Hopewell Methodist Church
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The Beacon
December 2026

Message from the Pastor

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory." (John 1:14)

As I reflect on our recent journey through Israel, I find myself returning again and again to one simple truth: Jesus truly entered our world. For years I have read the names in Scripture—Galilee, Capernaum, Jerusalem, the Mount of Olives, the Sea of Galilee—and preached from passages that unfolded in those places. Walking the land does not make the Bible more true, nor does our faith depend upon ever visiting the Holy Land, but standing in those places gave fresh weight to the words of John 1:14: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory." The eternal Son of God did not remain distant from the world He created. He came into human history, lived among real people, walked real roads, entered villages, sat at tables, crossed the sea, touched the sick, comforted the broken, and eventually made His way to Jerusalem and the cross.

That reality is especially meaningful as we enter the season of Advent. Our Advent series this year is called "God With Us," and those words capture the wonder at the very heart of Christmas. We are so familiar with the manger, the shepherds, the angels, and the songs that it is easy to lose sight of what they are proclaiming. The Creator entered His creation. The One through whom all things were made took on flesh and came to dwell among us. Christmas is not simply the celebration of a beautiful birth story; it is the announcement that God has come near. The Incarnation tells us that He has entered our human condition, shared in our weakness, and made Himself known to us in Jesus Christ.

As we traveled through Israel, I was also reminded that the places connected to Jesus' life are not isolated scenes but part of one unfolding story of redemption. The road from Bethlehem eventually leads to Jerusalem. The child laid in the manger is the Savior who would give Himself upon the cross. John tells us that in Christ "we beheld His glory," and that glory was seen not only in His miracles and teaching, but ultimately in His self-giving love. The One who came among us came to save us. That is why Advent invites us to look beyond the sentiment of the season and rediscover the depth of the gospel: God has acted in history to redeem His people through His Son.

Advent also reminds us that the story is not finished. We look back with gratitude to Christ's first coming, but we also look forward with hope to His return. The church has always lived between these two advents. We remember the Savior who came in humility, and we await the King who will come in glory. We celebrate the One who entered our world, while trusting His promise that He will make all things new. In a season marked by hope, peace, joy, and love, we are not simply remembering something that happened long ago; we are confessing that the Christ who came still reigns, is still with us, and will come again.

My prayer for us this Advent is that the familiar story will become fresh again. May we slow down enough to recover the wonder of the Incarnation and allow the truth of "God with us" to shape the way we worship, hope, and live. As we gather throughout December, may we remember that our faith is rooted in the real acts of a faithful God, that Christ truly came for us, and that His presence remains our hope in every season. The land helped me remember that He came; Advent now invites all of us to remember why He came, to rejoice that He is with us, and to look forward with confidence to the day when He comes again.

In Christ,

Pastor Bob

Music Minute

It is impossible to celebrate the seasons of Advent and Christmas without the melodies of our favorite Christmas carols ringing in our hearts, minds, and voices. No other season of the year has more music associated with it, nor brings with it the nostalgia and fond memories that are so special to us.

"O Come, O Come Emmanuel" is one of the most commonly sung carols throughout the Advent season. The chorus sung after each verse is the reminder that Jesus came to save us, and the promise that He will come again in glory: "Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel, shall come to thee, O Israel." Matthew 1: 23 says *"...and they will call him Immanuel," which means 'God with us'."*

Time after time, the Israelites found themselves separated from God - always by their own doing. And God would eventually deliver them, only to be betrayed by His chosen people again. So we find two constant themes in the Old Testament:

- The Israelites, no matter how hard they tried, were unfaithful to God, and
- God remained faithful and fulfilled the promises He made to them through His prophets.

God made many promises. Isaiah 7:14 says, *"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and you shall call his name Emmanuel."* The name Emmanuel translates as "God with us." It's a remarkable promise - the Ultimate Father and Creator of the Universe promising to make Himself physically present with the people who have proven themselves unworthy.

In one of the most somber Christmas songs, "O Come, O Come Emmanuel", there is an embraced tension within Israel. They are in exile, separated from God yet again. With a sober perspective, they choose to rejoice in the promise God has made to them. With nothing else to cling to, in the midst of desperation and loneliness, they recall and proclaim the promise that God would be with them - knowing that, in spite of their unfaithfulness, God is faithful to His promises.

No one could have expected a baby in a manger to be the start of God's perfect plan to be "with us." And yet, that is exactly how God fulfilled His promise. Are you waiting for God to come through on a promise He has made? Do you feel a sense of loneliness or exile? Rejoice! Emmanuel has come, and is coming again! God is faithful and always keeps His promises!

The Hand Bell and Community Choirs continue their work to prepare for our Christmas celebration, Glorious Christmas Night on Sunday, December 13th at 3:00 p.m. Our Hand Bell Choir will begin the program, and they will be followed by the presentation of the cantata. Our Community Choir is the largest it has ever been, and we are anticipating a large crowd in attendance, especially since there is only one presentation this year. Therefore, tickets will be required for admission. They will be FREE, but should be **reserved as soon as possible**. We have reservations for approximately 100 tickets already! Please contact Ellen in person or at musicdirector@hopewellcmc to reserve your seats for all who will be with you. The program will be followed by a cookie and cider reception in the Fellowship Hall. We will need **LOTS of cookies for our guests**, so please also share with Ellen if you are able to provide a batch or two. This event promises to be a highlight of the season as we share the hope and joy of Christmas!

May God be with each of you and your families this Christmas season as you prepare to celebrate Jesus' birth so long ago. Always remember that He is Immanuel, God with us, and that God always keeps His promises! May He also be with you as we anticipate His next advent on earth! From all of us in Music and A/V Ministry, we wish you a very merry and blessed CHRISTmas and a Happy New Year!

JOYfully Serving,
Ellen Stephenson
Director of Music Ministries

Lay Leaders Message

Making Room

Every December we sing about a baby in a manger. We set out the Nativity. We hear Luke 2 read again. And somewhere between the shopping and the parties, it is easy to miss how strange and wonderful the story really is.

This fall, three things I have been working on kept pointing me to the same place. For the courses I am taking through the CMC, I have been preparing a sermon series that covers John 14–17, the long conversation Jesus had with His disciples the night before the cross. In our Sunday evening Men's Bible study, we have been working through Ray Vander Laan's *Prophets and Kings*. And my daily reading plan has carried me into Israel's history books. Three different roads all lead to one destination: God wants to live with His people.

That desire runs through the whole Bible. In the wilderness, God told Moses, "And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them" (Exodus 25:8). Think about that. The God who made the stars asked for a tent so He could camp in the middle of His people. Later, when Solomon dedicated the temple, "the glory of the LORD filled the temple" (2 Chronicles 7:1). God had moved in.

But the story turns sad. Israel drifted. They kept the building and lost the relationship. And Ezekiel saw something heartbreaking: "Then the glory of the LORD departed from the threshold of the temple" (Ezekiel 10:18). The house was still standing. God was no longer at home in it.

For centuries, God's people waited. Then came Bethlehem.

John tells the Christmas story without shepherds or wise men. He puts it in one sentence: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory" (John 1:14). The word translated "dwelt" carries the idea of pitching a tent. The same God who once filled a tabernacle in the desert now pitched His tent in human flesh. The glory that left the temple in Ezekiel's day came back, wrapped in swaddling cloths. Matthew gives Him the name that says it all: Immanuel, "God with us" (Matthew 1:23).

As part of that same coursework, I have been reading Dennis Kinlaw's *Let's Start with Jesus*. I keep returning to a simple point the title makes. If you want to know what God is like, start with Jesus. Don't start with your own ideas about God and try to fit Jesus into them. Start with the baby in the manger and the man on the cross, let Him show you who God is. And what Jesus shows us is a God who does not keep His distance. He comes near. He moves in.

Here is the part that gets me. Christmas is not the end of that story. The night before He died, Jesus made a promise that goes even further: "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him" (John 14:23). Not a tent in the wilderness. Not a temple on a hill. Not even a manger in Bethlehem. Your heart. Your life. God wants to make His home with you.

Paul said it plainly to the church at Corinth: "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16).

So this December, I want to ask a question that is easy to overlook. Is there room?

Luke tells us Mary laid Jesus in a manger "because there was no room for them in the inn" (Luke 2:7). We usually blame the innkeeper. But most of us know what a full house feels like. Full calendars. Full minds. Full schedules that leave no space for the very One we are celebrating. Israel kept the building and lost the presence. We can keep the season and miss the Savior.

Making room does not take anything dramatic. It looks like ten quiet minutes with your Bible before the house wakes up. It looks like a prayer in the car instead of the radio. It looks like being in worship on Sunday even when the week has worn you out. It looks like opening your door, and your table, to someone who will be alone this year. Small things like these clear space for God to be at home in us.

So as you put up the tree and wrap the gifts, do one more thing. Make room. The God who once moved into a tent, a temple, and a stable, wants to move in with you. He is not asking for a perfect house. He is asking for an open door.

Merry Christmas, Hopewell.

In service and surrender,
Tyler Craddock, Lay Leader

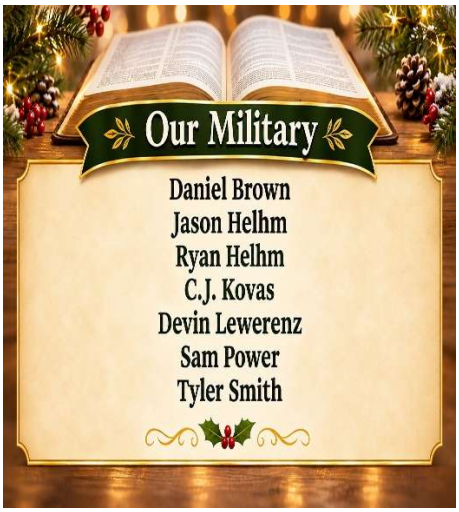
PRAYER

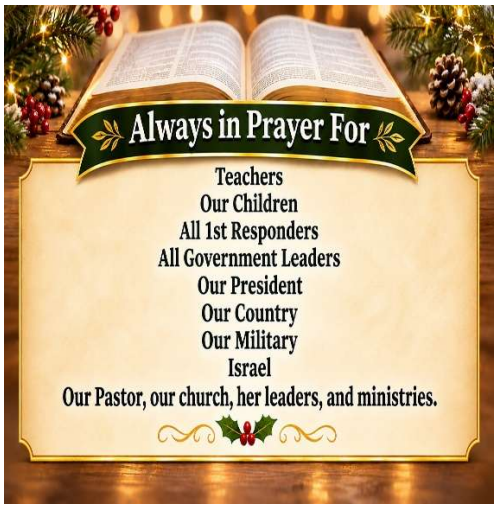
Let us approach the throne of grace with confidence...

HEBREWS 4:16

Anderson Family	Elizabeth Davis	Matthew McClurin	Kristen Smith
Vicki Ayers	Jack Dodge	Elizabeth Melancon	Marion Smith
Rebecca Bane	Denise Dubrule	Mark Melancon	Andi Taylor
Troy Barnette	Duke Family	Kathryn Meyer	Eian Taylor
Katie Beattie	Tom Dunkum	Billy Miller	Helen Taylor
Maury Beck	Carol Sue Durfee	Anne Moseley	Preston Taylor
Bright Family	Jarad Earley	Gary Moseley	Zander Thore
Kim Brown	Sara Frattone	Kate Mulreny	John Traylor
Gillian Buehler	Kathleen Frick	David Nebenzhi	Kelli Traylor
Karen Burke	Kevin Frick	Pamela Panaccio	David Tyree
Amy Burton	Sharon Harris	Ed & Diane Patton	Ukrop's Family
Anna Buttenbusch	John Heckendorn	Erin Pierce	Watkins Family
Donald Buttenbusch	Rachel Heckendorn	Reynolds Family	Eric White
Wanda Caisse	Hance Hofler	Richeson Family	Sarah White
Carlson Family	Ashley Holt	Stacey Rideout	Brandon Williams
Brandon Carter	Rose Hudson	Jen Ridout	Garry Williams
Alec Conarro	Inge Family	Ricky Robertson	Williams Family
Betty Cox	Ricky Jackson	Jessica Schmidt	Karan Wilson
Randal Cox	Robin Johnston	Linda Sexton	Chris Yacoviella
Custalow Family	Lux Family	Mary Sharpe	Brenda Young
Tim Davey	Markey Family	Mike Sharpe	Youth Ministry
Sue Davey	Rebecca McClelland	Shepperson Family	Empty Pew







Do you have a prayer request?

Let us pray for you!

We've created two ways for you to submit your request anytime. First, if you download the app, you can submit a prayer request and commit to praying for it on the "Prayer Wall." In addition, we've created a QR Code that you can scan to enter your prayer request. Once received, we'll add the person's name to our list in the bulletin. All names on our prayer list will remain for four weeks. If someone needs to remain on the prayer list, please let us know. To submit that request, scan the QR Code.

Explore scripture with us and help strengthen our faith community.

Together, we can engage meaningfully and enrich our spiritual lives.

December Bible Reading Challenge



December Birthdays

12-01	Steve Hague
12-05	John Stephenson
12-05	Ed Patton
12-10	Doris Edwards
12-13	Kitty Beck
12-14	Jeannie Lutz
12-15	Jeff Jacobs
12-16	Robb Wilson
12-18	Jessica Dedmon
12-19	Cindy Scott Cunningham
12-20	Gloria Holmes
12-22	Christine Price
12-23	Preston Taylor
12-26	Mary Ann Carlson
12-31	Lewis Smith
12-31	Howard Johnston

December Anniversaries

31 – Ricky & Laura Hatfield



Giving Gladly

General Fund Stewardship for the last 4 weeks :

HMC Income Statement 10/31/2026

October Income	$ 30,535.65
October Expenses	$ 24,967.06
Over /(short)	$ 5568.59
Income YTD 10/31/2026	$ 281,183.60
Expenses YTD 10/31/2026	$ 289,982.79
Over/ (Short)	$ (8,799.19)
Mortgage Loan Balance 10/31/2026	$ 96,779.25
Additional Principal Applied YTD 2026	$ 10,530.00

Last 4 Weeks Worship

Attendance Average

Wednesday Night Prayer: 9

11:00 Worship: 70

Online: 295

WORSHIP ONLINE

Watch the live stream on our website!

https://hopewellcmc.org

Let us know you're with us by saying "Hi!" in the comments.

WORSHIP THROUGH GIVING

Visit https://hopewellcmc.org/give
to give your tithes & offerings easily online.

You may also text "GIVE" to:
(804)485-1593 or you may scan the QR Code below.

Wednesday Night Prayer Service

Join us weekly on Wednesday nights at 6:30 pm for praise, prayer, and communion.



Joyfully Serving

Roles	**Dec 6**	**Dec 13**	**Dec 20**	**Dec 27**
Lay Reader	Johnston, Howard	Schmidt, Wyatt	Earley, Nikki	Lutz, Jeannie
Ushers	McNinch, Owens	Rapalee, Janet	Scheivert, Robin	Rapalee, Janet
	McNinch, Ann	Hatfield, Ricky	Scheivert, Mike	Miller, Gayle
	Koertge, Tom	Hatfield, Laura	McCann, Alan	Hamby, Beth
	Koertge, Linda	Elliott, Dana	Hague, Steve	Fones, Brenda
Greeters	Stephenson, Ellen	Morris, Frankie	Koertge, Tom	Craddock, Tyler
	Stephenson, John	Morris, Linda	Koertge, Linda	Craddock, Tracy
Children's Church	*TBD*	*TBD*	*TBD*	*TBD*
	TBD	*TBD*	*TBD*	*TBD*
AV Sound	Hague, Steve	Hague, Steve	Hague, Steve	Dedmon, Cody
AV Camera	Kweeder, Jim	Kweeder, Jim	Sharpe, Mike	Scheivert, Mike
AV Computer	Purdy, Irene	Purdy, Irene	Smith, Gayle	Craddock, Tyler

Hopewell Christmas Celebrations 2026



Christmas Gospel Music

Come and enjoy an evening of Christmas Gospel Music as we celebrate the birth of the Savior!

Friday, December 11, 2026 at 6:00 PM

Featuring Jason Runnels



Annual Christmas Luncheon

Kings Korner Banquet Hall
(Located at the Chesterfield Airport)

Sunday, December 13 at Noon

Sign Up by December 5th



Christmas Celebration Glorious Night... When Christ Was Born

Sunday, December 13th at 3:00 PM

Featuring the Hopewell Hand Bell Choir and the Community Cantata Choir



Men's and Women's Ministries Christmas Party

Saturday, December 19th 12 – 3 PM

A Sign-up Genius link will be emailed to the members to sign up to bring a dish to share, so be on the lookout for it! We will celebrate with music, games, food, fellowship, and an optional-participation "60-Seconds or Less" gift exchange.



Blue Christmas Service

Monday, December 21st at 7:00 PM

Come share in an opportunity to give your sadness to God and be comforted by His peace.



Christmas Eve Communion and Candlelight Service

Thursday, December 24th at 7:00 PM



Christmas Day Worship and Communion

Friday, December 25th at 10:00 AM

New Year's Eve Dinner and Worship Service

Potluck Dinner at 6:00 PM

Worship Service at 7:00 PM

Sneak Peak 2027



Come join your Hopewell Family in an afternoon of food, fellowship, and FUN! We will begin following the worship service, sharing in a simple picnic~style meal (provided for you). Following the meal, we will gather together to play your favorite games that you bring to share with us. This promises to be a great afternoon filled with love and laughter!

Because the meal is being provided, we will need to have an accurate head count no later than Sunday, January 3rd. Please sign up on the sheet that will be in the narthex beginning December 20th, or call the church office.



Finishing the Year Strong: A Legacy of Faithfulness

As we approach the close of 2026, we have a wonderful opportunity to take another significant step forward in the life and ministry of our church. Our Year-End Giving Campaign, running from November 1 through December 31, has a special goal: to pay off the remaining balance of our disaffiliation loan and enter the new year free from this financial obligation.

Our congregation has demonstrated tremendous faithfulness and generosity throughout this journey. Now, imagine what it would mean to begin 2027 with those financial resources redirected from debt repayment toward ministry, missions, outreach, and sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

For those who are required to take annual distributions from their retirement accounts, this may be an especially meaningful opportunity to give. Individuals age 70½ or older may be eligible to make a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) directly from their IRA to the church. When properly arranged, these gifts can count toward required minimum distributions without being included in federal taxable income.

Becky is available to assist anyone interested in arranging a direct transfer to the church. Because specific IRS requirements apply, we encourage you to consult your financial or tax advisor to determine whether this opportunity is right for you.

Gifts toward this campaign may be made anytime from November 1 through December 31. In addition, our Christmas Eve offering will be designated entirely toward this special campaign. What a beautiful way to celebrate the gift of our Savior by investing in the future of His church!

Every gift, regardless of size, brings us closer to our goal. Together, through prayer, faithfulness, and generosity, we can close this chapter of our church's history and embrace the opportunities God has placed before us.

Let's finish the year strong and step into 2027 ready to pursue all that God has in store!

Graceful Generosity

Published to help you grow as a steward of God's grace.

What Is a Steward?

"A steward is more than a servant, slave, or 'organizational church member.' A steward is one who, having received a trust from God, is in partnership with God through Christ for the working out of God's purposes for man and the world" (Joseph F. Jones).

Testing your Knowledge of Scripture

Can you identify who the following person may represent in Scripture?



If you said the widow in the story of the widow's mite, you were right. In Luke 21:1-4 we read, *"As he looked up, Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. 'I tell you the truth,' he said, this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.' "* Jesus commends the widow, who gave all that she had, not just the excess, as the others did. This story tells us that the level of generosity is much more important than the size of the gift. Even though she gave the last of her money, the widow did not expect to go hungry because she knew God would provide. She gave sacrificially, knowing that God would take care of her. Giving is an act of trust.

Whom or What Are You Trusting?

Lack of trust is a major hindrance to our growth as stewards. Do we trust ourselves, someone else, or things rather than God? If our trust is misdirected, our fellowship with God will suffer, and we will not be fruitful stewards. *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him and he will make your paths straight"* (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Where is our trust?

Having checking and savings accounts with adequate funds is helpful, but we must always remember that wealth in and of itself does not fulfill us nor provide any lasting value, happiness, or security. Money can deceive us in subtle ways. Do you find yourself worrying whether or not you have enough money? Do you hoard it? Is money your security and the topic that occupies your thoughts?

When we give in to our natural tendency to want to accumulate, we begin to think that we need many things. As our incomes grow, so do our wants and desires. We see money as the way to happiness. We think that, when we have money, we have all we need and become self-reliant. Unless we make the decision, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to live more simply and care more intentionally for others, we will

spend all that we have on ourselves (we may even spend more than we have).

Our attitude toward money and things can change when we begin to trust God and his presence and provision. As the Apostle Paul said in Philippians 4:19:

> ***"And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches."***

When we become more zealous to choose God's ways, we will experience his promises, comfort, and peace that result. We will find that God's grace is sufficient for all of our needs.

God will grant us the strength not to succumb to the temptation to trust money and possessions. He will grant us the sight to see the pull that our materialistic world has on us as well as the understanding that we will find lasting peace and contentment only in Christ. As Jesus said: *"And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age"* (Matthew 28:20).

On the Lighter Side

Three young boys were bragging about their fathers.

One of the boys said, "My dad works in the office, and he sits behind a desk and makes $50 an hour."

The son of an attorney said, "That's nothing. My dad talks on the telephone for half an hour and makes $75."

Not to be outdone, the son of a pastor said, "That's still nothing. My dad talks for 20 minutes, and it takes four people to collect all the money."



A Stewardship Thought

Our relationship with Christ makes it possible for us to be content in all circumstances. Without Christ we will never be satisfied. We are, by nature, people who have insatiable appetites for more things, success, and power. A relationship with Christ quenches our worldly appetites and brings about a redirection of interests to eternal things. We become willing to accept God's will and learn to be satisfied with what God gives us.

A Christian steward does not dedicate his time, talent, and treasure that they may become God's, but because they are God's.

Blessings on Your Stewardship Journey!

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December 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
AA–Wednesday 12 am & 5:45 pm; Friday 5:45 pm; & Saturday 10 am & 8 pm		1	2 10 am – The Village Sandvich Crew 11 am – Kingdom Seekers Class – Rm. 2 6:30 pm – Wednesday Night Prayer 7:30 – Rackpack Packing	3 6:45 pm – Choir Rehearsal – Sanctuary 7:30 pm – Cantata Rehearsal (Community Choir)	4 4 pm – Aallyah Shabbat	5 7 am – Men's Alliance
6 9 am Opening Exercise 9:15 am – Sunday School 10:30 am – Sunday Worship 12 pm – Youth Group 5 pm – Men's Bible Study	7 6:30 pm – TL and AHG	8 6:30 pm – Deacon's Meeting	9 11 am – Kingdom Seekers Class – Rm. 2 6:30 pm – Wed. Night Prayer 7:30 – Backpack Packing	10 6 pm – Handbell Rehearsal 7:00 pm – Cantata Rehearsal (Community Choir)	11 6 pm – Christens Geogel Music Night – Featuring Jason Bunnels	12 7 am – Men's Alliance Wreaths Across America 4 pm – Richmond Emmaus Board Meeting – RM 2 6 pm – Richmond Emmaus Gathering – FH & Sanctuary
13 9 am Opening Exercise 9:15 am – Sunday School 10:30 am – Sunday Worship 12:00 pm – Christians Luncheon 3 pm – Community Choir Cantata	14 6:30 pm – TL and AHG	15	16 11 am – Kingdom Seekers Class – Rm. 2 6:30 pm Wed. Night Prayer 7:30 pm – Backpack Packing	17 6 pm – Handbell Rehearsal 6:45 pm – Choir Rehearsal – Sanctuary	18 Newsletter Deadlene	19 7 am – Men's Alliance 10 am – Women's Ministry 12 pm – Mon's & Women's Ministries Christaus Party
20 9 am Opening Exercise 9:15 am – Sunday School 10:30 am – Sunday Worship 5 pm – Men's Bible Study	21 7 pm – Blue Christmas Service	22	23 11 am – Kingdom Seekers Class – Rm. 2 6:30 – Wednesday Night Prayer	24 7 pm – Christmas Eve Service	25 10 am – Christmas Day Service	26 7 am – Men's Alliance
27 9 am Opening Exercise 9:15 am – Sunday School 10:30 am – Sunday Worship 5 pm – Men's Bible Study	28	29	30 11 am – Kingdom Seekers Class – Rm. 2 6:30 – Wednesday Night Prayer	31 6 pm – New Year's Eve Dimer & Service		

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year

"God is always doing something new, so open your heart to fresh beginnings."