

Advent at Epworth—December 2023

HAPPY BIRTHDAY JESUS PARTY! - Sunday, December 10th, 6:00 p.m.

Join us for a great presentation of the Gospel by our young Cherub Choir participants as they dress up and share the Christmas Story. Afterwards we will have refreshments in the Fellowship Hall to celebrate the birthday of our Savior, Jesus!

Please bring “finger foods” to share as we celebrate at the greatest birthday party ever!!



Baby's First Christmas - Sunday, December 10th at 11:00 am

Come celebrate the new life God has given to the church family in 2023.

Chancel Choir Christmas Presentation - Sunday, December 17th at 11:00 am

Please join us for the Chancel Choir's Christmas musical presentation at the 11:00 A.M. worship service.... it's the gospel put to music!

CHRISTMAS CAROLING - Wednesday, December 14th at 6:00 pm

Please feel free to join the Kidz Crew on Wednesday, December 15, at 6:00 p.m. as we go Christmas Caroling. We will take as many as possible on the church van. If you would like to drive, please feel free to caravan with us. Email Letha at letha.parker@epworth-pc.org or text to (205) 799-8547 to register your participation.



MILK & COOKIES NIGHT with a SPECIAL VISITOR

Sunday, December 17th, 6:00 p.m.

Please join the Epworth Kidz Cruise as we celebrate Christmas! Afterwards we will have milk and cookies with a “Special Visitor.”



Christmas Eve Candlelight Service Sunday, December 24th at 5:30 pm

Sunday evening, December 24 (Christmas Eve) at 5:30 P.M. – Holy Communion service – You'll discover that this service is very moving and meaningful, and it continues to grow in attendance every year (invite your friends and family members—make it a family tradition).

NOTE: Christmas Eve Holy Communion will also be served, during all 3 Sunday morning Christmas Eve services, for those unable to attend the 5:30 pm Candlelight Communion Service.

Thank you for your continued support of the Epworth Kidz Crew Ministries! The many kidz programs and classes would not be possible without your faithfulness in volunteering and your monetary support of the Epworth Church. We are blessed to be a blessing, and I thank our God for your sharing in the advancement of the Gospel to children.

“Baby Jesus For Sale” by Rev. Grant Parker

I once read a disturbing report about a department store which sold Jesus dolls one Christmas season. The “Baby Jesus” dolls came complete with a manger, straw, and the infant Jesus wrapped in swaddling clothes. Unfortunately, the dolls were not highly favored among the busy Christmas shoppers, and the department store was left holding a large surplus of the dolls. The store was forced to drastically reduce the price of the “Baby Jesus” dolls in order to liquidate their stock. Shoppers were greatly taken aback the day after Christmas when they were greeted by a sale notice posted in the front door of the store: **“Jesus reduced by 50%.”**

It seems sort of callous—actually sacrilegious—to even think about reducing the value of Jesus, doesn’t it? That story gives me the same feeling I get when I read the word “X-mas,” rather than Christmas, on a storefront, a sign, or an advertisement. It seems as though Jesus is being methodically excluded—devalued—more and more each Christmas season. We get so caught up in the hustle and bustle of the celebration of the season, that we often bypass the

real Reason for the Season! Christmas is a festive time of the year. It’s truly a time to celebrate! Birthday parties are supposed to be that way...but unfortunately, the Guest of Honor—Jesus—is often uninvited to the celebration!

What can we do to make this Christmas different? Here are several suggestions.

1. Celebrate Advent in your home. Check online Christian bookstores for good Advent resources, such as Advent calendars, etc.
2. Read and re-read, tell and re-tell the story of Christmas in your home. (It’s found in the Bible in Matthew 1 & 2 and Luke 1 & 2.)
3. Give a Christmas gift to the world. You can make a donation to The Methodist Children’s Home, to the Salvation Army or to some other very worthy local organization that ministers to the needs of hungry, homeless, hurting, and helpless people, for example. Parents, try letting your children participate in choosing which cause to support.
4. Set up a nativity scene in your home, and if you have children in your home, describe to your children the role each character in the nativity scene played in the very first Christmas story.
5. If you send Christmas cards,

send cards with a Christian religious message, mailed in envelopes using stamps with a distinctive Christian emblem.

6. Sing Christmas carols in your home and listen to Christmas music with a Christian flavor in your home and vehicle.
7. Watch Christmas movies and programs with a Christian theme in your home.
8. Decorate your home emphasizing a Christian, rather than secular, Christmas theme.
9. Share the Christmas story with someone else this season. You’ll be surprised to discover how many people don’t know the biblical Christmas story of the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ, the Son of God!
10. Attend worship services and special events, such as the Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion Service and a Holy Communion Serve at all 3 Sunday morning services here at Epworth on Christmas Eve.

Wishing you a Christ-filled and Merry Christmas!

Brother Grant

Birthday	Name	
12/1	Billy Ray Head Robert Meacham Cindy Cameron Daryl Griggs Marie Culpepper Wyatt Wilkerson	
	12/3	Jason Yohn Marina Meacham
	12/4	Cody Townsend Wynn Bradley
	12/5	Richelle Sanders
	12/6	Luke McCart
12/7	Ricky Stone Chami Chedrick	
	12/8	George Gatewood Callie Gatewood James Clark
12/9	Gloria Griggs Carol Stanton Andrea Gil Jay Baker	
	12/10	Sloane Moss Taylor Hartley
	12/11	Donna Zeigler
12/12	Rich Coreno Steve Lake James Brooks Maverick Sanford	
	12/13	Libby Clay
	12/14	Joshua Caldwell
	12/15	Carol Martin Dee Dee Ellis Susan Riepe Vicky Moss
12/17		Cathy Sharpe
12/18		Mallory McLeod Megan Redmond Marley Hamilton
	12/20	Emily Wallace Maria Chedrick Taylor Riddle
12/21		Pat Roberts
12/22	Judy Burkes Rex Kennedy	
	12/24	J.W. Martin
12/25	Emma Wilson	
12/28	Mia Bell	
12/29	Madison Shields	
12/30	Jeanette Kersey Wade Wilkerson	
	12/31	Teresa Dean

Anniversaries	
Dec 14	Seabo & Vickie Griggs
Dec 17	Gentry & Belle Lee
Dec 23	Chuck & Sandy Clay Johnny & Connie Burell
	Dec 29
Dec 30	Mark & Daina Wooten

Teacher Treats at Christmas

Epworth would like to take treats to the teachers at Ridgecrest Elementary, our Partner In Education School. We are asking everyone who can to bring in baked goods, candy or other yummy treats on **Sunday December 10th**. Leave them on the table in the Conference Room. Thank you for supporting our teachers. If you would rather give a monetary donation toward this cause, please see or contact Christi Badowski (334-614-2656).

Thank you for your help.

Visitation Volunteers

The following people will accompany Brother Grant when he goes visiting on Monday nights. If you are listed here, please meet Brother Grant at 6:30 pm at the church to go with him to visit prospective and current members. Blessings,
Kathryn Perdue

December 4— Ross Goode
December 11—Pam Shores
December 18—Jaime Singer

PARSONAGE FAMILY CHRISTMAS GIFT

Dear Fellow Epworth Member,

I hope the reason for the season fills your heart with joy this Christmas and that you are surrounded by the love, comfort and peace that only our precious Savior can bring you! We have so much to be thankful for in our families, our community, our country and in our church family. We are blessed to have two of His most faithful servants, Brother Grant and Letha Parker, ministering year-round to the many and diverse needs of our church family...which is often done at the expense of their own family's needs. Literally from cradle to grave, Brother Grant is right beside us for all the "times of our lives." I want to thank you in advance for the generous response to the **Parsonage Family Christmas Gift** this year. Just be sure and mark your check or envelope for the "**Parsonage Family Christmas Gift**" and place it in the offering plate!

I want to share this beautiful Christmas Prayer with all of you!

Christmas Prayer

**Heavenly Father,
in this Christmas season,
help us rightly to remember
the birth of Jesus,
that we may share in the song
of the angels,
the gladness of the shepherds,
and the worship of the wise men.
Close the doors of hate
and open the doors of love
all over the world.
Let kindness come with every gift
and good desires with every greeting.
Deliver us from evil,
by the blessing that Christ brings,
and teach us to be merry
with clean hearts.
May the Christmas morning
make us happy to be your children,
And the Christmas evening bring us to our
bed with grateful thoughts,
forgiving and forgiven, for Jesus' sake.
Amen.**

God bless you and thank you so much for your generosity!

Susan S. Wiggins

A message from our Youth Minister Daniel Cook

It is the most wonderful time of the year, or at least I think so! Some of you are just now starting to put up your Christmas decorations because Christmas starts after Thanksgiving (my wife falls in this group). Others of us (I am in this group) jump into the Christmas spirit as soon as the calendar hits November 1st. We are all about to be immersed in the Christmas season as schools start to do events, the church begins to have Christmas programs, work parties begin, and get-togethers with family and friends begin to fill our calendar.

I love this time of the year because of the hope and joy that can be felt through the decorations, parties, and music. This time of the year is hard for some too, as time with family and friends reminds us of those who have gone before us. It is also sometimes difficult to see that hope and joy with the flooding of negativity from the world we live in. We look out onto the world and sometimes into our lives and see areas that could use a boost of this hope and joy.

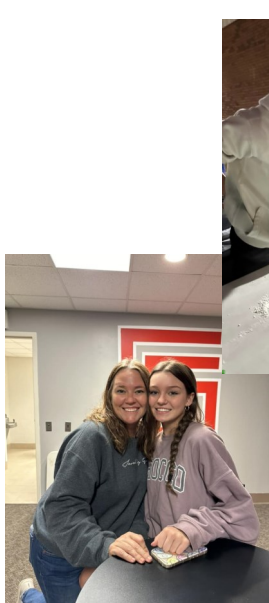
I think back on the time when Jesus came into the world. Before the birth of Jesus, the world was experiencing 400 years of silence where God did not speak and no scripture was written. I wonder what it was like and if people questioned, doubted, and lost hope in the promises of God. Those 400 years of silence set the stage with the perfect circumstances and timing for God to start His next part of His redemption plan.

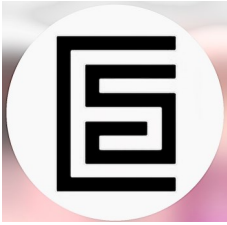
Luke 2:10-11 – “Don’t be afraid,” he said. “I bring you good news that will bring great JOY to all people. The Savior – yes, the Messiah, the Lord – has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!”

The silence is broken and the waiting is over! Not only that, but this will bring great joy to ALL people. The way “all people” know of this joy is from your life and your lips. This is seen in the response the shepherds had after seeing Jesus. Luke 2:20, “And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.” They knew the world was in much need and had a great desire to know what they experienced. As news began to spread, people began to be filled with hope and expectation.

This joy is what we sing about in the song “Joy to the World.” The joy that no matter what has happened or will happen, God who loved us enough to send His Son down from the thrones of heaven, to walk the roads with man, and then to die on a cross all so we can have a relationship with Him. Whether you are walking through a time of silence, sorrow, or happiness, God is with you! When you experience Christ in your life you can do as the shepherds did and go and tell others of what you have seen and heard. Joy can be brought into their lives through you and the message of Jesus! Oh come all ye faithful and let’s spread joy to the world this Christmas season. (See what I did there!)

Merry Christmas from Epworth Students!





Epworth Students December Events:

Wednesday Nights

December Series: Where are you in the nativity story? During the month of December we will look at the different characters of the nativity story to see their part in the story, their struggles, and their response.

Join us on Wednesday night from 6:00 - 6:30 we hang out in the gym, game room, and snack bar. From 6:30 to 7:30 pm, we have our youth service and then hang out for a few minutes after.

Sunday Mornings Worship

We invite all families and teenagers to attend a Sunday morning worship service. As you know there are three to choose from, with most teenagers attending the 9:45 service. We would love to see your family worship with us!

Small Group - Sunday Mornings at 11:00

Following the 9:45 service there is a class offered for all teenagers. Some may call it Sunday School and others call it a Small Group, no matter what you call it, it is important. This is a place for teenagers to talk through the Bible and life with other teenagers to grow together as they navigate what it means to follow Christ.

Winter Trip

Please be in prayer for the leaders and students who will be going on the Ski Trip, December 27th -30th. Once again thank you for everyone who donated money, supported the fundraiser, and gave in other ways to make this trip possible. Through your support we were able to lower the cost of the trip by \$175 per person!

Epworth Student Christmas Party - All youth are invited to our Christmas party December 16th at 6:30 pm. Come enjoy some Christmas games, food, and fellowship.

Sunday Nights

There are a lot of things happening on Sunday nights in December. The youth will meet December 3rd from 4:30 pm - 5:30 pm. The other Sunday nights your student will be encouraged to come and help with the children and family activities taking place. Mark your calendars for the candlelight service that will be taking place on Christmas Eve. That is one as a family you do not want to miss!



Angel Tree

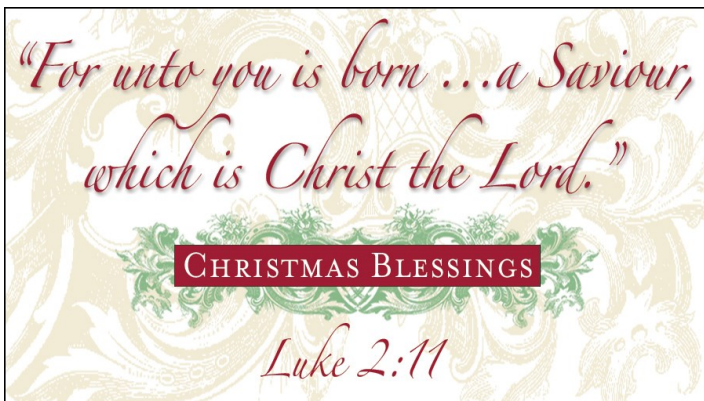
Angel Tree is a program of Prison Fellowship that serves incarcerated parents by providing a pathway for strengthening and restoring their relationships with their children and families. Angel Tree is a unique program that gives Epworth an opportunity to share Christ's love with families of prisoners. The program connects parents in prison with their children through the delivery of Christmas gifts given on the parent's behalf.

When a mother or father is in prison, the pain of separation from their child can be acute, but an Angel Tree gift, delivered in the parent's name, can help restore and strengthen the relationship and act as a symbol of God's love. Epworth has been participating in the Angel Tree Program for over twenty years. Many children, their families and prisoner parent have been blessed by this program.

Epworth will be participating with the Angel Tree program again this year. We will not be asking you to sponsor a specific child, buy and wrap presents and deliver to the church. Several options were given from Prison Fellowship Ministries and it has been decided that we will provide gift cards to each child. We are asking for donations so that we can provide a \$35.00 gift card to each child on behalf of their incarcerated parent. We feel this is the safest way to be able to carry on this worthwhile program.

You have always been a very generous and loving church and I look forward to us being a part of Angel Tree again this year and praying for those we serve.

Pam Shores, Your Angel Tree Coordinator



Adult Ministry

Christmas Trip

We will enjoy a day of Christmas Spirit in beautiful Warm Springs, Georgia. Please join us for our annual Christmas trip for a day of fellowship, shopping, enjoying the spectacular Christmas decorations and a most delicious lunch at the Bullock House.



Our Christmas trip to Warm Springs will be on Friday Dec. 8, 2023. We will leave the church at 10:00 AM EST and arrive in Warm Springs at 11:00EST.

A sign-up sheet will be posted in the Gathering Room.

Looking for Donations

Mobility Worldwide of East AL & West GA would love to receive your donations of canes, crutches, walkers, and wheelchairs. Your gift of mobility devices will be loaned in our local community or given to Partners for Care (a Kenyan mission) to meet the needs of the poorest of the poor. Please bring your donations to the mobility cart workshop (old youth house). Contact Sam Singer with any questions 706-570-4507.

December 2023

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
					1 6:30 pm Prayer Ministry Christmas Party	2 10:00 am— Hanging of the Greens Practice
3 11:00 Service Hanging of the Greens	4 6:30 Man Church	5 9:00 am Mom's Day Out & Preschool 9:30 am Bible Study 6:00 pm— Methodist Womens Christmas Dinner	6 9:00 am Preschool 6:30 pm Classes, Pastor's Bible Study & Kidz Konnections	7 9:00 am Mom's Day Out & Preschool 6:00 pm Epworth Staff Christmas Party	8 10:00 am Adult Ministries Warms Spring Outing	9
10 11:00 Service Baby's First Christmas 6:00 pm Cherub Choir and Happy Birthday Jesus Party	11 Newsletter Deadline 6:30 Man Church	12 9:00 am Mom's Day Out & Preschool 9:30 am Bible Study	13 9:00 am Preschool 10:00 am Cart workshop 6:00 pm Kids Christmas Carolng 6:30 pm Youth Christmas Party 6:30 pm Classes Pastor's Bible Study	14 9:00 am Mom's Day Out & Preschool	15 6:00 pm— Tuesday Morning Bible Study Christmas Dinner	16 Wreaths Across America Ft. Mitchell
17 11:00 Christmas Cantata 6:00 pm Kidz Milk & Cookie with Special Guest	18 6:30 Man Church Celebration Dinner with Guest Speaker Dr. George Mathison	19 9:00 am Mom's Day Out & Preschool 9:30 am Bible Study	20 9:00 am Preschool	21	22	23
24 8:30, 9:45 and 11:00 Regular Services 5:30 pm Christmas Eve Candlelight service	25 	26 Office Closed	27 Office Closed	28 Office Closed	29 Office Closed	30
31 8:30, 9:45 and 11:00 Regular Sunday Services						

