

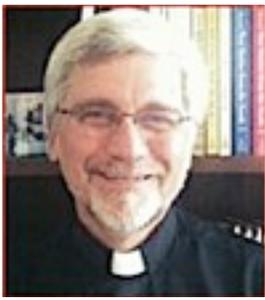
*J.J. White Memorial
Presbyterian Church*

December 2016



*And the Word became flesh and lived among us,
and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's
only son full of grace and truth.*

John 1:14



a word from our pastor...

The Reverend Bob Phelps

My New Favorite Christmas Song

By now you know that music is a big part of my life of faith. Whether I'm singing or listening and whether it's hymns or folk songs or Aretha Franklin, music feeds my soul. It ranks right up there with Scripture and the prayers of the Church among the ways I experience God's presence.

It's hard to imagine a season when music is any more important to our celebrating than Advent and Christmas. We all have our favorite songs for this season. While we may not get to "I Saw Mama Kissing Santa Claus" or "Grandma Got Run Over By a Reindeer" during worship, we're all looking forward to something that will make our celebration complete. Many of us look forward to "Joy to the World," and "Silent Night" sometime before the season is over. We're planning on going Christmas caroling to some of our homebound members on December 18; we hope you'll come and add your voice to that way of sharing joy with others.

I'm hard pressed to say what my all-time favorite Christmas song is. Usually it's the one I'm singing at the time. I'll admit that I'm not particularly fond of "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear," but if that's your favorite I suspect we'll get to it sooner or later.

This year, I have a new favorite. Some of you know that I've been singing with the University Choir at Southeastern in Hammond this fall. One of the pieces we'll be singing on our Christmas concert is new to me. It's called "The Hills Are Bare at Bethlehem." The tune is familiar, but the words are new to me. Here's what it says:

*The hills are bare at Bethlehem, no future for the world they show;
Yet here new life begins to grow, from earth's old dust a greenwood stem.*

*The stars are cold at Bethlehem, no warmth for those beneath the sky;
Yet here the radiant angels fly and joy burns new a fiery gem.*

*The heart is tired at Bethlehem, no human dream unbroken stands;
Yet here God comes to mortal hands, and hope renewed cries out, "Amen!"*

I know; that sure doesn't sound like a warm and fuzzy Christmas song. It's a long way from that to "Away in a Manger." One of the things that makes this song my new favorite is that it talks about what is real for so many during the holidays. In the midst of all the joy of this season, there are many who still experience pain and loneliness and all kinds of other feelings that are not compatible with what many others seem to be experiencing. While families gather, other families are separated by miles, discord, and all kind of other distances. While some enjoy parties and gatherings, others are confined or ill or new enough to communities not to be at home yet. While some enjoy focusing on spiritual things during these holy seasons, others still have issues with God to work through. And, of course, most, if not all, of us are wondering how we'll get everything done that will be required of us in the next few weeks—and how we'll pay for it when it's all over. All of us are not in places we want to be, even if it is Christmas.

I'm sure that many in Bethlehem and lots of other places felt many of the same things when Christmas came the first time. Sure, they didn't have all the pressure to give and perform and be that are so much a part of the holidays for us. But there was little to generate much hope in their time. People of faith had waited for generations for what God had promised, and here it was nearing the end of another year and no Savior had come. I don't know how cold it gets in Bethlehem, but it's surrounded by desert, so the area could not have held much promise. In short, like my new favorite song says, "The hills were bare at Bethlehem." Not much to give people of faith or anyone else much cause to think anything special was about to break out among them.

Yet that is exactly where God chose to enter human history, exactly where God chose to send Jesus to be God-with-us.

Wherever you are emotionally and spiritually this Advent and Christmas, know that God is nearby. People weren't looking for God to do anything special in Bethlehem that first Christmas. But God did. And nothing in the world has been the same since. I know there are still lots of reasons not to be hopeful. My new favorite Christmas song brings me hope anyway. I hope it will for you, too.

Grace and Peace,
Bob



Music Notes

from Deanna Phelps, Music Director

I'm having one of those time-warp weeks again. Our choir is deep into preparations for Lessons and Carols on December 18 and special music on Christmas Eve and Christmas morning this year. Our children are also getting ready to lead us in worship on December 11. I have no shortage of things to do this time of year. But I spent some time just before Thanksgiving (and will spend more this week) looking for music we'll sing in January and even looking ahead to Lent and Easter (Ash Wednesday is March 1!) Some of you know that we do lots of music swapping with the choir at a church in Huntsville, AL where our friend is choir director. She and I both buy things we think we can share with one another. She will be coming to visit in early December, so I needed to tell her some January and February music she could bring us and remind her to spend some time while she's here looking for things they can sing from our library. I'm not quite ready to think about anything but Christmas right now. But, like so many other things in this season, ready or not, it needs to be done.

I hope Lessons and Carols will provide a wonderful worship experience for us on December 18 as we sing and reflect on God's great love revealed in Jesus who came at Christmas. I know that whatever the kids do will be well-received, and I suspect they'll surprise you with how well they do. Christmas Eve and Christmas morning will bring us even more opportunities to celebrate together musically. As we sing both new and familiar tunes, know that we're already planning to continue our important ministry when the New Year comes.



Thanks to those who speak words of encouragement. Thanks to those for whom our contributions to worship provide quiet help for your journey. We look forward to singing with you during these important days.

The Christmas Joy Offering is a PC(USA) special offering we receive every year during the Advent or Christmas season. The Offering benefits two important causes. The Board of Pensions provides an assistance program for retired and currently serving church professionals who experience financial setbacks due to health or other unexpected issues. The Offering also supports Racial and Ethnic schools and colleges. This year, the schools supported include Menaul School in Albuquerque, NM, the Presbyterian Pan American School in Kingsville, TX, and



Stillman College in Tuscaloosa, AL. There will be a special bulletin insert with more information about this year's Christmas Joy Offering, and there are special offering envelopes available. Please either use the envelope or include a note on the memo line of your check to be sure your Christmas Joy Offering goes where you intend. You may make your offering any Sunday between now and the end of the year. Thank you for your support of this important Christmas Offering.



Advent 2016 at JJ White

Week 1 November 27, 2016

We'll begin the season with a startling call to wake up! Matthew 24:36-44 and Romans 13:11-14 will guide our thinking and praying.

We'll decorate the Chrismon Tree, a Christmas Tree with Christian symbols that call us to remember the real meaning of this busy season.

Week 2 December 4, 2016

We'll celebrate the Sacrament of Communion today to continue our Advent celebration. We'll read from Romans 15:4-13 and focus on the inclusive nature of the Good News of Christmas. God sent Jesus into the world to save not just some but all.

Week 3 December 11, 2016

Our young children become worship leaders today as they Sing a Song of Christmas. We'll also look briefly at Isaiah 35:1-10 and its astonishing promises. You'll want to be here this Sunday.

Week 4 December 18, 2016

The choir's Service of Lessons and Carols will be the focus of today's worship. Through music and Scripture, the choir will guide us through the promise and fulfillment of the coming of Jesus to save us. Beautiful music and readings by our resident readers, Andrew and Melisa DeCoux will help us continue our preparation for the coming of Jesus. We'll ponder Matthew 1:18-25 and the way it tells the story of Jesus' birth. Invite friends to join us for this special musical celebration.

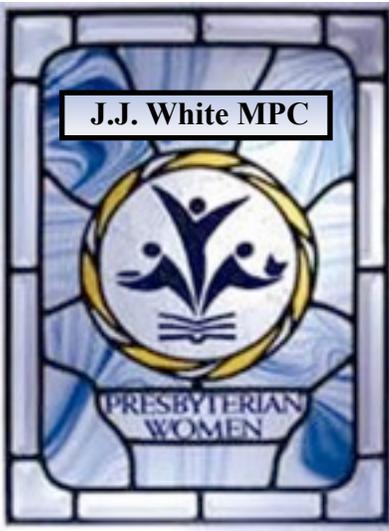
Christmas Eve, December 24, 2016

This is one of the most anticipated worship services of the year. We'll host two services, identical in form and content, one at 6:00 pm and one at 11:00 pm. Familiar Christmas songs, candles, the Christmas Story from Luke 2, and the Sacrament of Communion make this a fitting celebration for the whole family and for friends who might be visiting.

Christmas Day! December 25, 2016

Christmas falls on Sunday this year. We can't think of a better way for families to celebrate Christmas than by worshipping together. Worship will be the only activity at church today, at 10:30 am. No breakfast, no Sunday School. Plan to be here to celebrate Jesus' birth with us!





FW of JJ White will meet on Tuesday, December 13, at 11:30 in the Fellowship Hall. All women are invited to come to take part in a Christmas "potluck" luncheon. An Advent devotional will be given by Reverend Phelps.

YOUR HELP NEEDED ...

Wrapping Christmas Presents for "Flo's Angels"

Do you enjoy wrapping presents? If you do then there is a way you can help some children in our community have a better Christmas and have fun at the same time. Volunteers are needed to help wrap gifts for Flo's Angels. Wrapping will take place in the Ewell Martin



Room at J.J. White on the following dates and times:

December 5 (10:00 am.-1:00 pm and 3:30 pm - 5:00 pm)

December 6 and 7 (10:00 am - 1:00 pm.)

Ring the bell to support the Salvation Army's Kettle Ministry

Volunteers are needed to ring the bell for the Salvation Army again this year. JJ White is responsible for ringing on **Friday, December 9 (11:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m.)** and on **Tuesday, December 13, (9:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m.)** The sign-up sheet will be in the sanctuary on Sundays and in the church office through the week. Please help us by signing up for an hour or more on these days.



Crosby Work Project Planned



A work project is being organized to go to Crosby, Mississippi, to aid the folks there in recovery from the flooding this past August. If you want to be a part of this mission contact

John Drummond. The project is planned for Tuesday, December 6.

Children's Advent Workshop

The children have fun making gifts while the parents get a little break to prepare for Christmas or just relax. This activity begins at 9:00 a.m. to noon in the Ewell Martin Room. If you would like to help contact **Melisa DeCoux.**



Christmas Caroling on December 18



If you want to help us warm the hearts of some who can't be with us during Advent and Christmas and others who just need a little holiday cheer, plan to join us for Christmas Caroling on Sunday afternoon, December 18, at 5:00 pm. Singers (and others) will gather here at church and divide up into teams to go out and share holiday joy with homebound and other members and friends. We'll return to the Fellowship Hall for treats and conversation when we're done. Please plan to bring cookies or other snacks to share. If you have someone you want included on the caroling list, please call the Church Office.

Our Church Welcomes Community Groups During the Holidays

Situated downtown as we are, and with our spacious Fellowship Hall, we get to welcome several community groups to use our building during the holidays.

- ★MICA (the McComb Interdenominational Care Association) will hold its annual Christmas Volunteer Appreciation luncheon here on Thursday, December 1, at noon. Thanks to folks from our church who are providing cakes. All MICA supporters are invited.
- ★The Exchange Club will hold their annual Pancake Breakfast here on Saturday, December 3 before the Christmas Parade. Please come and support this service organization.
- ★The Girl Scouts will hold their Christmas Party here on Friday, December 9 and their Healing Hearts event on Sunday, December 11.
- ★Flo's Angels will continue the annual Christmas Party for Children on Saturday, December 10.
- ★The area Realtors will have a Christmas Dinner here on Monday evening, December 12.

Honoring and Remembering

J. J. White Memorial Presbyterian Church welcomes donations to any of the church funds honoring and remembering loved ones during the 2016 Celebration of Christmas

- ❖ Donations received no later than December 9th will be listed in the Sunday bulletins on Dec. 11, 18, and 24/25.
- ❖ For those wishing to give a poinsettia, please allow \$12 per plant.
- ❖ The poinsettias will be in the sanctuary Dec.11-25, and may be removed by donors or their designees on the 24th or 25th.



Name _____

___ I would like to donate ___ (#) poinsettias

___ I would like to donate to the _____ Fund

In Honor of _____

In Memory of _____

Wednesday Night at J.J. White



JJ White is the place to be on Wednesday nights. Food and fellowship, along with a time of activities for adults and children, begin at 5:30 in the fellowship hall.

Volunteer "crews" take turns preparing the meals. A recent Wednesday meal prepared by the Covenant Life Sunday School Class is pictured above. Volunteer teams are needed for January - May 2017. If you have a group who would like to get on the schedule to provide a meal you can find out the details from Reverend Phelps,

The Covenant Life Class got a little fancy because of their Thanksgiving theme, but just a simple meal with no frills is all that is needed from each cooking crew.

December Wednesday Schedule

We will return to our regular Wednesday schedule after a week off for Thanksgiving. We'll enjoy supper and other activities on December 7, 14, and 21 before taking December 28 and January 4 off for the holidays.

December 7 is our final Wednesday pot-luck for the year. Please plan to bring a dish or two and join us for this fun time at 5:30 pm each Wednesday.

Adults will have an Advent study after supper. We'll be looking at what some great Christian thinkers from the past and the present have had to say about this season. Hope you'll join us! Children will be working on their Christmas program until December 11 and will have other activities after that. Youth meet every Wednesday, too. And, of course, the choir rehearses after other groups meet.

We hope you'll make Wednesday at Church a part of your schedule every week.



The Session held its regular meeting for November on the 13th at 6:00 pm in the Ewell Martin Room. All current elders and newly elected elders Suzi Drummond, Will Kimmel, and Noggin Wild and our pastor were present. Actions taken at the meeting include:

- ❖ Welcomed newly elected elders Suzi Drummond, Will Kimmel, and Noggin Wild. Discussed their orientation, ordination, and installation.
- ❖ Approved minutes and financial reports.
- ❖ Approved transfer of membership for Chip and Susan Gibbes to the Lebanon Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Learned, MS.
- ❖ Heard a report from the Trustees regarding disposition of the funds in the Putnam investment account.
- ❖ Set Saturday, January 27, 2017, as the date for next year's Session Retreat.
- ❖ Heard a report from the Christian Education Committee regarding the recent Book Fair and the upcoming Children's Advent event.
- ❖ Heard reports from the Congregational Care and Fellowship, Finance and Stewardship (budget development continues), Missions/Evangelism, Property, and Worship Committees.

The Session meets monthly. The regular meeting for December will be on Sunday, December 11, at 6:00 pm in the Ewell Martin Room. Please remember to pray for Session members as they guide the ministry of our congregation.



December Lists

Flowers

- 4 Hanging of The Green
- 11 Advent
- 18 Poinsettias
- 25 Poinsettias

Children's Church

- 4 Carol Rawlings
- 11 Melisa DeCoux
- 18 Brandy Dyess
- 25 Alison Allred

Sunday Morning Breakfast

- 4 Lee Williams
- 11 Sharon White
- 18 Ali, Sara Beth, Melisa
- 25 CHRISTMAS DAY (no breakfast)

Ushers/Greeters

- Tommy Ratcliff, Captain
- Robbie DeCoux
- John Drummond
- Stacey Moak
- Johnny Nance
- Mark Statham

Men's Interdenominational

Wednesday Breakfast Group

- 7 Bill, Jim, Fred
- 14 Randy B., Tommy R.
- 21 Randy W., John, Tommy B.
- 28 Noggin, Jeff

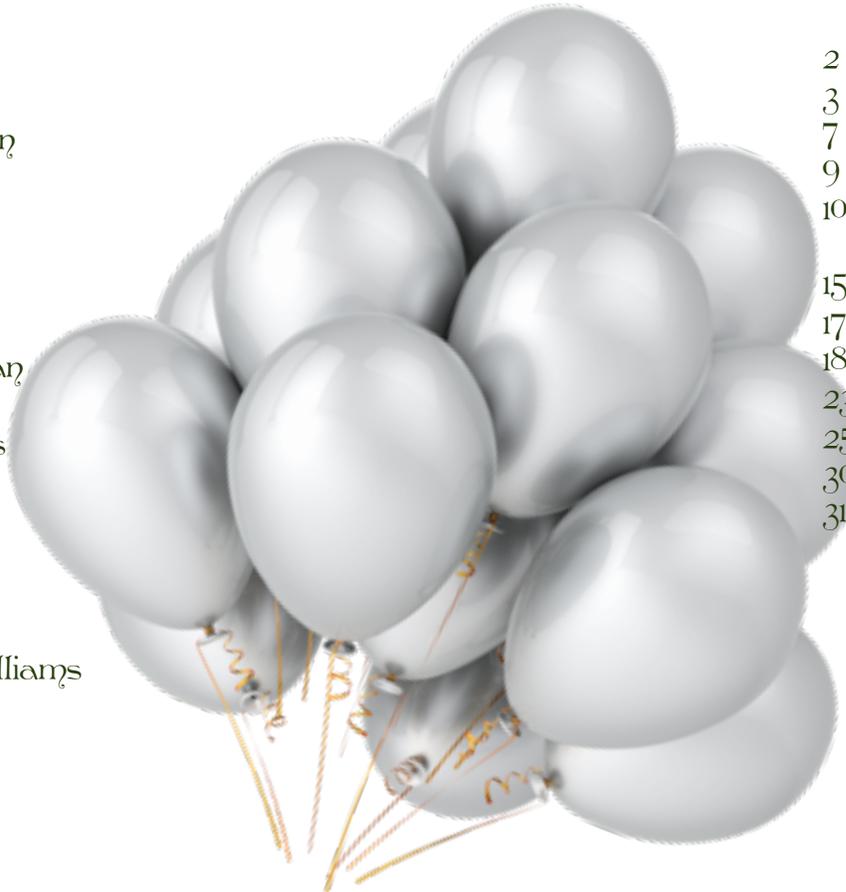
Elder of the Month

Margy Wicker

Happy Birthday to...

December

- 4 Will Kimmel
- 6 Kristen Allred
- Delores Feldman
- 7 Bob Phelps
- Betty Ott
- Carol Rawlings
- 8 Colin Catchings
- Emily Alford
- 9 Tommy Walman
- 10 J. W. Burt
- 11 Marie Catchings
- 14 Sharon Burke
- 14 Carol Wood
- 15 Bob Arnold
- 16 Eleanor White
- 21 "Sue" Sullivan
- 21 Norma Ann Williams
- 25 Billie Nance
- 27 Hunter Nance
- 29 Rusten Lewis
- 29 Phillip Nance
- 30 Julia Arnold



January

- 2 Nancy McElwee
- 3 Beverly Nelson
- 7 Joan McDaniel
- 9 Lily Warshauer
- 10 Ann Jackson
- Toni James
- 15 Mark Statham
- 17 Tommy Morgan
- 18 Prudence McGehee
- 23 Ralph Brock
- 25 Tommy Ratcliff
- 30 Bill Jones
- 31 Roger Nickerson



A Christmas candle is a lovely thing; It
 makes no noise at all,
 But softly gives itself away;
 While quite unselfish, it grows small.

~ Author Unknown

Sunday Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday

				1	2	3
4 9:00 light breakfast 9:30 Sunday School 10:30 Morning Worship - Communion	5	6	7 7:00 am Men's Breakfast 5:30 p.m. Supper and Wednesday Night Activities	8 Bible Study with Rev. Phelps 10:30 am Knutty Knitters 7:00 PM	9	10 Children's Advent Workshop 9:00 a.m. Christmas Party for Flo's Angels 10:00 a.m. till noon
11 9:00 light breakfast 9:30 Sunday School 10:30 Morning Worship - 6:00 pm Session Meets	12	13 Presbyterian Women's meeting 11:30 a.m. Fellowship Hall "Potluck Lunch"	14 7:00 am Men's Breakfast 5:30 p.m. Supper and Wednesday Night Activities	15 Bible Study with Rev. Phelps 10:30 am Knutty Knitters 7:00 pm.	16	17
18 9:00 light breakfast 9:30 Sunday School 10:30 Morning Worship - Chancel Choir Christmas Program	19 	20	21 7:00 am Men's Breakfast 5:30 p.m. Supper and Wednesday Night Activities	22 Bible Study with Rev. Phelps 10:30 am Knutty Knitters 7:00 PM	23	24 Christmas Eve Candle light communion 6 and 11 p.m.
25 Christmas Day 10:30 Morning Worship MICA		27	28 7:00 am Men's Breakfast (No Wednesday Night Activities this week)	29 Knutty Knitters 7:00 PM (No Bible Study Group this week)	30	31