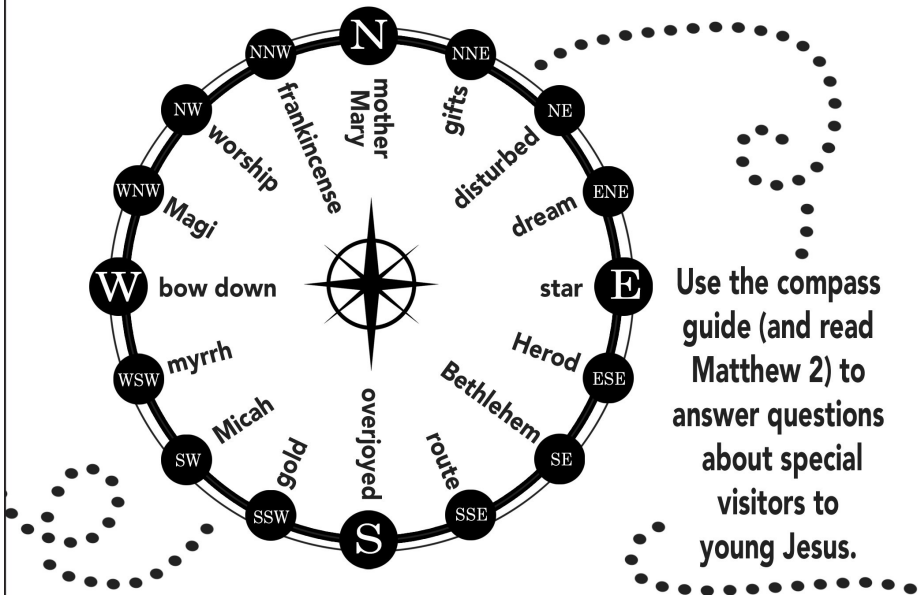
3rd Sunday of Advent—12-17-23: Joy: Lessons and Carols

4th Sunday of Advent—12-24-23: Luke 1:26-38, Luke 1:39-56
Love: "The Impossible Dream"

Christmas Eve 7 p.m.: Isaiah 9:2-7, Luke 2:1-20: "Gabriel's Favorite Song"

12-31-2023: Isaiah 61:10-62:3, Luke 2:22-40
"Worth the Wait"

Puzzle!



Use the compass guide (and read Matthew 2) to answer questions about special visitors to young Jesus.

1. Who was king at the time of Jesus' birth? _____ (ESE)
2. Who came from the East to worship the one born king of the Jews?
_____ (WNW)
3. How did King Herod feel about Jesus' birth? _____ (NE)
4. Which prophet did the chief priests and teachers of the law quote when King Herod asked where the Christ would be born? _____ (SW)
5. In what city would Christ be born? _____ (SE)
6. King Herod lied to the wise men, telling them to search and report back so he, too, could do what to Christ? _____ (NW)
7. What did the Magi see in the east and follow to find Jesus? _____ (E)
8. When the star stopped, how did the Magi feel? _____ (S)
9. Who else did the Magi see with Jesus? His _____ (N)
10. Before they worshiped the child, what did the Magi do? _____ (W)
11. Name the three treasures the Magi brought for Jesus.
_____ (SSW) _____ (NNW) _____ (WSW)
12. These three treasures were all brought for Jesus as _____ (NNE)
13. What warned the Magi not to return to Herod? A _____ (ENE)
14. The Magi had to return to their country by another _____ (SSE)

Answers: 1. Herod; 2. Magi; 3. disturbed; 4. Micah; 5. Bethlehem; 6. worship; 7. star; 8. overjoyed; 9. mother Mary; 10. bow down; 11. gold, frankincense, myrrh; 12. gifts; 13. dream; 14. route

“He was created of a mother whom he created. He was carried by hands that he formed. He cried in the manger in wordless infancy, he, the Word, without whom all human eloquence is mute.”

—Augustine of Hippo

“It is Christmas in the heart that puts Christmas in the air.”

—W.T. Ellis

“May God give you peace with yourselves; may he give you good will towards all your friends, your enemies and your neighbors; and may he give you grace to give glory to God in the highest.”

—Charles H. Spurgeon

“Never worry about the size of your Christmas tree. In the eyes of children, they are all 30 feet tall.”

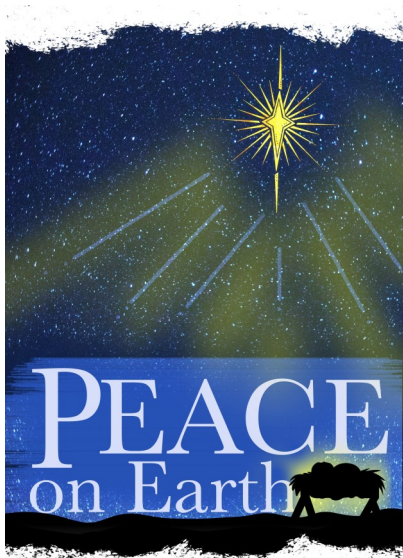
—Larry Wilde





DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Sue Bender	12/14
Denise Bennett	12/15
Christine Blair	12/15
Fred P. Watkins	12/16
Beverly Ridley	12/21

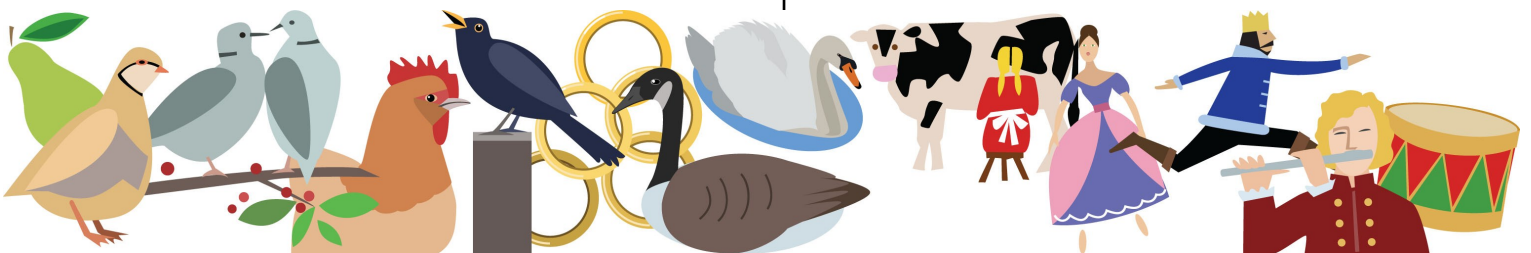


Eastminster Session

Chandra Anderson
 Betty Crabtree
 Blair Garrett
 Philis Knox
 Dick Knox
 Jim Lee
 Tom Pappas
 Charlotte Turner
 Sean Turner
 Fred Watkins



Pastor	Rev. Dr. Paul Burns
Director of Music	Fred P. Watkins
Organist	Melody S. Davis
Administrative Assistant	Chandra Anderson
Hostess/Housekeeper	Minerva Hernandez
Child Care Provider	Betty Crabtree



HIGHLIGHTS from the STATED SESSION MEETING

November 19, 2023

At the November 19 Stated Meeting, the Session

- ◆ Enjoyed a meal provided by Tony & Denise Bennett and Tom & Michele Pappas
- ◆ Heard a report from the Treasurer that Eastminster's financial position for October is still good.
- ◆ Elected delegates to the Special Meeting of Grace Presbytery on 7 December 2023.
- ◆ Heard a report concerning the reading of the 2022 Minutes and approved the sending of those minutes to the Presbyterian Historical Society.
- ◆ Approved a motion from the Worship Committee allowing the choir to host the annual Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper.
- ◆ Heard a report from the House and Property Committee regarding security.
- ◆ Heard a report from the Worship Committee regarding the status of choir scholarships.



Special dates

- ◆ First Sunday of Advent, December 3
- ◆ Second Sunday of Advent, December 10
- ◆ Third Sunday of Advent, December 17
- ◆ First day of winter, December 21
- ◆ Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 24
- ◆ Christmas Eve, December 24
- ◆ Christmas Day, December 25
- ◆ New Year's Eve/Watch Night, December 31

