



Riverlawn Presbyterian Church
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DECEMBER 2021

Singing in the Dark - The Humble Lifted Up

Luke 1:46-49: *“And Mary said, ‘My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me - holy is his name.’”*

In the first chapter of Luke's Gospel, we find what has come to be known as *Mary's Magnificat*. It is an advent song with an Old Testament feel. You could even call it a “gospel psalm” -- a hopeful song in a dark time. Christmas is the season of great music. Among the gospels, Luke is the most musical. Mark has very little to say about Christmas. John gives us a mystical theology of Jesus' birth. In Matthew, we read a somber tale about the intrigue of King Herod's court and his butchery of little boys. So Matthew describes a grim world. John theologizes. But Luke sings. In Luke, angel voices fill the skies and shepherds join the chorus. But before those voices are heard, we hear Mary's song glorifying God.

Philosopher Frederick Nietzsche detested Christmas. He said that not only is God dead, but Baby Jesus is just too gentle for the real world. Nietzsche taught something like this: big fish eat the little fish, might makes right, the spoils go to the victor, and nice guys finish last. Nietzsche felt that it's a good thing to powerfully assert our individual self-will. He called this self-centered life: "The will to power." "What is good? All that heightens the feeling of power, the will to power, power itself. What is bad? All that is born of weakness." Nietzsche asked, "So what could be worse than having sympathy for what is weak and lowly? The problem with Christianity is that it denies everything powerful and masterful. The notion of God born in a manger and dead on a cross makes Christianity mankind's greatest misfortune."

But Nietzsche did not understand the power of Jesus' love -- how God's power is revealed in weakness and God's greatness in humility. Christmas is about singing and surrender, not self-acclaim and the struggle to arrange the world to please ourselves. Christmas is not about a masterful show of divine force, but about a mysterious humiliation; God coming to us in His weakness; the Divine Word become flesh; a tiny baby--in whom God infinitely humbled Himself in love--to lift us up.

“He became a child, so that you could become a full mature human being. He was wrapped in swaddling clothes, so that you could be unraveled from the meshes of death. He came to earth, so that you could live beneath the stars. There was no place for him in the inn, so that there could be many dwelling places for you in heaven. He was rich, but he became poor for us. His poverty is our riches, and his weakness is our strength. He is poor for us, but in himself he is rich. You can see him lying there in swaddling clothes, but what you cannot see is that he is God's Son.” (Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, d. 397)

This Advent, let us prepare for our Savior – may our hearts make room and sing for joy!

Pastor Chris



MUSIC DEPARTMENT NEWS DECEMBER 2021

Each Sunday of Advent generally has a specific theme: Hope-Peace -Joy - Love. We know that God's people had been preparing for and hoping for a Messiah for over 500 years and I'm sure they were often discouraged and at times their hope waned. I think due to the pandemic we have seen folks struggle and sometimes lose hope so the message of hope during Advent certainly is valuable. There have been a few times during the past year and a half when I wondered if the choir was going to be able to meet again and lift our voices together. I didn't experience hopelessness; it was more like discouragement. We were able to have two outside rehearsals in early summer (2021) and then in August we gathered inside for two weeks only to have a spike in Covid cases in the state and for safety reasons future practices and our return to singing during worship was postponed. Finally in early November it seemed the time was right to resume choir and we met on Thursday evening, November 18th and sang for our first worship service since March 15, 2020 on November 21st. I was so thankful to have those folks back in the choir loft and adding so much to the service that day. The anthem, *Above All*, was wonderful. It was great to also have our praise band lead us in the opening songs that morning. The choir will not be singing weekly at this point but there are plans for them to sing later in December and on Christmas Eve. Brenda Petry will share with us on December 5th and I am working on other special pieces for the month of December.

I am happy to announce that Molly Page, violin soloist, will be returning on December 19th to play several Christmas selections for us. She will be doing three arrangements of traditional carols as well as a selection from Handel's *Messiah*. She is such a talented young lady, and I am thankful she will be with us again.

Wishing you a blessed Christmas and may you find joy & peace in this season.
Pam



ADVENT

The word *Advent* means “coming” or “arrival.” The season of Advent, the four weeks before Christmas, is a time of preparation and anticipation. We prepare to celebrate the first coming of our Savior, when he was born to us so many years ago. We also prepare for our Messiah's second coming, anticipating His glorious return.

Christmas Food Baskets

Riverlawn is again preparing 25 baskets for families in our community. You can help us in two important ways:

1) Sponsor a family (Each sponsor is asked to buy a gallon of milk, loaf of bread and a hand-held can opener – to be delivered to the church Friday afternoon or evening, December 18).

2) Bring the weekly designated items for the food baskets each Sunday. The weekly items are:

- November 14 – canned fruits and vegetables
- November 21 – spaghetti sauce and pasta noodles
- November 28 – canned soup
- December 5 – cake mixes and icing
- December 12 – shampoo, soap, toothbrushes, toothpaste
- Friday Evening – December 18 – Basket Assembly
- Saturday Morning – December 19 – Basket Pickup and Delivery

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**2021 Riverlawn Elders and Board of Deacons**

**Elders:**

*Jamie Albert, Building & Grounds*  
681-340-1128; James.macd.albert@gmail.com

*Susan Bryan, Christian Nurture/Women's Ministry*  
304-389-6063; newsusanbryn@gmail.com

*Jane Lothes, Clerk of Session*  
304-545-2026; janelothes@hotmail.com

*Joe Lothes, Missions*  
304-767-8313; fishlothes@hotmail.com

*Bill Michael, Worship*  
304-741-1736; Bmichael47@gmail.com

*Pam Mullins, Family & Community*  
304-932-8463; pmandpsm@yahoo.com

*Paul Mullins, Evangelism*  
304-741-5914; nascarmemberswva@yahoo.com

*Bob Willson, Stewardship & Finance*  
304-552-3109; Boblinc46@yahoo.com

**Deacons:**

*Mimi Albert — 304-546-6547*  
mimialbert72@yahoo.com

*Ann Cox—304-389-2227*  
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*Joanna Keller —304-546-7376*  
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*Linda Monday —304-541-4927*  
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*Janice Sims—304-727-0476*  
djsims@suddenlink.net

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**December 22nd** is the last day to submit your articles for January's Newsletter.



*December Birthdays*

- |                                      |                                      |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 2 Ruth Watts                         | 17 Chris Kilbert/<br>Rachel Cottrill |
| 4 Pam Smith                          | 19 Aaron Albert                      |
| 8 Pete Lukowski                      | 22 Fred Giersch                      |
| 11 David Johnson                     | 26 Debbie Roberts                    |
| 14 Linda Stephens                    | 28 Sherry Claar/<br>Kevin Sims       |
| 15 Caroline Dodrill/<br>Colton Davis | 29 Linda Means                       |

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BUILDING SECURITY

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|---------|---------------------------|
| Dec. 5 | Dennis Emmett |
| Dec. 12 | Larry Hyatt |
| Dec. 19 | Randy Dodrill |
| Dec. 26 | Brenda Petry/Rosie Rhodes |

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\*There will be a **Congregational Meeting** on Sunday, **December 12**, immediately following the 10:30 AM worship service to: 1. Elect elders and deacons for the coming year; 2. Present the 2022 budget; 3. Vote on the pastor's terms of call. Those on the slate for election include, for Elder: Kathy Barnes; for Deacon: Jason Barnes, Joanna Keller, Sherry Marcum, and Mary Reppert. Copies of the 2022 budget are available in the rear of the sanctuary, or can be provided upon request.

- \*Dec. 5—Deacons Meeting following worship
- \*Dec. 17—Christmas Food Basket assembly
- \*Dec. 18—Christmas Food Basket pick up/  
delivery
- \*Dec. 19—Special Christmas Music Service
- \*Dec. 19—Christmas Joy Offering
- \*Dec. 24—Christmas Eve Candelight Service,  
6:00pm

A Note from Anne Giersch

If anyone likes to bake cookies and would like to help with the "Cookie Mission" and bake (donate) a batch (4 dozen) of cookies to be distributed monthly, please contact Anne Giersch at [annegiersch@gmail.com](mailto:annegiersch@gmail.com) or Sherry Claar.

Thank you.

CHURCH LOCK UP

DEC. Mimi Albert



- Dec. 5 Jane Lothes
- Dec. 12 Kathy Barnes
- Dec. 19 Beckie Croghan
- Dec. 26 Susan Bryan



Irene Lee (Joyce Ryan); Linda Means; Dave and Joyce Ryan; Dawnetta Cook and family; Davis (student at Anne Bailey Elementary) (Nikole Kilbert); family of Kim Wells (Jamie and Mimi Albert); Janice Sims; Terry Beach (Jane Lothes); Maureen and Scott Lothes; Irene (Joe Lothes' sister-in-law); Joe Lothes' niece, Erin and her baby; Janet Young; Joe Kellam: Charlie Kellam; Xander Ball, Braelynn, Dana Russell and son (Jane Lothes); Mick Hughes (Caroline Dodrill); Rick Harris (Pat Croghan); and for the Global Church that we may embody the gospel to all.

**Wednesday Family Night**

As we did in the past, we will follow the Kanawha County School Calendar and will not have Wednesday Family Night during Christmas (December 20 -January 1) breaks. We will start back up in 2022, on Wednesday, January 12<sup>th</sup>.

Calling All Youth!

Thrive (grades 6-8); Ignite (grades 9-12)  
Sunday night from 6:30-7:30 pm, for an informal time of getting together, catching up, and enjoying the life we have in Christ! Everyone will need to wear a mask indoors. We look forward to seeing you!  
Nikole, Larry, Barb, and Pastor Chris

**THE CHURCH OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED  
DECEMBER 27 and 28**

- Purge ourselves of pride by focusing on glorifying God
- Teach the truth through fellowship & discipleship
- Demonstrate a life of love through service to others
- Share the gospel of Jesus Christ with those in need
- Purge Pride, Teach Truth, Live Love