



Crossnore Presbyterian Church

"Growing Deeper in Faith, Reaching Out in Love"

P. O. Box 386/200 Chapel Dr., Crossnore, NC 28616
828-733-1939/cpcpcusa@gmail.com.
www.crossnorepresbyterianchurch.org

Announcements and Items of Interest

December 17, 2020

This Sunday, December 20, we are worshipping together virtually; no physical worship in the sanctuary due the rising cases of COVID-19 in Avery County. This is the Fourth Sunday of Advent and our theme will be "Witnessing"

The Advent Bible Study Series on Zoom went well. Twelve people participated last week. Thank you to Rev. Maggie Lauterer for leading this wonderful series. Bible study will resume January 6 with our study of Acts. Please email the church office, cpcpcusa@gmail.com, to sign up for a Zoom link.

We will be holding our Christmas Eve Candlelight Service on December 24th at 5:30 p.m. The service will be held outdoors under the canopy of trees on our church grounds where we worshipped this summer. Please bundle up and bring your hot chocolate as we gather to remember the baby Jesus and worship the Christ who is born anew in our lives once again. We will be social distancing and wearing masks and those who want to stay in their cars can listen to the service on their FM radio.

Our Christmas Eve Offering

will go to Volunteer Avery County to assist those in need, especially our senior citizens, with heating oil and electricity in these cold winter months. Please make your check out to Crossnore Presbyterian Church and designate it for Volunteer Avery County.

Take a Look at the "Christmas Star"

On December 21, 2020, There will be a "great conjunction" of Jupiter and Saturn. This means that the two planets will pass extremely closely to each other. They come so close they may seem to be one great star. People have nicknamed the conjunction the "Christmas Star". This particular "great conjunction" only happens every 800 years due to the closeness of planets and it occurring at night. There has been much discussion about whether this was the Bethlehem Star guiding the Wisemen. To view it, go out an hour after sunset, find an unobstructed view of the sky and look to the southwestern sky.

Volunteers are needed to help pack food boxes at Reaching Avery Ministry. Please call Michelle at RAM to find out volunteer schedule: 828-733-5127. Janet Milsap is still with her

daughter, Brooke, at the JC Medical Center; she hopes Brooke will be able to return home soon. In the meantime, Michelle is the only staff person in the RAM office.

Sheri Elderfield has reversible Christmas masks with adjustable bands; masks are \$8 each. You can pick your mask(s) up at the church office or call (828-733-1939) and we will mail the mask (s) to you. She also has regular masks; \$6 each.

Volunteers are also needed to help at Feeding Avery Families, sign up on <https://feedingaveryfamilies.org/> volunteer Due to current Social Distancing guidelines, Feeding Avery Families has shifted to a non-contact / drive-thru model for distribution of food to clients. To support this approach, roles for volunteers on Thursdays and Fridays have changed.

Truck Unloading and Stocking—Thursdays 9:30 – 11:30 am.

Distribution—Fridays 11:30am—1-3 pm.



December Birthdays

- * PATRICIA MCGARR—DECEMBER 1
- * TASHA REID—DECEMBER 16
- * NANCY YARBOUROUGH—DECEMBER 20
- * LINDA TAYLOR—DECEMBER 24

Prayer Requests

- * FRANK DUNCAN
- * JESSE & BARBARA DOWNING
- * EL WILSON
- * MARILYN GASCHO
- * DAWN BATES
- * BONNIE VUOLO
- * JANET WELLS
- * TASHA REID
- * MAGGIE LAUTERER
- * MIKE KILGORE
- * FRANK DUNCAN
- * KATHY HUTCHESON
- * DAVID FRANCE
- * FRANCES & LARRY BROWN

Therefore prepare your minds for action; discipline yourselves; set all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you when he is revealed. 1 Peter 1:13



Note from Pastor Kathy:

I have returned from my silent retreat at Mepkin Abbey feeling renewed and refreshed. It was a different experience this year due to the pandemic. I was not able to talk with the monks or share in daily worship with them. All my meals were take-out from the refectory and eaten alone. There was no internet connection, no

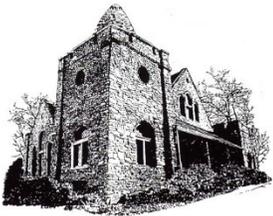
television, and my cellphone worked if I walked about 1/2 mile from the center. Given these circumstances, I had more time to be alone with God in a myriad of ways and to live into the passage from Psalm 46: *Be still and know that I am God.* I spent lots of time outside walking under the great canopy of ancient pin oak trees and through the expansive gardens and ponds. I quietly listened to the wind song of the marsh foliage and observed a great blue heron who was enjoying a peaceful afternoon. One day, I was on the banks of the Cooper River in the morning and returned that afternoon to find that the current had completely

reversed itself. What a powerful tide to affect the current so far upstream. Just the act of being quiet and absorbed in God's creation was joyfully transforming. My commitment to twenty minutes of daily scripture reading and meditation was renewed in my time at the abbey, which I am continuing to practice in my return home. The Spirit also inspired me to begin to contemplate the deeper vision of ministry and mission for which God is preparing me and our congregation as we look forward to 2021. All in all, I highly recommend Mepkin Abbey as a place that offers space and silence, natural and architectural beauty, food for the body and the soul, and gra-

acious time to know and trust God in a deeper way and yourself as well—light and shadow. If you would like more information, please look up the retreat center:



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December 17, 2020

Daniel's Den Hanukkah

This week's article comes from a reader who asks: **"What is Hanukkah? I have heard that it is an eight-day celebration, but why do Jews celebrate it?"**

This is a good question for this time of the year as we are in the middle of the 2020 Hanukkah celebration, which is eight days long (it started on December 10 in the evening and will last until the 18 in the evening). Hanukkah, which translates from Hebrew meaning "dedication", is the Jewish festival of lights that commemorates the rededication of the second Jewish Temple and the successful recapture of Jerusalem during the Maccabean revolt.

During this period, the Jewish people were under the rule of the Seleucid Empire—a powerful nation-state carved out of Alexander the Great's remaining lands by his general Seleucid after Alexander's death. At this time, the ruler was a man named Antiochus IV who wanted to Hellenize (or make Greek) the customs and ways of the Jewish people as he saw their culture—especially their religion—as a threat to his rule. This did not go over well with many pious Jews who observed the Law of Moses and did not want to mingle Judaism with gentile ways. In 168 B.C.E., when Antiochus IV captured Jerusalem, he erected a statue of the Greek god Zeus in the Jewish Temple and sacrificed a pig on the altar of incense, a sacrilege of epic proportions. Many Jews endured this humiliation for the sake of peace until a year later, in the town of Modiin, Antiochus ordered soldiers to go and force the local Jewish priests to make a sacrifice to the Greek gods. This was a massive miscalculation on Antiochus's part. Instead of offering the sacrifice, a Jewish priest named Mattathias refused the soldiers' command; and, when another Jew was ordered to make the offering, Mattathias struck down the ordering soldier. Mattathias's famous words are recorded in the Book of Maccabees, a book of the Bible held to be holy by Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, and Coptic Catholic, but not commonly utilized by protestants. "Let everyone who is zealous for the law and who stands by the covenant follow me!" (1 Maccabees 2:27). Mattathias would eventually raise an army and win many battles, but Mattathias would die before seeing Jerusalem's recapture. This would be accomplished under Mattathias's son Judah Maccabees, who would also rededicate the Temple, which is where the story of the first Hanukkah takes place. The story goes that Judah called on the people to relight the holy menorah, but it was found that there was only enough oil to keep the Temple's newly lit menorah alight for one night. The menorah, a seven-armed lamp, represented God's divine presence in the Temple, and for it to go out would represent the departure of God from God's people. But, according to the story, the menorah burned on for eight entire days and nights until replenishment could be found, a miracle which revealed God was with God's people.

Interestingly enough, the New Testament records that Jesus attended Hanukkah celebrations during his life, "The **Festival of Dedication** then took place in Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple in Solomon's portico" (John 10:22-23). This makes the Christian connection to Hanukkah personal, as our Lord and Savior celebrated the reembrace of God's faithful presence, but it does strike me as a bit ironic. After all, Jesus—who is Emmanuel or God with us—was celebrating his own presence among his people. I wonder if as the prayers were said and the menorahs lit if Jesus ever smiled to himself at this fact.

In modern days, Jewish people gather to eat, tell stories, exchange gifts, and light their personal home menorahs. Jews often eat foods fried in oil to remember the oil which was never depleted, and gather to celebrate with joy and happiness a God who promised to never depart from them. Hanukkah is a time for our Jewish siblings to give pause and remember the many miracles which God has done in their lives personally and as a faith community. As a Christian, I personally take time from my Advent devotions to remember Hanukkah as I dedicate and rededicate my life to the God who still leads us forth to the promised land with that same divine presence.

Have a question on church history, liturgy, sacred tradition, Presbyterianism, or more? Submit it to Daniel's Den at Daniel.Coffey@upsem.edu.



Daniel Coffey