

Eastminster Eagle

Volume 38, Issue 12

December, 2021

The Longest Night: A Service of Light Amid Darkness
Sunday, December 19th, 2021 from 4:00-5:00 p.m.
Eastminster's Sanctuary

The Christmas season is often marked by expressions of joy, excitement, and happiness. It's a time for family to gather and for churches to worship by pointing to the hope that is found in the coming of the Christ child. However, this time of joy and expectation can often overshadow the pain, sorrow, and hurt many people experience during this season.

The Longest Night Service, which falls on or near the Winter Solstice, provides an opportunity to experience a meditative worship service that makes space and time for sharing



our hurting places with God, preparing our hearts for the coming of Christ, sharing the Lord's Supper gathered as the family of God, and remembering our loved ones who are no longer with us, whether that be because of death, broken relationships, or distance. The service is also a reminder that we are not alone in our fears, our isolations, nor our despairs. Together we remember the promise of Emmanuel, God with us, always.

The Longest Night Service does not replace our All-Saints' Service on November 7, when we remember and give thanksgiving to God for our loved ones who have entered the Church Triumphant in the past year; but instead, offers that extra hope and encouragement when grief often sneaks up on us. Also, the Service is not offered just for those whose grief is fresh. As we all know, grief comes with no rules and no timeline. This Service offers a time for all persons to communicate with God the sorrow of the heart openly and honestly.

Certainly 2020, and even into 2021, the ways in which we celebrate the life of our loved ones in their death were affected by the pandemic. For many families and friends, gathering in person for a Service to the Witness of Resurrection was not an option. As brothers and sisters in Christ, scripture encourages us to laugh together, but also to weep together. We have all, in some way or another grieved this last year, plus, if for no other reason than not being able to grieve together and find hope in the promise of everlasting life. This Longest Night Service offers both a time to grieve and a time to give thanksgiving to God.

We will gather in the sanctuary for a time of Scripture reading, prayer, and Holy Communion. Following the Service, we will gather in the Fellowship Hall for refreshments and the opportunity to share stories, particularly about our loved ones whose death during the pandemic altered some of the ways we give thanksgiving to God, to whom we belong in both life and death.

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For dreams halted, for jobs lost, for relationships strained, for illnesses and injuries, for decency and compassion that was lost amid division, and so many other griefs, you are invited to hear the faithful Word of God, to find hope in the eternal life given to us through Jesus, and to rest in the comfort of the Holy Spirit with us always. We will also remember with thanksgiving these beloved saints, members of Eastminster Presbyterian Church, and now the Church Triumphant: Pat Beck, Jack Lucas, Estelle Scheibel, Will Nixon, Duke Wyatt, Alice Brooks, Jenelle Symns, Peggy Slaton, Barbara Wyatt, and Lewis Thiebaud.

If you have friends or family members who are not listed on Eastminster's membership rolls, whose death in 2020 or 2021 was not celebrated with a gathered community of faith, I invite you to share those names with me and we will give thanksgiving to God for the gift of their lives, also.

For the promised hope that nothing in life or death will ever be able to separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ, we say, "Amen."

Pastor Sherry

PCHAS Virtual Luncheon

A dozen PCHAS supporters gathered around the table for the fall luncheon. The Zoom presentation, as always, brought to light the good work that Presbyterian Children's Homes and Services continues to do.

Denise Bennett provided a wonderful lunch of French Potato soup and wilted salad. And, we also celebrated Vicki Lynn Cook's birthday!





Since the end of July, I have been working on choir anthems, carols, and hymns for Advent, Lessons and Carols, Christmas Eve, and Christmas Tide (this year the next day after Christmas) all the while trying to recover from knee surgery. The choir started working on some of the music on October 17th. The choir looks forward to sharing the season through music with you and praising God for the season. This year we have music ranging from pop gospel arrangements such as *Breath of Heaven (Mary's Song)* to new modern carols. Sean Turner has composed two pieces of music, *Adam Lay Ybounden* and *Bid Your Servant Go*. The choir will sing these two hymns during Lessons and Carols on Sunday, December 19th. That service will also have 7 people playing more than 7 instruments from flute, cello, trumpet, violin, to banjo. Yes, even banjo! The Christmas Eve Service features a new anthem *Gotta Whisper, Gotta Shout* written in the spiritual style, and a new choral arrangement of *O Holy Night*.

As I was studying the score of *Gotta Whisper, Gotta Shout* (one of the Christmas Spirituals), the thought came to mind that we as a congregation have traditionally sung during Lessons and Carols *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (#136 in our *Glory to God* hymnal). I must admit that other than understanding on the surface what the text is telling us, I hadn't paid close attention to what the hymn is asking us to do. That is, until I was in an online seminar about using spirituals in worship and the presenter read some lines from the devotional book *Rise Up Shepherd: Advent Reflections on the Spirituals* by the Rev. Dr. Luke A. Powery (dean of Duke

University Chapel and associate professor of homiletics at Duke Divinity School). Dr. Powery is considered one of the best teachers of homiletics and of the art of preaching in this country. From now on, singing the spiritual will cause me to look inside myself and ask, "have I gone and told as I should." The following is an excerpt from Dr. Powery's book.

"Advent" means "coming." In particular, it refers to the first coming of Jesus Christ into the world in a lowly manger, and the second coming of Christ, who will return as reigning King to redeem all of creation. In this well-know spiritual, there is a declaration of what we should do in response to the news that Jesus Christ is born. "Go, tell." It reminds us, both in word and deed, that we are called to respond to the Savior's birth, and his humble coming into the world. It is a charge to act, to move, and to speak. In other words, can I get a witness? Are we witnesses to the living Christ who came on "Christmas morn"?

The creator of this spiritual does not suggest that we keep quiet and keep this news to ourselves. The music of this song is upbeat and bouncing with joy, and this call, this charge, should be good news to us. The "go, tell" is an invitation to experience the joy of Jesus and spread this joy wherever we may find ourselves. It's this combination that is key.

We can go somewhere and never say one word. Or we can speak but never go. Witnessing to the birth of Jesus requires

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both—going and telling, acting and speaking—because Jesus requires our whole being, not just part but our bodies and voices, the fullness of who we are.

Let his coming come to you in such a way today that you can't help but be filled with the energy to go and tell some good news in a world full of bad news."

Let us pray: *Coming God, come into my life that I may receive the joy of going and telling the good news of your birth in the world. Amen.*

Sunday, December 19



LESSONS & CAROLS

A shoot brings life

Last year, Israeli scientists harvested dates from seeds that had been dormant about 2,000 years. The seeds, recovered during archaeological digs, were nurtured in incubators and several thrived. One (named Methuselah!) became a 10-foot-tall palm tree.

Horticulturists joked about marketing “dates that Jesus ate,” but there’s another scriptural connection. Isaiah 11, a traditional Advent reading, prophesies: “A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots” (verse 1, NRSV). Jesus is the tender shoot that emerged from the humble peasant origins of Jesse, father of King David. From a dynasty that went dormant due to Israel’s sins sprouted a mighty tree, who will someday usher in a reign of peace (see verses 6-7).

Some people and churches celebrate Christmas with a Jesse Tree, remembering how God sent Jesus to sprout life out of death and bring new hope and joy to the world.

—adapted from *The Wired Word*

The greatest gift-giver

When we give each other Christmas presents in [God’s] name, let us remember that he has given us the sun and the moon and the stars, the earth with its forests and mountains and oceans — and all that lives and moves upon them. He has given us all green things and everything that blossoms and bears fruit and all that we quarrel about and all that we have misused. And to save us from our own foolishness, from all our sins, he came down to earth and gave us himself. —Sigrid Undset

Advent Craft—Flower Pot Nativity Sunday, November 14

What a great day of devotional, food, fellowship and crafting., We enjoyed casseroles, salad and desserts provided by our members, and had a table devotional. And, of course we enjoyed each others company.

Then, it was off to the crafting table.



The example of Mary

“We must look to Mary’s example to know how to deal with the glorious impossibilities of God,” writes Calvin Miller in *The Christ of Christmas*. “Look how she turned the world upside down by making one simple statement.”

Jesus surely could have come to earth without Mary’s aid. But God seems to prefer partnering with people to accomplish miracles such as salvation and healing. So God chooses Mary to carry the Savior. Later, Jesus often declares people’s own faith crucial to their healing. And today, God works justice through us, not apart from us.

God doesn’t force us into collaboration. Yet, notes Miller, “God needs only a little of our agreement in order to work mighty wonders.” Like Mary’s humble assent: “I am the Lord’s servant. ... May your word to me be fulfilled” (Luke 1:38, NIV). And like yours — for whatever partnership God invites you into. God will do the heavy lifting, for certain, but he hopes you’ll say yes.



Remember to reach out

For many people, the holidays bring sorrow, grief and stress. If you’re hurting, turn to Jesus and his power. Learn from the woman who, desperate to be healed, reached out to touch the edge of Jesus’ robe and was immediately cured.



Sometimes we think our healing process will be so exhaustive that we hesitate to take the first step. Or we doubt that Jesus still performs miracles. Amid your pain, have you reached out? Have you dared to touch Jesus’ robe? He is there, waiting to say: “Your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering” (Mark 5:34, NIV).

—Julie Lee

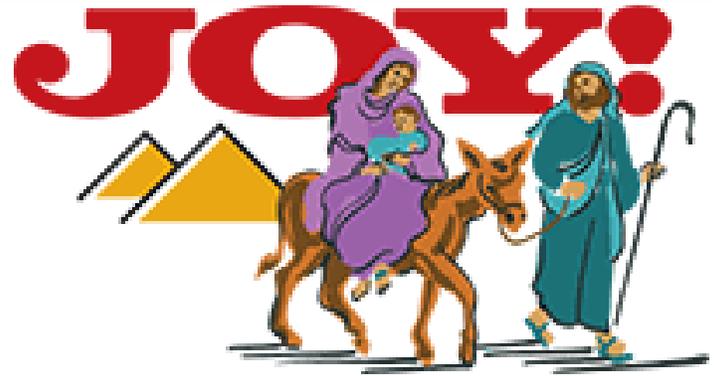
A season of waiting

Our oven recently bit the dust, and the needed replacement part is no longer manufactured. Due to an appliance shortage, we had to wait eight weeks for a new oven! Yet even amid inconvenience, I see God's purpose. We were thankful to have a grill and slow cookers in the meantime. We creatively attempted to cook favorite meals in different ways. And though we craved anything baked in an oven — cookies, casseroles, even chicken nuggets — we realized that waiting eight weeks for an oven isn't truly a trying time.

Many of us wait for much greater milestones and miracles: physical healing, the return of a prodigal child, an end to financial struggles. Paul offers us hope as we wait: "May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had" (Romans 15:5, NIV).

When you're in a season of waiting — including Advent! — consider what you're thankful for and what you crave. Tell God how you're feeling and ask for endurance while you wait.

—Janna Firestone



Only Matthew records the holy family's "flight into Egypt," linking Advent with Lent and Christmas with Good Friday. In an article titled "Joy to the World/Pain in the World," James I. Cook expresses gratitude that Matthew documents the slaughter of the innocents: "I turn to it again and again, when someone I know loses a loved one at the height of the Christmas season. It helps me — and I hope it helps them — to remember that theirs are not the first tears to fall on Christmas; to recall that there has never been a Christmas of pure peace and happiness; [to recognize] that 'joy to the world' has always been sung to the accompaniment of much 'pain in the world.'"

—adapted from Homiletics

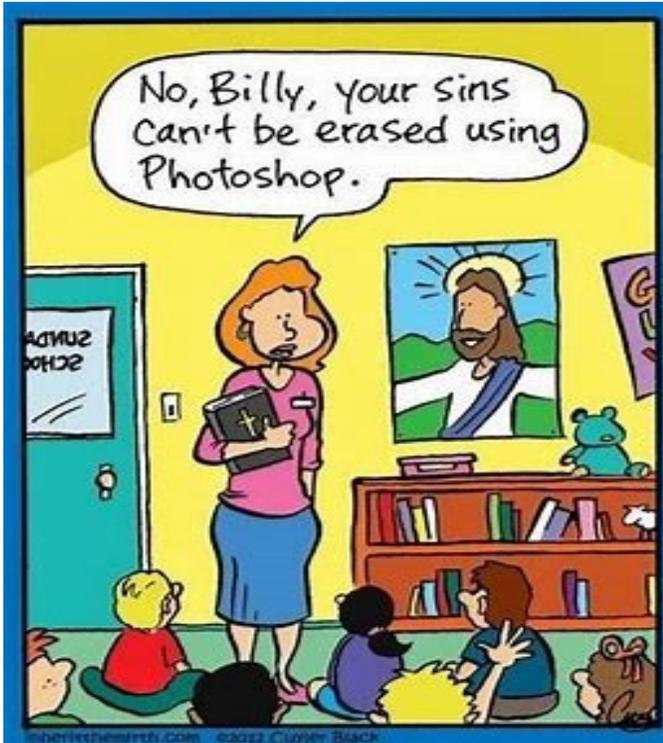
Merry
CHRISTMAS

In Matthew's genealogy, which woman is not mentioned as Jesus' ancestor?

- A. Tamar
- B. Rahab
- C. Mary
- D. Ruth
- E. Sarah
- F. Bathsheba



Answer: C (See Exodus 14; Joshua 3; 2 Kings 2.)



Scripture Readings for December

1 Pss. 5; 145	11 Pss. 36; 147:12-20	22 Pss. 62; 145
2 Pss. 42; 146	12 Pss. 130; 148	23 Pss. 12; 146
3 Pss. 89:1-18; 147:1-11	13 Pss. 56; 149	24 Pss. 96; 147:1-11
4 Pss. 97; 147:12-20	14 Pss. 67; 150	25 Pss. 116; 147:12-20
5 Pss. 51; 148	15 Pss. 57; 145	26 Pss. 84; 148
6 Pss. 104; 149	16 Pss. 54; 146	27 Pss. 63; 149
7 Pss. 19; 150	17 Pss. 65; 147:1-11	28 Pss. 24; 150
8 Pss. 135; 145	18 Pss. 143; 147:12-20	29 Pss. 122; 145
9 Pss. 123; 146	19 Pss. 88; 148	30 Pss. 33; 146
10 Pss. 15; 147:1-11	20 Pss. 122; 149	
	21 Pss. 108; 150	

“All the Christmas presents in the world are worth nothing without the presence of Christ.”

—David Jeremiah

“There is nothing so secular that it cannot be sacred, and that is one of the deepest messages of the Incarnation.”

—Madeleine L’Engle

“God goes to those who have time to hear him — and so on this cloudless night he went to simple shepherds.”

—Max Lucado

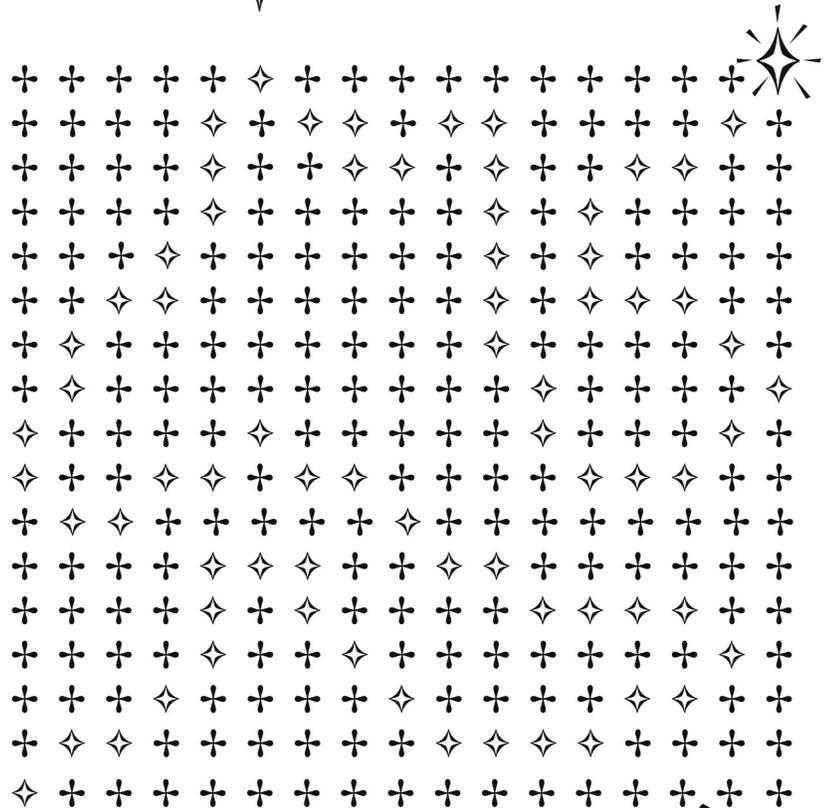
How to keep Christmas

Inspirational author Wilferd Peterson pondered ways to “best keep Christmas” and “defeat the little bit of Scrooge in all of us.” After reading his suggestions, add your own!

- ◆ By following the Star ... to stand again in awe and wonder before the Babe in the manger.
- ◆ By rediscovering the faith and simplicity of a little child.
- ◆ By being still and listening to the angels sing within our hearts.
- ◆ By quietly evaluating our lives according to the Master’s standards as set forth in the Sermon on the Mount.
- ◆ By resolving to give ourselves away to others.
- ◆ By using the light of Christmas to guide us through ... the coming year.

Puzzle!

Starting in the lower-left corner, help the wise men follow the ✦ path that leads to baby Jesus.



↑
START



Now unscramble these words to discover what gifts the wise men brought Jesus.

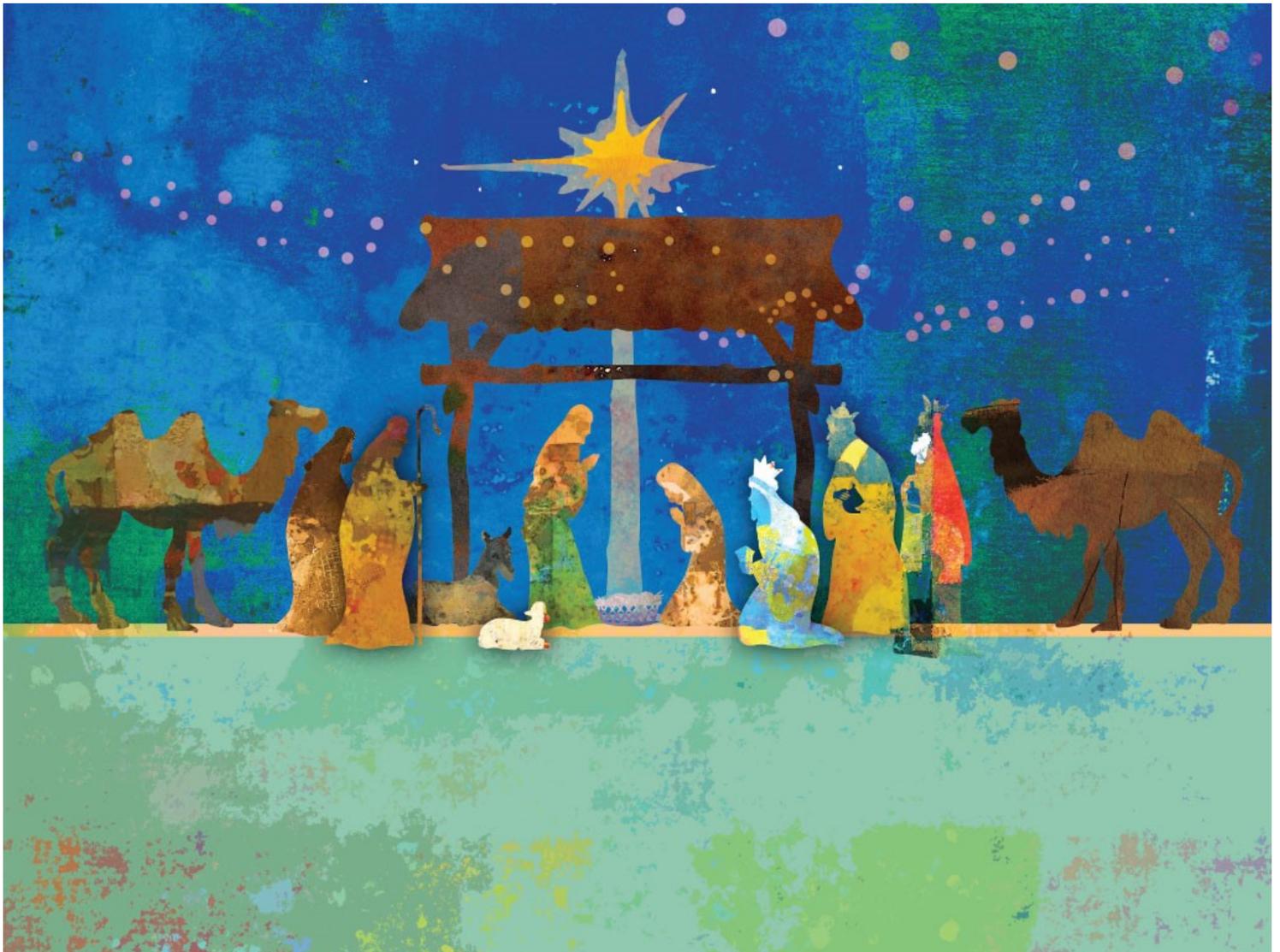
L D O G N C A K N R I E N F S E R Y H M R

Answer: gold, frankincense, myrrh

Pleasant Grove Food Pantry for month of October



	Families	Adults	Seniors	Children	Persons	Pounds
5-Oct	183	441	49	445	935	13,125
12-Oct	202	476	66	499	1,041	13,889
19-Oct	214	506	50	532	1,088	13,815
26-Oct	225	528	57	505	1,090	12,042
Totals	824	1,951	222	1,981	4,154	52,871





Diana Uche	12/2
Cheryl Gonzales	12/9
Naomi Davis	12/12
Sue Bender	12/14
Denise Bennett	12/15
Christine Blair	12/15
Fred P. Watkins	12/16
Beverly Ridley	12/21
Bobbe Brown	12/30
Ian Kelleher	12/31



Eastminster Session

Denise Bennett
 Betty Crabtree
 Kayla Dixon
 Blair Garrett
 Kathy Kreger
 Jim Lee
 Michele Pappas
 Helen Randolph
 Vicki Thiebaud
 Charlotte Turner



Pastor	Sherry Holloman
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 17, 2021

- ◆ Heard a report from the Treasurer that revenues are down for November.
- ◆ Heard a report from the Treasurer that monies for construction costs have all been disbursed.
- ◆ Heard a report from the Treasurer that the banking transfer from BBVA to new owner PNC is complete.
- ◆ Heard a report that the Treasurer is working with the Texas Presbyterian Foundation to provide required relevant information to assist the Long-Range Planning Committee.
- ◆ Approved 6:00 as the time for the Christmas Eve service, following a survey of member preference.
- ◆ Heard an update on the Wilkinson Center Toy Distribution scheduled for December 17/18.
- ◆ Heard an update on plans for the Christmas Village.
- ◆ Heard an update from the Long-Range Planning Committee.
- ◆ Offered a Prayer of Thanksgiving for the life of Alleen Wilkinson.
- ◆ Heard a report from the Re-entry Task Force regarding the reinstatement of Sunday morning breakfast. Pending new guidelines from the CDC, the Sunday breakfast will be reinstated in January, 2022.

Special dates

- ◆ **Second Sunday of Advent, December 5**
- ◆ **Third Sunday of Advent, December 12**
- ◆ **Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 19**
- ◆ **First day of winter, December 21**
- ◆ **Christmas Eve, December 24**
- ◆ **Christmas Day, December 25**
- ◆ **New Year's Eve/Watch Night, December 31**

