

Happy New Year, Westminster!

Perhaps *never* have a people been more pleased to say good-bye to a year and more eager to greet a new year, than the humans who inhabit this planet in the year 2020. I am refraining from rehearsing all the reasons that 2020 was a year that will live in infamy. We can almost sing the song together with verses about COVID, and protests, and elections, and natural disasters.



But I do think it is a good time to finish the sentence: The year 2020 was **also** the year of...

... turning to God in prayer.

... examining what *really* matters.

... learning to value, protect, and support essential workers.

... creativity.

... phone calls, and Zoom meetings, and staycations.

...checking in on friends, neighbors, and strangers.

...the year COVID 19 vaccines were developed in record time.

At Westminster, 2020 was **also** the year of...

... hosting a cluster of Presbyterian Women for dinner (January).

... our first church-wide retreat (February).

... hosting Boston College Habitat volunteers (February).

... a carnival of opportunities family night supper (March).

... saying, "Farewell," to members David Grier and Joseph and Cindy Key.

... saying, "Hello!" to new members Tracy Rainey, Jacob Dennis, Nevaeh Sholar, Dashe Case, Bill and Nancy Hogan.

... new air handlers for our sanctuary and new gutters for our education building.

... new organ shoes for Larry Dozier (retiring those ivory patent loafers from the 1970s).

... Flat Jesus Holy Week and "sawubona" ordinary time.

... worshipping with our family and friends all over the world, thanks to new virtual worship resources.

... Macy Hale Watkins arrival in time for her drive by baby shower! (May).

... Confirmation completed and celebrated for Jacob, Nevaeh, and Dashe (May).

... Benjamin Watkins at the piano for a season.

... prayer partners and pop-up possibilities.

... Zoom Sunday Studies on Wednesdays, and PW *reZooming* on Mondays!

"I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of this glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe."

Ephesians 1:18-19a



... bell choirs.

... Camp in a Box!

... collaborating with our partner Presbyterians on mission (mask project, angel tree, and BOGO for God) and worship (Joint Lessons and Carols with Ware Shoals) and study (e.g., *Facing Racism* with New Faith).

... more than 600 pounds of food stopping by the church on the way to the food pantry!

How, I wonder, would you finish the sentence for Westminster? How, I wonder would you finish the sentence for you and your family? I'd love to hear your reflections on "2020 as also the year of..."

Unfortunately, pandemics, and social unrest, and disagreements between family and friends, and natural disasters don't seem to respect the boundaries between years. These things will not disappear with the turning of the calendar page. But neither will God's faithfulness.

We've learned a lot in 2020 about how to live an **also** life, accepting the things that are, digging deep to change the things that can be changed, and making the best of the things that can't, always with our hand firmly in the hand of God who will show us the next right step no matter what 2021 brings our way.

Let us step together into this New Year, confident that God is **also** with us.

With abiding hope and unfathomable peace, I am your pastor and friend,

Caroline

Epiphany Sunday 2020: The Great *Ah Ha!*

"January 6th is the twelfth and final day of Christmas, according to the Christian liturgical calendar. It is known as *Three King's Day*, or the *Feast of Epiphany*."
from pcusa.org



EPIPHANY

In 2021, we will celebrate this "*Ah ha!*" day on Sunday, January 3. It is the day we remember the visit of the Magi, visitors from the East who followed a star to bring gifts to a newborn king. Epiphany also means a "manifestation of a divine or supernatural being." The arrival of these visitors, guided by a heavenly light, and the gifts help us see the unique nature of the child in Mary's arms. Finally, in a general sense, an epiphany is a sudden revelation or insight, an "*ah ha!*"

All Advent long, we anticipated the expected arrival of God's gift to us, Jesus Christ, and prepared to welcome him anew into our hearts. On Epiphany Sunday, we read again about the gifts that the wise and regal bring to the Christ Child. And we will hear a story, told by our own Phillip Dennis, about one who came, who was not considered so wise or so regal, who was in fact perhaps considered an annoyance, and yet brought a gift that honored the Lord. Follow your heart to the manger, and bring the gift that is uniquely yours as we gather together in wonder and joy to celebrate the great "*ah ha!*"

January Sermon Series: The Space Between Heaven and Earth

In the 1960s there was a crisis of faith. With the international race to space, humanity crossed the barrier between the heavens and the earth. Something in our ancient stories made us imagine that we might find ourselves closer to God if we could just release ourselves from the gravitational pull of earth. Read Genesis 11:1-9 if you want to see how this turned out for folks with the same desire for God even if with more limited tech.

From the lofty perspective of space, we who had always pointed skyward when asked to locate the dwelling place of God, found ourselves with more questions than answers. And perhaps we found ourselves more distant from God than we had previously thought, for nothing we could do, not even put a man on the moon, could bring us closer to God.

God's word for us at the beginning of a new year, when we are trying to reach higher and do better, is that God has come to us. God breaks in and crosses the great divide. There is no space between heaven and earth, for God's dwelling place is in us and among us.

And yet, I believe we have much to learn about how to dwell in this space with God. So let us listen again to God's word for us, so that we might fully inhabit the sacred space of our earthly lives.



January 3: The Story of LD Epiphany Sunday; Holy Communion

- † Isaiah 60:1-6, 10
- † Matthew 2:1-12

January 10: The Beginning of the Good News—God Breaks In

- † Genesis 1:1-5
- † Mark 1:4-11

January 17: Message Received— Learning to Listen to the Lord

- † Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18
- † 1 Samuel 3:1-20

January 24: Now It's Your Move

- † Jonah 3:1-5, 10
- † Mark 1:14-20

January 31: Guest Preacher

Pastor Caroline Dennis will be preaching this Sunday at Morris Chapel Baptist Church at the invitation of Bishop Oliver McCray for their Cross Cultural/Interdenominational Worship Initiative.



New Wednesday Night Study: The Gospel According to St. Mark

Start the new year right by joining our Wednesday Night Study group as we study St. Mark's version of the good news. The Reverend Phillip Dennis will be our guide for this journey. "Because Mark's gospel is the shortest, it sometimes doesn't get the attention it deserves," said Phillip. "In our time together, I hope to show what is special about Mark's take on the familiar stories." This six-week study begins on Wednesday, January 6th at 7:00 P.M. Stay tuned—details coming soon!

Westminster Happenings

Friday January 1	Church Office Closed
	The Space Between Heaven & Earth: The Story of LD <i>Epiphany Sunday; Holy Communion</i> Worship at 10:00 A.M. in person or via live streaming on our website. Celebrate the arrival of Magi and the Sacrament of Communion.
Sunday January 3	Take Down Christmas Decorations Immediately following worship in the Westminster sanctuary. Come prepared to help put our decorations back into storage. Quest: Youth Help with decorations, plus lunch and learning until 1:00 P.M.
Wednesday January 6	The Feast of Epiphany (or Three Kings' Day) <i>The traditional end of the Christmas season</i> Wednesday Evening Study Group Facilitated discussion at 7:00 P.M. in person or via Zoom. The Rev. Phillip Dennis begins a new study of Mark's Gospel.
Thursday January 7	Pop Up Prayers in the Portal Join fellow prayer warriors for prayer and devotionals at 8:30 A.M. Note: popping up in the narthex (a <i>portal</i>) due to chilly weather.
Sunday January 10	The Space Between Heaven & Earth: The Beginning of the Good News—God Breaks In Worship at 10:00 A.M. in person or via live streaming on our website. Embrace the good news that nothing can separate us from God's love. Session Meeting In the narthex at 2:00 P.M. Finalize the 2021 budget and plans for 2021.
Monday January 11	Presbyterian Women: Circle Meeting Meet at 10:00 A.M. in the narthex or via Zoom. Explore lessons 4 ("Lamenting Life") and 5 ("Lamenting Death"), guided by Rev. Caroline Dennis.
Wednesday January 13	Wednesday Evening Study Group Facilitated discussion at 7:00 P.M. in person or via Zoom. Continue our study of the gospel according to St. Mark.

Westminster Happenings, *continued*

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| Thursday
January 14 | Pop Up Prayers in the Portal
Join fellow prayer warriors for prayer and devotionals at 8:30 A.M.
Rejoice and be glad that our God is a mighty and loving Father. |
| Sunday
January 17 | The Space Between Heaven & Earth: Message Received—
Learning to Listen to the Lord
<i>Congregational meeting following worship</i>
Worship at 10:00 A.M. in person or via live streaming on our website. |
| Wednesday
January 20 | Wednesday Evening Study Group
Facilitated discussion at 7:00 P.M. in person or via Zoom.
Find out what St. Mark has to say about the good news of the Christ. |
| Thursday
January 21 | Pop Up Prayers in the Portal
Share socially distanced prayer and devotional time at 8:30 A.M.
Bring your prayers boldly before God with your WPC family. |
| Sunday
January 24 | The Space Between Heaven & Earth: Now It's <i>Your</i> Move
Elder Ordination
Worship at 10:00 A.M. in person or via live streaming on our website.
Prepare to leave your comfort zone as God calls you to action.
Quest: Youth
Lunch, leisure, and learning 11:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M. |
| Wednesday
January 27 | Wednesday Evening Study Group
Facilitated discussion at 7:00 P.M. in person or via Zoom.
Connect with Rev. Phillip Dennis and the group studying Mark. |
| Thursday
January 28 | Pop Up Prayers in the Portal
Share socially distanced prayer and devotional time at 8:30 A.M.
Bask in God's presence and lay your concerns at His feet. |
| Saturday
January 30 | Session Retreat |
| Sunday
January 31 | Guest Minister
Worship at 10:00 A.M. in person or via live streaming on our website.
<i>Pastor Caroline Dennis will be preaching at Morris Chapel Baptist
.Church their Cross Cultural/Interdenominational Worship Initiative.</i> |

Stewardship Report

A note from Business Affairs chair, David Hammond, on behalf of the entire Session:

Sincere thanks to the many congregation members who responded to our annual Stewardship campaign. With most of the pledge cards returned, the total committed for 2021 stands at \$175,200 (compared with \$178,940 that was pledged for 2020).



Session has crafted a budget that strives to balance our call to mission, outreach and growth with the business realities of maintaining our small staff and large, beautiful campus. Keep the Session in prayer as they finalize the budget and discern how best to manage our funds.

“Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.

Luke 6:38

We are a small church with a BIG vision—your gifts of time, talent, and, yes, treasure are essential if we are to be the church we *aspire* to be.

If you forgot to send in your pledge card for 2021, it's not too late. And if you have not yet fulfilled your pledge for 2020, please consider making your gift as soon as possible.

You can donate online via the Donations page on our website or the Use App button on our Facebook page. Of course, snail mail works, too:

Westminster Presbyterian Church
2330 Cokesbury Road
Greenwood, SC 2964

New Year—New Session

On Sunday, January 24th, Westminster will ordain a new group of Ruling Elders. These hardy souls have agreed to accept the challenge of guiding the business of the church. Please keep these new leaders in your prayers all year: **Paula Borne, Steve Kuhl, and Jennifer Sholar**. Also lift up **Kathy Gillespie, David Hammond, and Emily Kienker** as they continue serving with grace and skill.

As Paula, Steve, and Jennifer step up, **Nancy Dozier, Claire Kuhl, Bill Jacobs, and Deb Jones** step down to become



Resting Elders. Please express your gratitude to all of these Westminster shepherds who graciously give of their time and talents to make keep our church home missionally focused and fiscally sound.

Party Time!



Best wishes and sincere prayers for these members and friends with January birthdays:

- ❖ 3rd – Emily Kienker
- ❖ 14th – Kathy Felder
- ❖ 15th – Carlisle McInnis Hobson
- ❖ 16th – Laine Horowitz
- ❖ 21st – Gary West
- ❖ 21st – Gemma Craven
- ❖ 22nd – Kathleen Watkins

Congratulations are also in order for these loving couples celebrating their wedding anniversary:

- ❖ 1st – Kathy & Gary West

If you haven't already done so, please send your family's special dates to the church office (wpcgwd1@gmail.com) or call 864.229.3595.

Greenwood Place December Update

Submitted by Fred Murphy, Executive Director



At the end of November, Greenwood Place had to discontinue its operation as we had an individual test positive for the virus. We were fortunate that the individual was asymptomatic. We closed the Clubhouse from November 27th thru December 16th. No other Member tested positive for the virus.

Before closing the Clubhouse for the virus, the Clubhouse was able to be open for Thanksgiving. We served a meal of turkey, dressing, gravy, mashed potatoes, green beans and pie to 13 individuals.

The Clubhouse continues to wait to hear from Self Regional Healthcare and SC Cares about our funding requests. They last communicated with Greenwood Place to say that they will make a decision about funding prior to year-end. We are hoping for positive news from each, and for enough funding to allow the Clubhouse to remain open until we are able to apply for funding from the State of SC Department of Mental Health, which would take place in June 2021.

During November, the Clubhouse averaged 11 individuals in attendance per day. Members spent 823 hours at the Clubhouse. We provided 168 meals and transported 117 individuals to and from the Clubhouse.

As always, we ask for your continued thoughts and prayers for the Members and for Greenwood Place.

Resolutions for Mental Wellness

Part of a series on mental health issues

A recent study on New Year's resolutions found that about 40% of Americans set resolutions at the start of the year, and fewer than half are successful after six months. By taking smaller, more achievable steps towards your goals, there is a greater chance that you will keep them. Use these self-care strategies from the Mental Health First Aid curriculum to set realistic New Year's resolutions for your mental health:



- **Make time for self-care.** Brainstorm a list of self-care activities that make you happy and schedule them as part of your daily routine.
- **Be kind to yourself.** Allow yourself to have feelings and forgive yourself for mistakes. You are here and doing your best, and that's what counts.
- **Make sleep a priority.** This year, try to go to sleep a little bit earlier every night and give your body the rest it needs.
- **Limit your screen time.** Spending too much time on your phone or computer can affect your quality of sleep, your relationships, and even lead to feelings of depression.
- **Learn more about mental health.** One of the best ways to improve your mental health is to understand it. The National Alliance on Mental Illness website is a great place to start: nami.org.

Let Us Pray...



For Those in Our Church

We lift our prayers for those dealing with health and other issues, including especially these friends, families, and caregivers:

- Lynn Bornemann
- Martha Brothers
- Mary Corley
- Larry Duncan
- Nathan Gillespie, praise for passing the Georgia Bar Exam
- Laine Horowitz
- Mac Hubbard
- Nickie Templeton
- Tommy Wilson

*“Be joyful in hope,
patience in affliction,
faithful in prayer.”
Romans 12:12*

We pray daily for our prayer partners and their special concerns. We pray for our sister churches, New Faith, Ware Shoals, First Presbyterian, Abbeville Presbyterian, and others.

We pray for the ministries of our church, especially:

- Quest: Youth
- Prison Ministry
- Thornwell Home
- Greenwood Place
- NAMI
- Food Pantry
- Beyond Abuse
- Meg’s House
- Greater Greenwood United Ministries
- Camp Fellowship
- Imani Choir



For Those in Our Hearts

We pray for these members of our wider community:

- Charles Alexander
- Lynn Bornemann’s cousins
- Tom & Lucia Bryson
- Ashlyn Buchanan
- Scott Crandall
- Debbie Dill
- Alberta Eichelberg
- Kathy Felder’s twin friends
- Greer & Joey Gallman
- Charlotte Gero
- Kathy Gillespie’s sister, Betty Gossam
- Dee Greene
- Lois & Bob Grice
- Susan Hamersley’s brother, John
- Jo Heron
- Lucia Horowitz’s family and friends; cousin Edward
- Jimmy Hughes
- Norma Hoviss
- Kelly Lott
- Family of Ashley Mahon
- Lula & Bo Manning
- Bill & Suzy Mitchell
- Chris Murphy
- Linda Price
- Margaret Rada & son
- Kathy Ransom
- Terrance Reece
- Howard Thomas
- Denise Waldrep and her mom & stepdad
- Jack Waldrup
- Ed Watkins
- Dot Wiley
- Fran & Tim Wiley
- Jeff Williams
- Sarah Willis



For the World

We pray for all our neighbors everywhere who we are called to love as we love ourselves:

- For all those affected by the world-wide COVID-19 pandemic, for doctors, nurses, and health care professionals, parents, students, and school faculty and staff.
- For peace and wisdom in our community, country, & among world and local leaders
- For the Door of Hope ministry, saving children in South Africa
- For those living with mental illness
- For our enemies

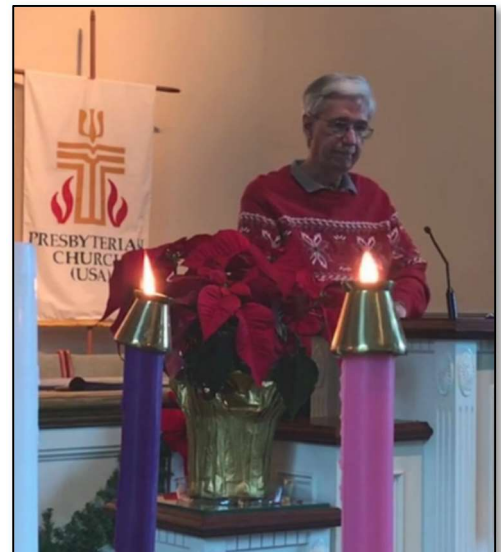
Gifts from the Heart Make a Difference: Angel Tree Success!



The New Faith and Westminster congregations teamed up to adopt two Meg's House families for Christmas. Meg's House is a Greenwood nonprofit that provides programs and service to domestic violence victims and the chronically homeless. Thanks to the overwhelming generosity of our congregations, two Mom's and their children received clothes, household goods, and, of course, toys, candy, and bicycles on Christmas morning.

Representatives from both congregations participated in blessing the gifts before they were delivered. Pictured in top photo, left to right: Valerie Dansby, Cassandra Daniels, Beth Hammond, Susan Pope, Deb Jones, Tina Moss, Caroline Dennis, David Hammond, Kathy Felder, and Emily Kienker.

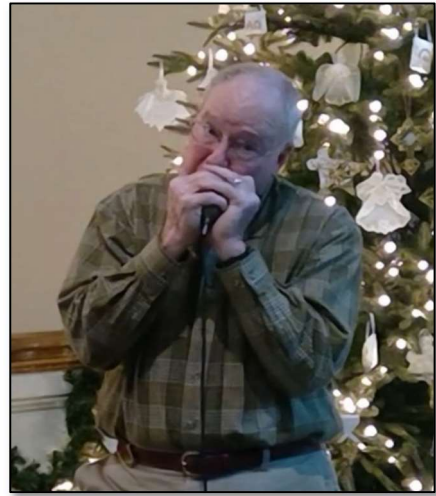
Fifth Annual WSPC and WPC Service of Lessons & Carols



On December 13, pastors, narrators, and musicians from First Presbyterian Church of Ware Shoals and Westminster Presbyterian joined forces to worship God and celebrate Christmas with the sacred words and songs of the season. On this page, Larry Dozier, Nancy & Bill Hogan, Rev. Kevin Cartee, Rev. Caroline Dennis, Steve Kuhl, Debby Lake, and Spears & Joyce Alexander.

Continued next page...

Service of Lessons & Carols, *continued*



More merry musicians: Kevin Cartee, Brittany Walker, Lyman Goldman, Bill Jacobs, Audra Irick, Elizabeth Watkins, Campbell Lake, David Bell, and the Westminster Chimes bell choir. Choir members: Susan Pope, Aaron Acord, Dashe Case, Nancy Hogan, Lucia Horowitz, Phillip Dennis, and Bill Hogan.

December 20: Longest Night of the Year Youth Event



Westminster's Quest: Youth group made the most of the longest night of the year. Crafts, cooking, and conversation preceded the main event—a hybrid viewing party featuring Disney's "Inside Out." Thanks to all who participated!

