**Chartiers Hill United**

**Presbyterian Church**

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 **December 2022 Newsletter**

In my recent reading, I’ve come across some wonderful words about Christ’s coming into the world. It seemed a nice idea to share some with you, that you might hear another voice than mine. I hope you enjoy these musings from others. First, an Advent prayer by Old Testament scholar, Walter Brueggemann *(from Awed to Heaven, Rooted in Earth)*

In our secret yearnings
we wait for your coming,
and in our grinding despair
we doubt that you will.
And in this privileged place
we are surrounded by witnesses who yearn more than do we
and by those who despair more deeply than do we.
Look upon your church and its pastors
in this season of hope
which runs so quickly to fatigue
and in this season of yearning
which becomes so easily quarrelsome.
Give us the grace and the impatience
to wait for your coming to the bottom of our toes,
to the edges of our fingertips.
We do not want our several worlds to end.
Come in your power
and come in your weakness
in any case
and make all things new. Amen.

“For outlandish creatures like us, on our way to a heart, a brain, and courage, Bethlehem is not the end of our journey but only the beginning - not home but the place through which we must pass if ever we are to reach home at last.”
― Frederick Buechner, American writer, preacher, theologian, from[*The Magnificent Defeat*](https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/74285)

“Politicians compete for the highest offices. Business tycoons scramble for a bigger and bigger piece of the pie. Armies march and scientists study and philosophers philosophize and preachers preach and laborers sweat. But in that silent baby, lying in that humble manger, there pulses more potential power and wisdom and grace and aliveness than all the rest of us can imagine.” ― Brian D. McLaren, American pastor, author, speaker

Author Glennon Doyle Melton wrote, “Every time we open our mouths and speak, we are either saying let their be light or let there be darkness.”

“With the arrival of Advent, Christians everywhere turn again towards the Savior. Advent marks the beginning of the celebration of His birth and His long-foretold ministry, atonement, death, resurrection and second coming. If Advent is an occasion when I re-turn my eyes to the Savior, then it is also an invitation to consider where my eyes—and my heart—have been in the meantime. Advent is the gentle nudge that invites me to remember that the truth most worth knowing is that Jesus Christ is the only way Home. It is also a gentle reminder that I ought to keep my eyes upon Him all year long.”

― Jean-Michel Hansen, author of Christian fiction

“God travels wonderful ways with human beings, but he does not comply with the views and opinions of people. God does not go the way that people want to prescribe for him; rather, his way is beyond all comprehension, free and self-determined beyond all proof. Where reason is indignant, where our nature rebels, where our piety anxiously keeps us away: that is precisely where God loves to be. There he confounds the reason of the reasonable; there he aggravates our nature, our piety—that is where he wants to be, and no one can keep him from it. Only the humble believe him and rejoice that God is so free and so marvelous that he does wonders where people despair, that he takes what is little and lowly and makes it marvelous. And that is the wonder of all wonders, that God loves the lowly…. God is not ashamed of the lowliness of human beings. God marches right in. He chooses people as his instruments and performs his wonders where one would least expect them. God is near to lowliness; he loves the lost, the neglected, the unseemly, the excluded, the weak and broken.”
― Dietrich Bonhoeffer, German pastor and theologian, hung by the Nazis during WWII, from [*God is in the Manger: Reflections on Advent and Christmas*](https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/14392722)

**Worship News**

Our Advent and Christmas messages will focus on the theme **“God with Us”** using the traditional symbols of the Advent candles: Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love.

**Worship Times**

Sundays of Advent 8:30 and 11:00 with live streaming on Facebook at 11:00.

Christmas Eve candlelight service is at 7:00 PM. Live streaming on Facebook.

Christmas Day we will gather for worship at 11:00 AM ONLY. The message will be the same, but the music will change.

New Years Day we will gather for worship at 11:00 AM only. Live streaming on Facebook.

**Thanks…**to all of the faithful folks who turn out each year to decorate the church for the holidays. The sanctuary is beautiful.

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**Music**

The bell choir rehearses at 6:00 PM and the chancel choir rehearses at 7:00 PM on Thursday evenings. The “Ukuladies” rehearse on Sunday evenings as arranged by Amy Hickman.

**Finance & Budget**

Per capita apportionment has risen to $50 per member for 2023. If you receive giving envelopes, you will find an envelope for this particular item at the front of the box. If you do not receive giving envelopes and are a member of the church, you may simply write “per capita” in the memo of your check and you will be credited accordingly. Per capita payments are collected by the Presbytery from each church and is based on membership. These monies are used for many things: the operation of the Presbytery, the missions supported by our presbytery (Pine Springs Camp, Resurrection House, etc.), the Synod, and the work of the denominational offices. If members do not pay their own per capita, the church must take those payments from the general operating budget of the church. The more we use of our budget for per capita, the less our money can be used for the operations of the local church. If your child has joined the church through confirmation, they are considered members and we are charged per capita for them. Currently our obligation is $11,900 for the year. So you can see that we appreciate it very much when you take care of this item yourself. If it is a hardship to make the per capita payment, please rest assured that it will be taken care of.

Giving has never quite returned to pre-Covid levels. The staff, elders, and trustees continue to work at being good stewards of all that we have. Payments from Range Resources have carried us through the last three months and kept the church from having to tap into investments. At their November meeting, Session approved the 2023 budget with no increases other than cost-of-living increases of 3.5% for staff.

Everyone should have received a giving statement through the end of September. If you did not and would like one, please contact the church office. Thank you to all of you for your faithful support of God’s work through Hill Church. You are a blessing.

**Dates to Remember**

**December 17** – **Christmas Cookie Exchange.** Cookies should be delivered to the church in the morning. Packing will be done this day. See Mary Lee Neill, Lynn Thomas or Jamie Bails-Richardson if you have questions.

**December 18** – **Christmas Caroling**! Pizza will be served for lunch. Meet at church at 1:00 to head out with a song in your heart. Carolers will visit neighboring nursing care facilities and some private residences. See Jeff Messerly or Lynn Thomas for further information.

**January 29** – **The annual congregational meeting.** We will have one worship service at 11:00 AM, followed by lunch. After lunch we will gather again in sanctuary for our meeting. We will review all the board and committee reports, the Clerk’s report on membership, and the Pastor’s report for 2022. We will receive the financial reports, vote on the terms of call for the pastor, and elect new officers.

If you are a committee chair or moderator of a board, please have an annual report prepared for the church office no later than January 20, 2023. Reports should be sent electronically, using a Word document in 12 pt font.

**Mission & Evangelism**

**December Mission Project:** Every month the congregation of Hill Church supports one mission and/or outreach projects. For the month of **December,** our mission is **The MaryBelle Baby Doll Project.** This is a fun one! Using soft, life-like baby dolls to help women with Alzheimer’s is very effective in decreasing their stress and agitation. Doll therapy works. Who doesn’t want to buy a baby doll at Christmas time?! If you’re willing, please purchase a soft, life-like (no hard plastic) baby doll and deliver it to the narthex. The Mission Committee will get the dolls to local Alzheimer’s patients. Thank you for caring.

**Community assistance:** If you are having difficulties paying utility bills, buying groceries, etc. please see Pastor Shannon who can connect you with many agencies that can help. Your requests are completely confidential. Don’t go without the things you really need.

Looking ahead…**His Ambassadors** is a new idea being worked on by the Mission & Evangelism Committees to assist members and friends of members who have specific needs and to conduct monthly nights. Stay tuned for details to come…and think about becoming one of HIS Ambassadors. The first project going on right now is a toy drive for the **Children’s Hospital Foundation**. A link has been created for a virtual toy drive. It’s easy to give…no actual shopping involved. The link that will take you directly to Hill Church’s Toy Drive is through our Just Giving page. This is the link:

<https://www.justgiving.com/page/hillchurchgivestokids2022>

December Birthdays



May Christmas stop being a day or season in your life, but a way of living every day with the goodness of our Lord in your heart. In that way, you will cherish peace and goodwill, practice grace and mercy, and love what God has loved.