



The Twig Bender

December 2019



Lois Cullom

Lori Lohr

Rev. Joseph Franklin, Sr.

Taylor Stapleton

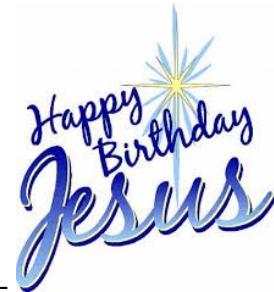
Jennifer Yeary

From the Pastor

Dear Baby Jesus,

I'm so excited You are coming. So many of us have been anticipating Your arrival for so long and now the time is upon us.

There is a bit of confusion though as to the exact moment and date You'll be here. Many have speculated, but we are hopeful there will be a sign of some kind that You have come.



It's been said You will save us and bring a new kingdom with You. I'm wondering how a baby will be able to do this, but I trust God has a plan. I am in awe of God for making such a sacrifice. You are God's only Son.

It is hard to comprehend God would let such a perfect one be born a baby on earth. There is so much sin here. People are doing whatever they want, even if it hurts others. There is a lot of selfishness here. The government and laws don't do anything to help those who are poor and without hope.

Even in the places where we worship God, Your heavenly Father, there are some leaders who think they are better than the rest of us and they use laws to make those of us who are different feel like outcasts.

In This Issue

Spirit of Giving.....	2
FunRaisers.....	3
Cantata.....	4
Bible Quiz	4
After School	5
Circles News.....	6
Food Donation	6
Tax Tips	7
Calendar.....	8—9
Dec. Scriptures	13
Vital Statistics.....	14
Comms Survey	15
Mark Your Calendars ..	Back

(Continued on page 8)

The Spirit of Giving

By Steve Stalnaker

One of my favorite Christmas decorations at our house is a small, resin figurine of Santa Clause bowing in prayer before the Baby Jesus.

“Jesus is the Reason for the Season” is becoming a hackneyed phrase, but it still rings true and always will. It’s also trite to say that Christmas has become overly commercialized in this country. I remember a “Dennis the Menace” cartoon once showing Dennis in front of the Christmas tree, knee deep in wrapping paper and toys and saying, “Is this all?”

I think we can overdo condemning our society’s trend towards materialism during these holidays. While the commercialization is there, I sometimes wonder if it’s truly as bad as some folks (including holiday article writers) would have us believe.

When I found out, to my utter disappointment, that there isn’t really a Santa Clause, my Mother told me that Jolly Old Saint Nick represents the spirit of giving.

But much more than Santa Clause could ever be, the spirit of giving is found in God giving His only begotten Son to us, first as a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, and then as a man dying to expunge our manifest sins.

While we can never get close to that gift of God, a lot of us do give. We give not just fancily wrapped gifts or smoked hams. We give of ourselves, our time and our money. Examples of giving abound here in the Greenwood/Laurel Park Charge.

(Continued on page 9)



**Our December Communion
Offering Goes to the
Virginia Institute of Pastoral Care**

FunRaisers Rock in 2019

By Betty Ritchie

Thanks to all our friends at Greenwood and Laurel Park churches for helping the FunRaisers this past year.

Buying the pickles, apple butter and bag lunches is more appreciated than words could ever tell. There have been other items that were sold during the year such as painted river rocks, homemade scarves and Christmas wreaths.

The FunRaisers' List of Blessings for This Year:

- Two new phone systems for the Church Office and the Education Building (for the After School Ministry): \$123.74.
- Two doorbells for the Education Building at \$19.99.
- Repair of the spotlight on the front lawn: \$455.73.
- Upgrade of the Brunswick Stew pot for \$561.20.
- Handicapped commode in the Education Building: \$265.
- For a total of \$1,425.56.



We still have apple butter and dill pickles for sale. Try one of our bag lunches sometime. We think you will like it.

Many blessings to you all for helping the FunRaisers in the year 2019!



Christmas Eve Service
Tuesday, Dec. 24 at 4 p.m.
Laurel Park United Methodist Church
2700 Hungary Road

December Eating

Due to the holidays, we will not have a Fellowship Dinner or FunRaisers bag lunches this month. Look for them to return in January.

Christmas Cantata Coming Dec. 22

By Jackie Schultz

"Breath of Heaven," our Christmas Cantata is coming to Greenwood on Sunday, Dec. 22 at the 11 a.m. worship service.

Our cantata is a short, beautiful musical story about the obedience of a young girl who fearfully rejoices at an angel's visit, proclaiming that she will become the mother of our Lord and Savior, Jesus.

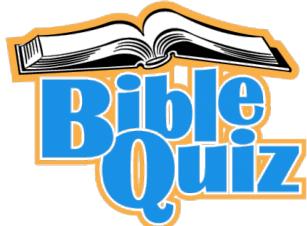


Please invite friends and relatives to celebrate with us. There will be a congregation Christmas Carol Sing-along at the finale!

Choir practice is at 6:30 p.m. every Thursday in the Choir room. There is still time to join us, and always an open seat with your name on it!

Let Us Be Joy to the World!

Bible Quiz: Famous Children in the Bible



Children are an important part of many of the stories in the Bible. Each month we have posted information about a child mentioned in God's Word.

The question for November was: This boy killed a giant. The answer is found in 1 Samuel 17.

David was just a boy, but he fought the giant Goliath. Even the big men in Saul's army wouldn't fight Goliath. David was able to fight the giant because he trusted God. He was not afraid, and he knew that God would help him defeat Israel's enemy.

This will be the last Bible Quiz article to appear in the *Twig Bender* for a while. We hope you have enjoyed learning about children in the Bible. More children are mentioned in John 6:1-15 when a boy gave Jesus his lunch to feed a huge crowd of people; 1 Samuel 20:35-42 where a boy picked up the arrows that Jonathan shot; and Acts 20:7-12 when a young man fell asleep during a long sermon.

After School



After School Update

By Porter Schermerhorn

November was another fun-filled month for the Greenwood After School ministry!

In addition to our regular day-to-day activities, at our November Fellowship Dinner Pastor Josette and several of the kids sang and moved to the worship song "Every Move I Make."

Other highlights included making delicious homemade pizza on Nov. 18 (which was both a HCPS half-day and Mickey Mouse's birthday), as well as shopping for items and filling 2 shoeboxes for the United Methodist Church's Shoe Box Ministry (which ultimately becomes part of Samaritan's Purse's Operation Christmas Child).

We also set up a Christmas Tree for what we call the Mitten Tree ministry, a United Methodist program that collects warm hats, gloves, scarves and mittens and gives them to needy children. We've already received a few items and will be collecting until Dec. 20.

Upcoming plans for December include a trip (complete with homemade doggy treats) to the animal shelter, a visit to the Bass Pro Shops and a last-day-of-school Christmas party.

Merry Christmas from everyone at the Greenwood After School!

Prayer Conference Call every Wednesday, 6 to 6:15 a.m. Dial in on 605-313-5111; code: 196886.
Press star six (*6) to Mute your phone.



Greenwood Circles



The **Ruth Circle** will meet Wednesday Dec. 4 at 6:30 p.m. in the home of Betty Ritchie. Everyone will bring a covered dish to share. We will be making plans for the family we adopted for Christmas. We will not be having a meeting in January.

The **Willing Workers Circle** will meet Thursday, Dec. 5 at 5:30 p.m. in the Just Friends Sunday School class at the church. We'll finalize our plans for the family we've adopted for the holidays. Our January meeting will be dinner out.

Food Donation Connection

December Pick Up Rotation

Wednesday, Dec. 4: Charley Banks; Thursday, Dec. 5: Lewis Daniel; Friday, Dec. 6: Adamarye Patteson.

Wednesday, Dec. 11: Jean Mowatt and William Gibbs; Thursday, Dec. 12: Lewis Daniel; Friday, Dec. 13: Carolyn and Ray Smith.

Wednesday, Dec. 18: Charley Banks; Thursday, Dec. 19: Lewis Daniel; Friday, Dec. 20: Brenda and Harry Shuler.

Wednesday, Dec. 25: Christmas Day; Thursday, Dec. 26: Lewis Daniel; Friday, Dec. 27: Adamarye Patteson.

Wednesday, Jan. 1: Jean Mowatt and William Gibbs; Thursday, Jan. 2: Lewis Daniel; Friday, Jan. 3: Carolyn and Ray Smith.

Thanks to everyone who has helped to pickup food and give it out on Friday nights.

Also thanks to the ones who have been furnishing gallon bags to put the food in and also paper bags for the people to pick up the food in. Thanks for all of your prayers. — Adamarye Patteson.



December Tax Tips

December is a great time to make some end of season tax moves to help lower your tax bill and increase your tax refund. Once the year ends, so do most of your opportunities to reduce your 2019 taxes. Here's some tax tips *from Turbo-Tax online:*

Get organized. It's never too early to gather receipts for tax deductible expenses and income sources. Doing it now will help you ensure you're not forgetting anything significant and help you see a better snapshot of your finances ahead of the new year.



Defer Bonuses. If your hard work paid off this year and you are expecting a year-end bonus, this extra money in your pocket may bump you up to another tax bracket and increase your tax liability. If you can hold off on seeing any extra income this year, see if your boss will pay you your bonus in January.

Accelerate Deductions and Defer Income. There are a handful of tax deductions that are recognized during the year in which you pay them. For example, if you own a home and get a mortgage interest deduction, and if you make an extra mortgage payment on Dec. 31, you can claim that additional tax deduction on this year's taxes.

Donate to Charity. The holidays are a great time to clean out clothes and household goods while giving to those in need. You can reap benefits of a tax deduction for non-cash and monetary contributions donated to a qualified charitable organization. Make these donations count on your taxes by donating by Dec. 31. Even if you donate by credit card, you do not have to pay it off in 2019 to receive the tax deduction.

Maximize your Retirement. Another great way to reduce your taxable income

(Continued on page 10)



No Fifth Sunday Service this Month

Due to the Christmas/New Year Holidays, we won't have our usual combined worship service with sister church Laurel Park UMC on Sunday, Dec. 29. Combined services will return in March at Laurel Park.

Dear Baby Jesus

(Continued from page 1)

I don't know, but if I were God, I would probably keep You a little while longer because I would worry about Your safety. But, well, God is all powerful and all knowing. So, I trust God knows what God is doing. You are God's Son and I am sure God has a wonderful plan for Your life. And I am glad it includes me and everyone else here too. We really need a Savior.



Even though I have no idea what You will look like and be like, I love You already. Everything I have read about Your coming has lifted my spirits and given me hope for the future.

Isaiah prophesied You would be a wonderful counselor, a prince of peace, God with us—I just get all the feels and butterflies in my stomach just thinking about You. I can only imagine what Your presence will be like and feel like when I see You face to face. An unspeakable joy is just welling up on the inside as I imagine it.

I suspect I'll be working in the field when You come, hopefully I won't miss anything. I trust God won't forget me out here. God knows how I feel about You coming and will get me and my co-laborers a message so we can tell everyone else You have come. Maybe this is premature, but "Happy Birthday!!" I love You so much. I can't wait to see You! God bless You Baby Jesus.

Sincerely, Your Disciple at Heart

Josette L. Franklin

Merry Christmas from the *Twig Bender*

The *Twig Bender* staff — Linda Walker, Jean Mowatt, Gay Stapleton, Janice Banks, Cindy Jo Daniel and Pastor Josette, our contributing writers and your humble editor — wish all our readers a Merry Christmas and a Happy, Blessed New Year!



The Spirit of Giving

(Continued from page 2)

The Willing Workers Circle has adopted a family from Longdale Elementary School, furnished them with a Thanksgiving dinner and will get them Christmas gifts. Likewise, the Ruth Circle has adopted, for Christmas, a family in need.

The kids in our After School Ministry took on a service project in November for the Samaritan Fund (see story on page 5) and are sponsoring, again this year their Mitten Tree to provide hats, gloves, scarves and, of course, mittens for children at the United Methodist Family Services (UMFS).



Many folks in the Greenwood church family give their time, quietly, in the background, without fanfare, to decorate the church for Christmas, keep the church office running week in and week out, raise money for the church selling home-made pickles, stirring stew, baking cakes and keeping the church grounds. And they do this not only at Christmas time, but throughout the year.

We are a giving people who give all the time. If you don't like the materialism of the Holiday Season, fine; don't buy anything. But whatever you do, don't stop giving of your time, talent and treasure. And always thank God for the greatest Gift of all: Jesus Christ, the Savior of the World.



Blue Christmas Service

For some, the holidays are not purely joyful and filled with mirth. Memories of loved ones, recent grief, losses of all kinds, depression, and broken relationships are just a few of the things that can weigh on some hearts at Christmas time.

On Saturday, Dec. 21, we'll offer a Blue Christmas worship service at 3 p.m. at Laurel Park UMC. This service is specifically designed to give those who might be grieving for losses of any kind an opportunity to worship and remember.

December Tax Tips

(Continued from page 7)

while building your nest egg is to make a contribution to your retirement savings account. Whether you contribute to a 401(k) or a Traditional IRA, you can take a dollar for dollar reduction in your income and save for the future.

Spend your FSA. If you have a Flexible Spending Account and you have money left, get caught up on your doctor's visits. The old "use it or lose it" rule may not still apply, but if you have unused money in your FSA account on Dec. 31, you may only be able to carry over a limited amount.

Buy Low, Sell Low? Chances are you have a few investments in your portfolio that have gone down in value. You can recognize your losses and use them to offset investment winners. To do this, you need to sell the losing investments and offset your losses against your gains recognized.



Fall Fair Income



As of December 1, our income from the Brunswick Stew Sale and Fall Fair totaled \$2,718.79. Of this, \$1,500 goes to our overseas missionary, Clara Biswas, in Cambodia. The remainder, over \$1,200, goes to our general fund. Thanks to everyone who helped with the stew and everything else that brought us some cash.

Christmas Card Exchange

Trade Christmas greeting cards with other members of the Greenwood/Laurel Park Church Family. Please have your cards in the box in the narthex by Sunday, Dec. 15. Cards for Laurel Park folks can go in the box in the Greenwood narthex. Cards will be available for pick up on Sunday, Dec. 22.



Be Prepared – Read the Scriptures

December Lectionary Readings

December 1	Isaiah 2:1-5; Psalm 122; Romans 13:11-14; Matthew 24:36-44
December 8	Isaiah 11:1-10; Psalm 72; Romans 15:4-13 Matthew 3:1-12
December 15	Isaiah 35:1-10; Luke 1:46b-55; James 5:7-10; Matthew 11:2-11
December 22	Isaiah 7:10-16; Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19; Romans 1:1-7; Matthew 1:18-25
December 24	Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-20
December 29	Isaiah 63:7-9; Psalm 148; Hebrews 2:10-18; Matthew 2:13-23

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WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/GUMCVA



2020 Church Planning Meeting

The Greenwood Church Administrative Council has scheduled a 2020 planning meeting for Saturday, Jan. 11 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.



The Council encourages all members of the Greenwood church family to attend and give the Council feedback on how the church is doing and where the church needs to go to meet God's will.

There will be refreshments.

Greenwood Church Family Birthdays



Clarence Powell	12/9	Betty Lloyd	12/15
Jonae Shuler	12/10	Jamie Smith.....	12/15
Betty Coleman	12/11	Kathryn Walker	12/21
Cindy Jo Daniel	12/11	Gail Stanley	12/28
Janice Banks.....	12/13	Daniel Langston	12/28
Mary Cullom	12/13	Jackie Schultz	12/31



Anniversaries

Clarence & Kaye Powell 12/19

Don't see your birthday or wedding anniversary in The Twig Bender and would like to have us publish it? Send your dates to admin@gumcva.org or call the church office at 804-266-5341; likewise, let us know if you'd like your birthday or anniversary removed.



Twig Bender

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Sunday School: 9:30 a.m. — Worship: 11 a.m. Sunday

Pastor

Phone:

Pastor Josette L. Franklin

804-238-9318

Acting Music Director

Jackie Schultz

Email

josettefranklin@vaumc.org

Steve Stalnaker

Office hours: 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Tuesday — Friday

Fax:

804-266-2019

After School Phone:

804-266-6668

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Visit our web site at www.gumcva.org

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Communications Survey 2020

We believe that communication between the church leaders and the church family is very important. Direct, constructive feedback is the best means we have of finding out if we're effectively communicating with you. What are the best forms of communication for reaching and informing you?

Please write a number value next to each communications type listed below to indicate how useful you think it is, using this scale:

5: extremely useful; 4: very useful; 3: useful (average);

2: somewhat useful; 1: not useful; 0: Not Applicable.

Then tear your completed survey out of this newsletter, drop it into the offering basket, email it to the church office or phone in your answers. Anonymity is OK.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bulletin, and specifically these parts: | <input type="checkbox"/> Marquee |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Announcements | <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter: <i>The Twig Bender</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prayer List | <input type="checkbox"/> Prayer Chain |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Order of Worship | <input type="checkbox"/> Signs on the Lawn |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Upcoming Scripture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social Media (e.g. Facebook) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Upcoming Events | <input type="checkbox"/> Worship Service Slide Show |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mark Your Calendars | <input type="checkbox"/> Web Page |

Bonus Question: We're thinking about using broadcast email to disseminate information to everyone in our directory who has an email address. Would this be useful to you? Yes No Don't Care No email

Add your comments: What would you like to see added, changed or ended? And anything else you want to tell us. (Use additional pages if necessary)

Please have your completed survey in the Church office by Sunday, Dec. 29.



Greenwood UMC — December 2019



Mark Your Calendars

- | | |
|---------------|------------------------------|
| Jan. 1..... | New Year's Day |
| Jan. 11..... | 2020 Church Planning Meeting |
| Jan. 20..... | Martin Luther King day |
| March 8..... | Daylight Saving Time Begins |
| April 12..... | Easter Sunday |

