



## *Merry Christmas*

It's that time of year again; Advent. It's the time of year when we turn our faces toward Jerusalem and follow the star to Bethlehem, in search of the Christ child, lying in the manger.

So often we hear of Christmas as a season of love or a season of joy. This year I have been thinking about Christmas as a season of hope. There are many things we

can hope for in life, among them are healing, peace, love, prosperity, or wholeness. Yet hoping presumes we don't have these or see these yet.

Paul tells us "for if we hope for what we do not see, then we wait for them with patience." So hope also involves patience and persistence. Some people see the Jews as the perfecters of hope. For 1877 years, since the destruction of the temple in 70 CE, they longed to celebrate the Passover in Jerusalem. Finally, in 1947 the opportunity arose, with the re-creation of the state of Israel, for fulfillment of this hope.

It seems there are a lot of things wrong in our world today. These attitudes and actions grieve us. We wish and hope things were different. The list is long and includes items like disease, like lying, like greed and stealing, like violence, like illness and addiction, like pain and suffering, and like broken relationships.

Advent reminds us to hold on to the hope that things will get better. Christ is coming again and when Christ returns all things will be made right. Our deepest desires and expectations will come into being. Christmas also reminds us to hold on to hope, since that process of fulfillment has already begun with the arrival of our savior and the reminder of God's great love for us. May your deepest hopes, desires, and dreams find their fulfillment this Christmas.

On behalf of your entire Church Staff, Libby Overholt, Rebecca Cranfill, Owen Duggan, and Deborah Rhine-Bading, we wish you a very blessed and hopeful Christmas.

Blessings,  
Pastor Dick



## Worship at Northwood This Advent and Christmas

Have you ever wondered why our Sanctuary tree only has white and gold ornaments? And what do all of those symbols mean? This year, we will be having two Sunday school classes to discuss these questions... and you will be able to make your own ornament to take home. All ages are welcome to join us in the Fellowship Hall on Sundays, Dec. 1 and 8, 10 AM.

Let Music fill your soul during our Sunday morning services: Bluegrass, Northwood Lessons & Carols, and a Children's Pageant. Plus our casual VIBE service, a special combined Lessons & Carols at Our Lady of the Lake University, and our very own Christmas Potpourri.

And, of course, we will have our traditional Christmas Eve service, complete with candlelight. And the birth of Christ is only the beginning, as we will focus on Epiphany at the start of the new calendar year.

Here are the dates for your calendar:

Dec. 1, Sunday	Chrismon Sunday school @ 10 AM (all ages) Bluegrass music during service
Dec. 7, Saturday	VIBE @ 6:30 PM
Dec. 8, Sunday	Chrismon Sunday school @ 10 AM (all ages) Lessons & Carols during service
Dec. 15 Sunday,	Lessons & Carols @ 3:30 PM (combined, OLLU)
Dec. 22, Sunday	Children's Pageant during service Potpourri @ 6:30 PM
Dec. 24, Tuesday	Christmas Eve service at 6:30 PM
Jan. 5, Sunday	Epiphany and New Year focus



## A Special Advent Offering

The Congregational Care Committee is aware of church families needing financial assistance. The idea for a special offering during Advent to provide some funds when needs arise was born, the Advent Gift. If you know of a family or if you yourself have a financial need, please contact our pastor or Sheron Antczak, chair of the Congregational Care Committee. Requests will be confidential, and help will be given as funds are available.

Since this is an offering, a dollar amount cannot be guaranteed. In past years, our Northwood family has given generously to toy drives and car loads of Christmas gifts have been delivered to families in need. This year we would like to concentrate on our Advent Gift. Envelopes for the Advent Gift will be in the pews Dec. 8, 15, and 22. If you chose to mail a check, please write "Advent Gift" in the memo space.

# Chrismon Sunday School

Begin the holiday season with learning about Advent and Northwood's Christmas traditions.

On Dec. 1 and 8 at 10:00 AM, in the Fellowship Hall,, we will begin the Advent celebration with two lessons and workshops on the many decorations and symbols we annually use. Most notable of those is our Chrismon tree. This year we are trying to revive the true tradition of the Chrismons and learn how they tell the story of Jesus symbolically from his birth through Ascension.

You will learn what the many seasons mean and help make some new seasonal monograms.

There's lot to do for everyone, but you can just come and watch as well. All are invited.



## Lessons and Carols at OLLU

On Dec. 15 at 3:30 PM at Sacred Heart Chapel, the OLLU Music Department of Our Lady of the Lake University and Musica Sacra San Antonio will present Lessons and Carols.

This special festive Advent service will feature carols, hymns, and anthems of the season. Admission is free and open to people of all faiths.

### *Potpourri 2019*

Our annual Potpourri on Dec. 22 at 6:30 PM will be as it was in the "old" days with people wearing reindeer antlers, lights around their necks, and yes, "ugly Christmas sweaters." Or just whatever they want.

The Fellowship committee is hard at work and the program is taking shape – lots of music and Christmas fun. It promises to be enjoyable for everyone. We will start with a potluck, as usual, with Fellowship is providing the meat course, and they think it will be a hit!! Bring your favorite side dish to share.

There will be a sign-up poster in the narthex - please sign-up so we can have a head count. We're hoping for a full house!

## Highlights of the Regular Session Meeting

The Session met on Nov. 19 for their regular monthly meeting. Here are highlights:

- Transferred membership of Lynn Hamby to Alamo Heights United Methodist Church.
- Received the financial report showing that committee spending for 2019 is approximately \$37,000 below budgeted level. However, through October, total expenses (approximately \$231,700) exceeded total income by approximately \$20,000.
- Heard Pastor's report that Personnel & Administration has almost completed the annual staff reviews. The last review for Deborah Rhine-Bading is planned before the end of the year.
- Received "A Brief History of Northwood Presbyterian Church" prepared by Pastor Dick.
- Received the updated copy the church Assessment Report being completed by Vanessa Mueller. The session will give input and the report will be approved by email vote in two weeks. The approved report will be forwarded to Commission on Ministry via our contact person, Lou Williams. Copies of the report will be made available to members of the Congregation.
- Agreed to complete their review of and input to the updated Officers' Manual, being developed by Patty Clark. This Manual will also be approved before the end of the year.



MISSION PRESBYTERY  
PRESENTS

# MIDWINTERS YOUTH CONFERENCES

Mo Ranch, Hunt, TX

January 10-12, 2020  
January 17-19, 2020

Both BLENDED conferences  
for 6th-12th graders

Romans 12:3-11

Cost is \$160 per person (youth and adult). Payment due upon registration. Can be made via credit card or check.

Calling all  
6-12th graders  
and their parents

Time to go to **Mo!**  
for our Midwinter Retreat  
**January 17-19, 2020**

*If you've gone before...  
you will surely want to go again.  
If you have never gone...  
you don't want to miss it.*

Mid Winter Retreat is a gathering of Presbyterian Youth from north and south, east and west, to sing, dance, play, study, eat, sleep and pray together up on the Mountain. We expect 300 youth each weekend from all over Mission Presbytery.

If you want to join the fun, we need you to sign up by Monday, Dec. 16.



# News from Northwood Presbyterian Day School

Martha Sherrod

Christmas came early to the Day School thanks to the fantastic PreK-4-SA grant the Day School received! Among the items we purchased with the grant are new books and literacy materials, math materials, multicultural dolls, classroom manipulative and classroom equipment, just to name a few. We are also busy assembling new gross motor equipment for our outdoor play yard. (IKEA's got nothin' on us!!) 😊 All this will make learning that much richer for our students!!

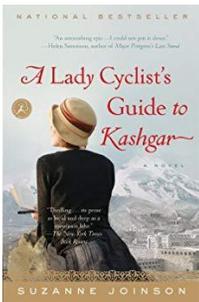
Thanks to everyone who bought books at our Fall Scholastic Book Fair. We raised almost \$800 for our school. Giving the gift of reading is always a good thing!

Our annual Christmas Program is Monday, Dec. 9 at 6 PM. Everyone is welcome to attend and get in the Holiday Spirit.

Even though it is only December, enrollment for the 2020-2021 school year will start soon! Be looking closely for when enrollment begins because spaces fill up quickly. Spread the word!

## Book Club News

The Northwood Book Club will gather for a potluck dinner and book exchange at Linda Iverson's home on Dec. 29 at 6:00 PM.



Bring a wrapped book to exchange within the group. Also bring any book suggestions for 2020! The January book is *A Lady Cyclist's Guide to Kashgar* by Suzanne Joinson.



## PW in December

Our three Presbyterian Women circles are into their fourth gathering. The Morning Circle will gather at 10:00 AM in the Visions or Activities Room at church on Wednesday, Dec. 11 to study Lesson 4 of our book *Love Carved Out of Stone*. The Saturday Circle will meet Saturday, Dec. 14 at 9:30 AM for brunch potluck at Gail

Clowe's home and study Lesson 4.

The Evening Circle is studying CS Lewis's book *Mere Christianity*. They will meet Monday, Dec. 9 at 6:30 PM for dinner and discussion at Patty Clark's home.

All women are welcome to join our meetings!