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IN THE TOWN OF EAST BEND, NC



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IN THIS ISSUE:

*The Good News from Baltimore UMC*

ADVENT IN THE  
AGE OF COVID-19  
*Page 3*

DONATE TO SOLUS  
CHRISTUS BY  
SHOPPING AT  
SMILE.AMAZON.COM  
*Page 4*

GO ON A VIRTUAL  
MISSION TRIP  
*Page 5*

“GOD AND THE  
PANDEMIC” BY  
N. T. WRIGHT  
*Page 6*

THE PHILLIPS’  
GENEALOGY  
BOOK IS DONE!  
*Page 6*

IF YOU’VE  
EVER ASKED,  
“WHAT’S MY  
PURPOSE?”  
*Page 7*

UPDATES  
ON OUR  
CROCHETERS  
*Page 8*

SECRET HEART  
SISTER BIG REVEAL  
AND 2021 SIGN-UP  
*Page 9*

CANDY CANES  
AND CANDY  
CRUTCHES  
*Page 10*

**More Than a  
Merry Christmas**  
*By Gwen Smith*

*But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. (Luke 2:19, ESV)*

On the night that divinity merged with fleshy humanity as Jesus came on the scene in a stable, things of earth were shaken and stirred with fresh glory and awesome wonder.

A host of heavenly angels appeared in the sky praising God and celebrating the arrival of the long awaited Messiah. They left their veiled existence to speak and sing to a few lowly shepherds in a field.

Wait, what? Why?

To announce the good news of great joy that came as a gift from God in a clothed baby-package named Jesus. The singing sky-creatures pointed the shepherds to the swaddled Savior who was in a manger near by and urged them to go and check out the Christ child.

When the shepherds came on the scene they found Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus just as the angels had said. (Luke 2:16) They wor-

shipped, were in awe, and “spread the word concerning what had been told them concerning this child.” (Luke 2:17, 20)

And Mary? She took it all in. She reflected and worshiped.

The Bible says she, “treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.” (Luke 2:19)



I know this story. You probably do too. But let’s glance again at the responses...

In celebration of the man-ged-Messiah, heavenly hosts sang praises to God and lit up the sky with joy. Shepherds ran to see Jesus, glorified God, and amazed listeners by telling them about all they had seen and heard. A young new mama soaked in the wonder of it all and marinated on the majesty before her.

When I consider the contrast between the first

Christmas and today’s Christmas, I realize how far we’ve wandered.

Instead of filling the sky with declarations of deity our airwaves are filled with grumblings over whether we should say Merry Christmas or Happy Holidays. We plow each other over with shopping carts and claw our way to the front of lines for the sake of a sale. We spend money that we don’t have and justify – even glorify – gluttonous intakes.

Wait, what? Why?

What are we pondering? Where are we fixing our focus?

That first Christmas was much more than merry. It was sacred... holy... filled with wonder and worship. Christmas is all about Jesus.

More than having a merry Christmas, I’m stirred to have a meaningful Christmas that takes me back to the manger that led to the cross.

One that mixes the merry with the meditative. One that pairs the fruit of the Spirit with the fruitcake.

*Continued on page 7*



## Who's Who at BUMC

### Pastor

Pastor Chad Shoaf

### Administrative Council Chair

Brian Logan

### Treasurer

Kelly Speer

### SPPRC Chair

Avalon Doub

### Parsonage Chair

Mason Doub

### Nurture

Michelle Doub

### Outreach

LeAnn Doub (1/1/21)

### Witness

LeAnn Doub (1/1/21)

### Lay Leader

Steve Gentry

Evelyn Hiatt (1/1/21)

### Lay Delegate

Deborah Wyatt

### Sunday School Representative

Cindy McMurray

### Nominations Chair

Pastor Chad

### Trustees Chair

Bill Griffin

### Finance Committee Chair

Ernie Hiatt

### Finance Secretary

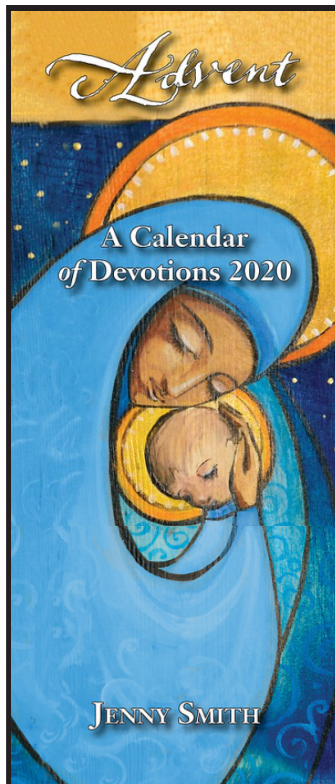
Shirley Doub

### Member Secretary

Debbie Griffin

### Council Secretary

Deborah Wyatt



## Advent: A Calendar of Devotions 2020

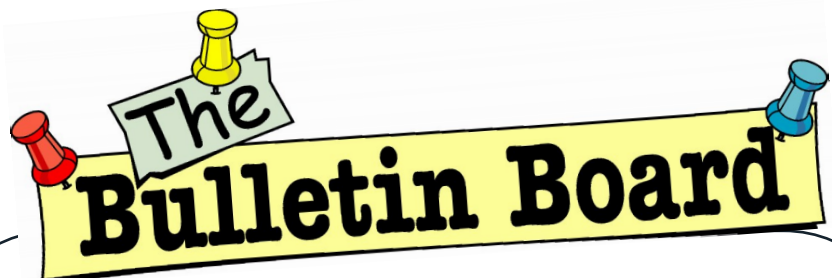
A convenient and affordable  
Advent devotional  
for the entire church.

Providing daily devotions for Christians as they prepare to celebrate Christ's birth, this annual favorite is a wonderful resource for churches to give to each family to emphasize the importance of the Advent of our Lord. Each day's reading, from November 29th to Christmas Day, is based on the Revised Common Lectionary and includes the Scripture, a short devotion, and a closing prayer.

Cokesbury sells this devotional as an eBook for \$1.29.

Order yours here:

<https://www.cokesbury.com/advent-a-calendar-of-devotions-2020->



## **\*UPDATED\*** Phase Three Extension Guidelines for In-Person Worship & Ministry During COVID-19

With Governor Cooper's extension of Phase Three, along with the implementation of additional measures necessary to protect public health, the Bishop and Cabinet have also extended their Phase Three guidelines for WNC United Methodist Churches. Please note, while worship guidelines remain the same, all other indoor gathering should be limited to 10 persons or less. In additions, The Bishop and Cabinet urge pastors and church leaders to use the NCDHHS COVID-19 Alert system to monitor their county and to reconsider their decision to hold indoor worship, particularly if their county is "red." All local churches are asked to use extreme caution in response to the recent rapid spread of the virus. We advise that all churches continue following CDC, state and local guidelines for indoor and outdoor gatherings, including handwashing, wearing masks, and observing physical distancing rules and group size limits.



# CELEBRATING Advent

In the age of COVID-19



- Although we won't be able to enjoy packed-full sanctuaries on Christmas Eve, there are a variety of ways to gather safely and to celebrate the coming of Jesus. Twin Cities District pastors recently shared some ideas with each other, and they are so creative that we want to lift some of them up to the whole conference:
1. Send care packages/worship kits with some Christmas items that families can use or enjoy as they embrace the season
  2. Send out instructions for making an Advent wreath or provide "at home hanging of the greens kits," along with weekly prayers or readings for lighting candles throughout the season (perhaps connecting people who live alone via Zoom so they can do it together)
  3. Have a brief and simple Christmas Eve worship service outdoors (perhaps with a bonfire)
  4. Prepare a Christmas pageant in pictures (kids could dress up in nativity attire and be photographed ahead of time, and then the photos could be shown virtually on Christmas Eve during the telling of the Christmas story)
  5. Host a drive-in Christmas movie in your parking lot using an FM transmitter
  6. Send paper bags to families and ask them to create personalized luminaries to be placed in the sanctuary and used during worship or filmed and photographed
  7. Have a virtual (live or pre-recorded) Christmas pageant using Zoom and/or Facebook Live
  8. Host a drive-through or walk-through Christmas Eve experience outside your church building (perhaps using a life-size nativity scene as part of it)
  9. Host an Advent book study
  10. Plan a socially distanced Christmas carol sing in your church parking lot
  11. Dependent on how COVID-19 case numbers are looking in December, instead of a big single Christmas worship service, host a series of brief and small "Carols by Candlelight" services in the weeks leading up to Christmas (have people make reservations so you can adhere to capacity limits you set)

*Originally published by the Minnesota Annual Conference October 2020. Republished with permission by ResourceUMC.org.*

<https://www.resourceumc.org/en/content/creative-ideas-for-christmas-eve-worship-2020>

## December Lectionary Readings



### 2nd Sunday of Advent

*December 6, 2020*

Isaiah 40:1-11  
Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13  
2 Peter 3:8-15a  
Mark 1:1-8

### 3rd Sunday of Advent

*December 13, 2020*

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11  
Psalm 126  
1 Thessalonians 5:16-24  
John 1:6-8, 19-28

### 4th Sunday of Advent

*December 20, 2020*

Judges 4:1-7  
Psalm 123 or Psalm 76  
1 Thessalonians 5:1-11  
Matthew 25:14-30

### Christmas Eve

*December 24, 2020*

Isaiah 9:2-7  
Psalm 96  
Titus 2:11-14  
Luke 2:1-20

### Christmas Day

*December 25, 2020*

Isaiah 52:7-10  
Psalm 98  
Hebrews 1:1-4 (5-12)  
John 1:1-14

### 1st Sunday after Christmas

*December 27, 2020*

Isaiah 61:10-62:3  
Psalm 148  
Galatians 4:4-7  
Luke 2:22-40

### Christmas Season

What a feeling of celebration, what a joy that all this anticipation has come to a kind of fruition. True, there will always be the questions about whether anything will change in the world around us because of this event. Transformation always takes longer than we think it should. And it often begins with something small, a new vision, a stronger hope, a baby in a manger. Something small that will change everything.

Cut along the dotted lines and save as a bookmark for reference



In 2020 our city will celebrate the **Winston-Salem Jaycees Drive-Thru Holiday Parade!** The parade will be **Saturday, December 5, 2020 at 4:00 pm.** Due to COVID-19, this year's Parade will be a Reverse Parade!

What's a Reverse Parade you ask? Only the most special and wonderful event of the season!! Participant's that would traditionally march through the streets will be lined up in specific areas on 4th Street starting at Broad Street to the corner of Trade Street where the Parade will turn left and continue onto Trade Street. Those who would normally watch from the

streets will now lineup in their vehicles at the Winston-Salem Truist Stadium prior to 4PM, drive down Broad Street, turning Right on 4th Street and then Left on Trade Street.

This year's reverse Parade will be in partnership with the Downtown Winston-Salem Partnership and Twin City Santa. All participants are encouraged to bring toys to donate to Twin City Santa for their Annual Toy Drive. Collection Locations will be set up at the Truist Stadium and all along the route!

As you drive away from the Parade there's one more special sur-

prise!! Head towards the Winston-Salem Fairgrounds on University Parkway for a special viewing of a holiday movie at The Drive at the Winston-Salem Fairgrounds. Didn't get a chance to donate your toys along the Parade route, here's another chance!! More information to come soon about the Annual Tree Lighting Ceremony put on by the Downtown Winston-Salem Partnership.

All driving participants are encouraged to decorate their vehicles for the holidays! Please respect social distancing and mask rules unless in an area deemed otherwise. Please stay in your vehicle at all times, unless in an area deemed otherwise. Please refrain from decorating your vehicles with anything deemed offensive (we do reserve the right to ask you to leave).

For more information:  
<https://www.wsparade.org/>

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Did you know that every purchase you make from Amazon can generate revenue to be given to an organization of your own choosing? How do you set up an Amazon Smile organization?

1. Visit **smile.amazon.com**. 2. Choose an organization from the menu on the right. You can select from spotlight organizations or search for an organization by name or location. 3. Click "Select and Start Shopping.". Remember: every time you want to shop at Amazon, shop at **smile.amazon.com!** If you shop at Amazon.com, your purchases will not count toward a donation to your organization.

How about designating a local organization like **SOLUS CHRISTUS** to receive your funds? Every purchase you make from **smile.amazon.com** will generate a donation, equal to .5% of your total purchases, to SOLUS CHRISTUS!

It's a great way to support worthy organizations in our community!

## Christmas Prayer

Dear loving Lord,  
You didn't come,  
To a perfect world.  
You came to a people,  
Full of complexity,  
And confusion.  
Your birth itself,  
Surrounded by conflict,  
Doubt and fear.  
You came humbly, oh Lord,  
Born of a virgin,  
To a simple family,  
To walk a journey of tears,  
And glory.  
Now come again, dear Jesus,  
Come to my fragile heart.  
Let my heart be,  
Your manger.  
Prepare that quiet place,  
Where Peace and Joy,  
Are born again.  
O Lord, let me be humble,  
Receiving and giving,  
Your ever-loving mercy.  
May my soul sing praises,  
To only you.  
For you alone are holy,  
You alone are the Lord,  
The Most High,  
Jesus Christ!  
In your sacred name,  
Amen.



## ZOE Empowers - Virtual Mission Trip



Zoe Empowers is a Christian empowerment ministry for orphans and vulnerable children living in extreme poverty in Africa and India. After graduating from ZOE's three-year empowerment program, a child will have moved from extreme poverty to sustainable self-sufficiency; able to provide food, clothing, shelter, education, medical care, and social support for themselves and their siblings; know God's love, and have hope for the future in their own community.

## ZOE Empowers - Virtual Mission Trip

Pack your bags for a virtual trip to Rwanda, Kenya, and India! Glimpse the kingdom of God with orphaned and vulnerable children around the world lifting themselves permanently out of poverty. What does this unique travel experience include?

- Day 1 on December 8, 2020 at 10 a.m.-11:30 a.m. Visit Rwanda with Epiphany Mujawimana, founder of Zoe's empowerment program and manager of Zoe Rwanda. Listen in wonder as Epiphany describes Zoe's genesis out of tragedy and how this movement of God began. You will be amazed by what orphaned children in Rwanda are capable of with just a little support.

- Day 2 on December 9, 2020 at 10 a.m.-11:30 a.m. Explore a Kenyan village with Reagan Kaberia, Zoe's chief program officer and manager of Zoe Kenya. Hear directly from the incredible boys and girls in Zoe's program. Be inspired by the triumph of the human spirit in God's hands.

- Day 3 on December 10, 2020 at 10 a.m.-11:30 a.m. Travel to the exotic location of India and speak with Nani Chintala, manager for Zoe Vizag, India. See God at work in urban slums on a new continent. Also learn how your gifts and skills can be used by God to change the world for these young people.

For more information on ZOE Empowers, please visit their [website](https://zoempowers.org/). - - - <https://zoempowers.org/>

### WHEN

Tuesday, December 8, 2020 to  
Thursday, December 10, 2020  
[Add to my calendar](#)

**Register** →

### WHERE

Virtual: ZOOM link will be sent  
prior to meeting.

### Phone

(704) 714-2339

### Email

[cbateman@wnccumc.org](mailto:cbateman@wnccumc.org)

### Contact

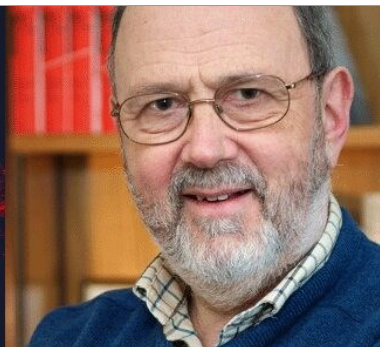
Carol Bateman

**TO REGISTER, VISIT:** [www.yadkinvalleydistrictumc.org/event/14350803](http://www.yadkinvalleydistrictumc.org/event/14350803)

# GOD AND THE PANDEMIC

A CHRISTIAN REFLECTION ON THE CORONAVIRUS AND ITS AFTERMATH

N.T. WRIGHT



**“God and the Pandemic: A Christian Reflection on the Coronavirus and Its Aftermath”** by N.T. Wright is a short book, only 76 pages. The book is an expansion on an article the author wrote for Time Magazine, published March 29, 2020, titled **“Christianity Offers No Answers About the Coronavirus. It’s Not Supposed To.”** The Time article can be found at:

<https://time.com/5808495/coronavirus-christianity/>.

N. T. Wright is the Professor of New Testament and Early Christianity at the University of St Andrews,

a Senior Research Fellow at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford University and the author of over 80 books.

In his book, Prof. Wright includes a quote from Martin Luther written in a 1527 letter offering advice to Christians during a plague outbreak in Europe. It is unnerving how relevant a letter written almost 500 years ago (aside from differences in word usage and language) can be so relevant in our current pandemic.

*“With God’s permission the enemy has sent poison and deadly dung among us, and so I will pray to God that he may be gracious and preserve us. Then I will fumigate to purify the air, give and take medicine, and avoid places and persons where I am not needed in order that I may not abuse myself and that through me others may not be infected and inflamed with the result that I become the cause*

*of their death through my negligence. If God wishes to take me, he will be able to find me. At least I have done what he gives me to do and am responsible neither for my own death nor for the death of others. But if my neighbor needs me, I shall avoid neither person or place but feel free to visit and help him.”*

(M. Luther, 1527, from book *Luther: Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, ed. T.G. Tappert, 1955)

While looking for more information on this quote by Martin Luther, I found another interesting article on Luther’s letter of 1527 and its relevance to today: **“Martin Luther on How Not to Tempt God During a Plague”** by David Fink, March 30, 2020. It can be found here:

<https://villageanglican.church/village-blog-desmos/2020/3/30/martin-luther-on-how-not-to-tempt-god-during-a-plague>

Submitted by Ernie Hiatt

## The Phillips’ Genealogy Book is Finished and Available for Purchase!

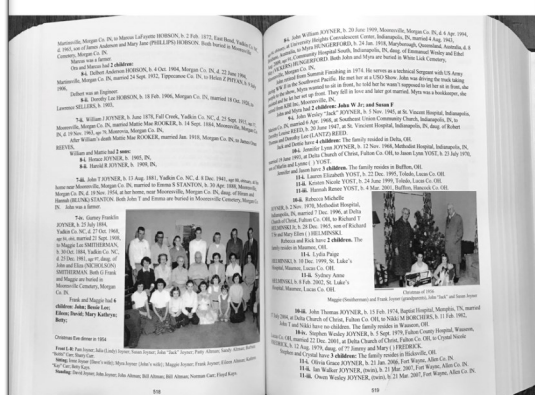
It is a beautifully bound and exquisitely formatted “labor of love” that spans a whopping 1,214 pages! The index is an additional 298 pages where you can easily look up those relations that are of particular interest to you. Pictures and family stories add a personalized dimension to the voluminous pages of names, dates, and locations.

If you would like to know more about this book, please contact  
Peggy Phillips: (336) 813-4487.

## Joseph and Mary Phillips and Descendants 1710-2020

Peggy Allen Phillips

What a unique idea for a Christmas gift for that local history buff in your life!



Joseph and Mary PHILLIPS and Descendants 1710-2020

Peggy Allen Phillips

This information is done by my best ability. I am not a writer, just like to piece puzzles together, and this is a big puzzle. We have truly enjoyed researching this family tree of my husband Billy Gray Phillips. We have gotten to visit, meet, talk, and become friends with a lot of family members that have only shared information and pictures, and helped me get this together. We went to a lot of cemeteries, libraries, history rooms, court houses, and many States. Many thanks for all the people with whom shared their information and helped me. I can not even start to name them all. If I missed anyone so sorry, just could not get in touch with everyone.

My Husband Billy and I walked on the land in Carroll County Virginia, where Joseph Phillips first set foot on when he came to America, and saw the bricks that William B Phillips lay in the 1730's, was so amazing, he was a very good builder and brick mason, and was selected to build houses for Thomas Jefferson, The Phillips Farm, Phillips-Ronald House with five chimneys. He bricked Orange Co. Court House, and many churches, all with special designs, in Carroll Co. Virginia.

The only regret I have, is I didn't get this book published before my husband Billy Gray PHILLIPS, passed away. He said when he got cancer "I would love to see the PHILLIPS Book published". He was a dedicated husband, father, grand-father, and friend to everyone he met. He loved the Lord, his church, and his church family. He was a hard worker, loved to fly his airplane, boating, fishing, skiing, just pleasure riding, hunting, hunter safety, traveling and many more sports.

Dedicated to the memory of my husband  
Billy Gray Phillips  
February 19, 1943- October 8, 2017



Billy Gray and Peggy A. Phillips



One that lingers with both lively praise and low-bending prayers.

One that harks the herald and helps the hungry.

Yes. I want us all to have a merry Christmas. But more than that I long for us to have a meaningful Christmas. Not one that is consumed with consuming or lost in senseless secondary conversations, but one that is fixed on adoration, celebration, consideration and awe.

One that reflects on and gives thanks to God for sending Jesus to be our hope.

One that is rich with depth and love and relationship.

One that is filled with the fullness of His grace.

So that's the challenge. For us to lay aside nonsensical controversies, behaviors and distractions, and instead fix our hearts on celebrating a merry and meaningful, Messiah-focused Christmas.

Let's Pray - *Holy Lord, All glory and*

*honor and praise be to Your name! Thank You for invading the darkness of this world and my heart with Your light. Help me to live a life of meaningful, purposed, responsive worship during this Christmas season and every day.*

*In Jesus' Name,  
Amen.*

Now It's Your Turn - Read Luke 2. Pause for a moment of personal reflection. What's one thing you can do today that will make this season more meaningful and purposed?

*Submitted by Sharon Gentry*

## **If You've Ever Asked, "What's My Purpose?"**

*by Holley Gerth*

*The plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of His heart through all generations (Psalm 33:11, NIV).*

### **Friend to Friend**

I stand at the sink, dirty pan in hand. I feel small in this space, ordinary and rooted to the ground. I have been here for a long while now, in this kitchen, on this earth, and I silently ask, "What's my purpose?"

Across the street a mama or grandma might be asking the same question as she changes the tenth diaper of the day. Maybe in the center of town someone is leaning her head on her desk with the door closed, just resting for a moment on that stack of spreadsheets and wondering this, too.

When we ask this question and silence seems to be the answer, we often go searching. We'll say yes to another opportunity or perhaps run away from it all. We'll join that cool playgroup or volunteer at the soup kitchen on Fridays. We might jockey for the promotion or put in the long hours. My purpose is out there somewhere, we think, and one day I'll find it.

But then the opportunity doesn't go as planned, the giving leaves us empty, and our souls grow pale in the

fluorescent light. "Something else will do it," we say, "Surely it will be the next thing." And on we go with our gypsy hearts.

It's understandable, this great migration. We live in a culture that tells us the purpose of life is about us. We must find that one thing we are here to do and then all will be well. But when I look closer at how "purpose" is used in Scripture, there's a different story.

*"Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails" (Proverbs 19:21).*

*"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according*



*to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).*

Over and over when purpose is described, it comes from God and belongs to Him. Also, purpose isn't talked about much in terms of just individual people. It is more often spoken of as an ongoing thread that

stretches through all of history and eternity. It's so much bigger than us. So when we go looking only for "our" purpose, we are disappointed. What changes everything is when we understand that a meaningful life is not just about finding our purpose but joining God's. If we want to be part of God's purposes today, then we simply love Him, others, and ourselves. That means standing at the kitchen sink washing dishes can be worship. It means that another diaper changed can be an act of sacred service. It means the work project done well can be an offering.

The square of earth you are standing on is the only place in all of history and the entire universe where both you and God are right now. It's where His purposes and you, a person created by Him, come together. This is not small or inconsequential. It is beautiful and powerful. It is holy, meaningful ground.

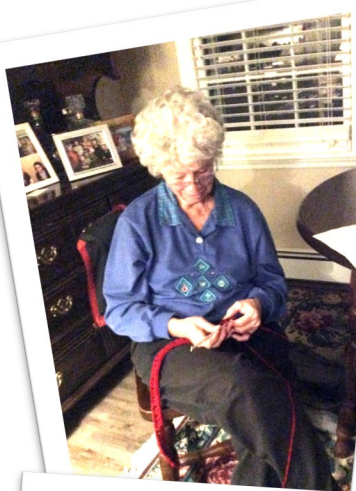
### **Let's Pray**

*God, it's amazing to know that You have called us. You've chosen us. You've given us a part in Your plan. Out of all of history, this is the time and place You wanted us to be. Help us to see Your extraordinary plan even in the middle of our most ordinary days. Where You are is holy ground and You are always with us.*

**In Jesus' Name, Amen.**

*Submitted by Sharon Gentry*





## Knit & Crochet Group is a resounding success!

This group has been BUSY! They have already sent around 40 afghans, along with cross book-marks, to Hospice. They are now adding NICU hats for preemies to their inventory! And they already have another 10 finished afghans ready to go to Hospice.

Not only are they doing God's work, but they are having a lot of fun doing it! Several beginners have learned to crochet under Shirley Doub's wonderful tutelage.

There's always room for more crocheters!

If interested, please contact Shirley Doub  
@ 336-830-4132 or Debbie Griffin  
@ 336-961-6978.



Chad Gentry, was recognized as Reebok business partner of the year for the North American market! At last some positive news for a crazy year!



The Baltimore UMW thanks everyone for their support in 2020 as it was a different year! We missed the socialization of the community with our Annual Breakfast/Bake sale and Chicken Stew.

Thank you to those that have already contributed as asked at the Special Mission program on Sunday, November 22! As the year ends, if you feel it in your heart to donate, please see Debbie Griffin or Sharon Gentry.



## Secret Heart Sister 2020

I enjoy being your secret sister!



The heart is  
happiest when  
it beats  
for others!



Have a  
great day!

What a blessing it has been to have a special note or treat left at the church this year during all the social isolation! Thank you to each that participated in the joy spreading! It is sad that we cannot have the annual reveal tea but there is hope for 2021!

**Please leave a note, small gift, etc....by Sunday, December 20th at the church to REVEAL your identity to your secret heart sister!** The final reveal list will be printed in the January newsletter.

So...let's do it again! The benefit you get from being a member of this group is just that...you belong to a group that cares and prays for you in a different time in each of our lives! Also you get to know different people in our church!

For those that would like to participate in 2021, please fill out the form below and leave in the 2021 Secret Heart Sister Box at the church on the bench going into the fellowship hall or email to Sharon Gentry at [ssgentry@aol.com](mailto:ssgentry@aol.com). **Deadline for this is Sunday January 10, 2021**

Name:	
Address:	
Birthday:	
Special anniversaries:	
A few of my favorite things (flowers, hobbies, scents, colors, collectibles, ...):	
Favorite Bible verse(s):	
People I am praying for (family friends, life situations, ...):	
Is there anything else you want to share?	

### Advent Prayer

4, 3, 2, 1... Count the weeks  
til Jesus comes.



Each week we add another light.  
Our hope for Jesus growing bright.  
We pray, we share, we do our part...  
to welcome Jesus to our heart!



### CHRISTMAS GROUP THERAPY

I DON'T BELIEVE  
IN MYSELF.

I THINK  
I'M BI-POLAR.

ALL THE OTHER  
REINDEER LAUGH  
AND CALL ME  
NAMES.

I'M  
TRAPPED  
IN A  
DEAD-END  
JOB.



## Candy Canes and Candy Crutches

by Wendy Speake

**Let each candy cane you see this Christmas, remind you of the Shepherd who has the absolute authority and ability to lead you into safe pastures, both today and eternally!**

Behold, God is my helper; the Lord is the upholder of my life. (Psalm 54:4)

I was in high school the first time I heard an atheist argue that Christians are just weak people in need of a crutch. “Jesus,” he accused, “is the crutch you lean on to get you through this life.” I was only sixteen years old, but I remember thinking, Of course He’s a crutch. Praise God for sending His Son for us to lean on, with the fullness of our fallen weight, or we’d be hobbling through this crazy life alone.

I couldn’t understand why this combative boy in my geometry class was challenging my faith with that ridiculous crutch analogy. The image of Jesus holding me up, making me able-bodied and sure-footed, only strengthened my believing heart. “You’re right,” I conceded, “you’re absolutely right. Christians need Jesus every day. However, I think we’re all leaning on something. But I’ve come to believe that whatever we lean on in this life better have the ability to get us ready for the next life too.”

“Heaven?” he asked with a sneer.

“Leaning on Jesus in this life is the only thing that will allow us to walk into His eternal kingdom when this life is over. But put heaven aside if you want. We all need something to lean on. Perhaps you’re leaning on your abilities just as heavily as I’m leaning on my Savior’s ability to hold me up.”

God is absolutely a crutch! He’s the only crutch that enables us to not only walk through the valleys on this earth but also to run full speed ahead into the high places of eternity. Praise the Lord for His sustaining,

upholding, and eternal support.

The trouble is, sometimes I forget that faithful crutch and grab other things to get me through at three o’clock in the afternoon when the stresses of life add up. It’s often in the midst of real-life stress that I forget to lean on the real-Life Giver.

For instance, when my school-age kids are melting down over math homework and my husband has just called to say that he’ll be late, I sometimes grab a handful of chocolate chips. When I’ve been cleaning the house all day but still have three loads of laundry to fold and put away, I have been known to throw some highly sugared creamer into my afternoon cup of coffee or tea. When I’ve had a challenging morning at work, I often grab a leftover brownie from the night before to push me over the hump. Instead of leaning on Christ, I lean on something fleeting to boost my adrenaline and give me a surge of dopamine so that I will feel better.

Even as I write this, what comes to mind is the image of a candy cane, which is made to look like an actual cane or, better yet, a crutch. The problem with leaning too heavily on a candy crutch is, almost immediately, it breaks, and I break too, because God never intended for sugar to sustain me. Instead, God says, “Cast your burden upon the Lord and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken” (Psalm 55:22 NASB).

Big burdens, daily burdens, seemingly insignificant burdens. God can handle them all when you place them in the palm of His hands. Other translations of Psalm 55:22 similarly exhort, “Cast your cares upon the Lord . . .” I like that image too. You can cast your cares on Him because He cares for you.

In contrast, sugar doesn’t give a rip about your joy or your health, your stress or your family, your ability to bear the fruit of God’s Spirit in your life or your emotional well-being.

Nowadays, when I think of the

crutch analogy, I imagine a cane—not a candy cane but a shepherd’s staff. Jesus was the ultimate Good Shepherd and I am the epitome of a foolish, wayward sheep. But I know my Shepherd’s voice, and I can hear Him calling me back into His presence again. Jesus is the true and faithful lover and sustainer of my soul. He leaves the ninety-nine to grab me each time I wander off Jesus picks me up and carries me back with the full weight of my burdens resting on his shoulders.

Friends, all other crutches will break under the weight of your burdens. Only Jesus can pick you up and carry you, because He alone has the authority and power and position to carry you into an eternal life with Him. So, praise God for sending His Son so that you don’t need to hobble through another day alone. Because of Jesus, you can run, full speed ahead, into this abundant and eternal life! Lean your full weight on that.

*Let’s Pray,*

*Dear Jesus, I’m leaning on You today. You can carry my burdens because You care for me. You are able to sustain my life because You gave Yours. No one else and nothing else was created to carry my weight. Thank you, Jesus. I lean on You today. It is in Your strong and sustaining Name I pray, Amen.*

Submitted by Sharon Gentry

### *A Christmas Prayer*

*O good and gracious God,  
in the midst of midnight darkness  
your All-powerful Word  
once again leaps from heaven  
as a beam of light.*

*In breathless awe  
we hear the angels’ joyful shout:  
Jesus, Son of God and Son of Mary  
is born and He is to be called ‘Emmanuel.  
God with us.’ Amen.*







# CONTACT INFORMATION



Phone

Office Phone: 336-961-6055  
Church Phone: 336-250-2801  
Home Phone: 336-699-2697



Mail

Baltimore United Methodist Church  
2419 Baltimore Rd  
East Bend NC 27018



Internet

Church Website:  
<http://www.baltimoreumc.com>  
Church e-mail:  
[cshoaf@wnccumc.net](mailto:cshoaf@wnccumc.net)

## Want to Get Involved at BUMC?

At BUMC, we encourage everyone to get involved. There are many ways to join in:



Provide Flowers for a Sunday Service  
Join the United Methodist Women  
Volunteer as a Nursery Attendant  
Join the United Methodist Men  
Join the Table Talk Group  
Become an usher  
Join the Choir



## Office Hours

The Church Office is open Mondays from noon to 4 p.m. and Wednesdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

## Birthdays and Anniversaries

We would like to add birthdays and anniversaries to our monthly calendar.

## BUMC Phone Tree

Get your phone number added to our phone tree list to get the latest announcements.

## Schedule of Services

Baltimore United Methodist Church worship services start at 9 a.m. every Sunday. Worship is followed by Sunday School for all ages at 10:15 a.m. The Lord's Supper is celebrated on the first Sunday of every month.

Baltimore United Methodist Church  
2419 Baltimore Rd  
East Bend NC 27018



Or Current Resident