

Faith Speaks

Christmas invites us to have a child-like wonder at the birth of baby Jesus in a manger. Christmas also invites us to feel the warmth of family as we remember that the Father has given us his Son so that we might be children of God. And, of course, all of these feelings pour over into our homes and our lives as we gather with each other, decorate trees, exchange gifts, and celebrate traditions.

Christmas certainly does bring out all of the “feels,” doesn’t it? But, if we stop and ponder these things (like Mary did - Luke 2:19), we might find ourselves facing a truly massive theological question - how can Jesus be both God and man? That is a question that sparked the interest of the early church for over 400 years and was at the center of several major church councils.

It is mind-boggling if you think about it. In fact, those of you with children have probably heard this question in some form. On the surface, the incarnation seems to be a contradiction. God is infinite, all-powerful, eternal, and all-knowing. Mankind, on the other hand, has none of those attributes. This apparent contradiction actually led to one of the first heresies in the early church - Docetism. The Docetist said that Jesus must have only SEEMED to have a natural fleshly body because there is no way that God would actually stoop so low as to enflesh himself. But, beloved, God did stoop

that low! That is what Immanuel means - “God WITH us,” and more than that, “God BECAME us.” So, how do we reconcile this? How can Jesus be both fully God and fully man? When it comes to large questions like this, it’s always best to just let scripture speak.

First, it’s important to understand that at no point in the incarnation does the Son ever stop being God or become less divine. In John 8:58, Jesus says of himself, “Before Abraham was, I am.” The divine name “I Am” speaks of God’s eternal nature. So, after Jesus has been enfleshed (made man), he is still saying of himself that he has always been and always will be God.

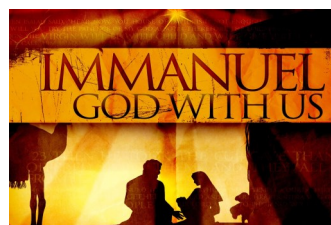
But it’s equally important to understand that after his incarnation, Jesus never stopped being man, either. John 1:14 - “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” The fact that Jesus became flesh means he adopted all of the weaknesses and vulnerabilities that we have in our flesh. He thirsted (John 19:28), he bled (John 19:33-34), he cried (Luke 19:41), and he died (Mark 15:37). And after his resurrection, Jesus was still both God and man. Thomas put his fingers into Jesus’ wounded flesh and exclaimed, “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28). Nothing about Je-

sus’ humanity has changed since then, even after his ascension into heaven. When Paul is writing Timothy, he says, “There IS one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the MAN Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5).

But, perhaps the best way to understand the dual natures of Christ is to understand WHY Jesus must be fully God and fully man. Jesus took on flesh so that he could identify with our struggles and be the perfect sacrifice for our sins. “Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people” (Hebrews 2:17).

Christmas is always such a busy time. In the panic of the season, let’s remember to pause, reflect, and ponder in our hearts and minds the great thing that God has done. He has not just come to us; he has become like us. Praise our Lord and Savior, the God-Man, Jesus Christ! Merry Christmas.

Pastor John



Church Staff

Pastor

Rev. John Cleveland

Church Administrator

Melinda Hawkins

Music Director

Nancy Lowry

Financial Secretary

Brooke Echols

Treasurer

Ronnie Burch

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2023

Session Members

John Cleveland

Gregg Coniglio

Keith Lovern

Dan Patterson

Mark Watts

Deacons

Jimmy Brock

Alan Dennis

Cameron Dennis

Zohrab Najarian

Pray that the Lord will bless the preaching and teaching ministry of the church to gather and build up the saints, that God's word will grow and multiply, and that our witness, love, and holiness will increase by the power of the Holy Spirit.

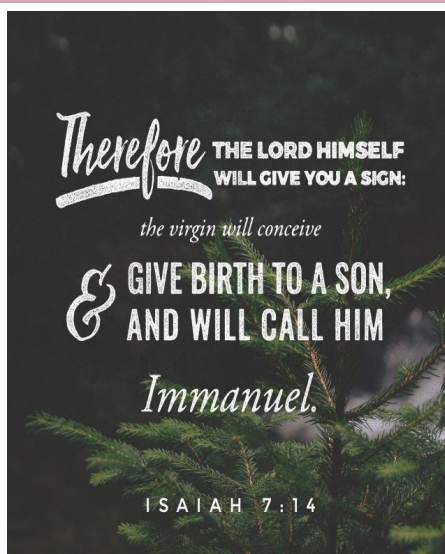
Ask the Lord to strengthen us with the Holy Spirit for counsel, wisdom, understanding, and the fear of the Lord, that we may share in our Savior's life and grace.

For the following, pray for health, comfort and fellowship with God during a period of sickness, that the Lord will give them faith, patience, joy and submission to his will.

- ◆ **Myra Echols:** cancer
- ◆ **Miles Pass:** 5y/o with leukemia
- ◆ **Jordan Israel:** speedy recovery from brain surgery
- ◆ **Kay Horvath:** In Memory Care Center
- ◆ **Chris Ober:** continued chemo treatments
- ◆ **Peggy Savory:** liver cancer and chemotherapy
- ◆ **Donna Criger:** Corticobasal Degeneration
- ◆ **Bob Brown:** unrelenting pain
- ◆ **Wayne Mitchell:** kidney removed 12/1
- ◆ **Dawn Mitchell:** cataract surgery 12/7
- ◆ **Terry Clotfelter:** death of family and friends
- ◆ **Wilson Station EPC in Tennessee**
- ◆ **Children in Foster Care**
- ◆ **Our Shut-Ins**
- ◆ **The Lost**
- ◆ **Our Elders and Deacons**
- ◆ **President Biden and Congress**
- ◆ **Supreme Court**
- ◆ **Persons serving in our Military**
- ◆ **Law Enforcement Officers**
- ◆ **Emergency Responders**
- ◆ **Our Nation**

Please pray for our missionaries:

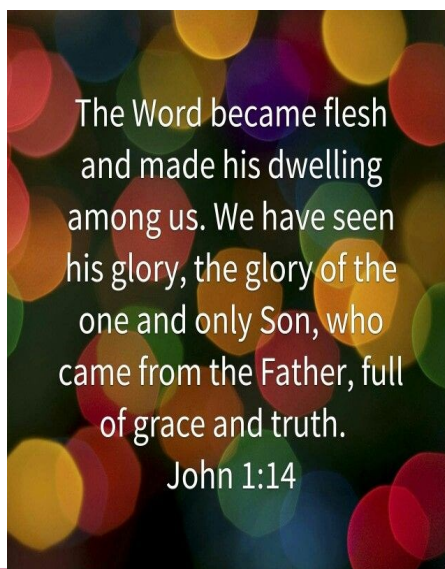
- ◆ **Phil and Diane Thrash**
- ◆ **Gary and Jackie Burnett**
- ◆ **Santosh John**
- ◆ **Keith and Rachel Keller**
- ◆ **Jeff & Veronique Kim**
- ◆ **Jenny Coon**
- ◆ **Mike Rasmussen**



If you have a prayer request or a praise report that you would like to have included in the next newsletter, please email them to:

faithepcrus@gmail.com by Sunday, December 31st.

This would include any NEW or OLD requests that you would like to have included. This section is renewed monthly.



Women's Ministry Announcements

All ladies of the church are invited to attend the Girlfriends of Faith December gathering on Saturday, December 16, 2023, from Noon to 2 p.m. at the home of Marcia Daniel, located at 3452 Union Church Road, Stockbridge 30281.

Also, our group is going to assist a local family by providing some unwrapped Needs and Wants gift items for a mother and her five children. Please see Laurie Brannan, who has a list of ages, sizes, etc. The list will also be available beside the sign-up sheet described below.

Meat lasagna and chicken fettuccine will be provided by Pasta Max of McDonough. We need one person to volunteer to bring a salad and one person to volunteer to bring a dessert. Please let Marcia know if you would like to volunteer to provide either.

A sign-up sheet is located in the Narthex. Please sign up by no later than Sunday, December 10th, if you plan to attend so an accurate amount of food can be ordered. Please indicate on the sign-up sheet that you would like to carpool with others from the church parking lot to Marcia's house.

Please plan to join us for this time of fellowship and good food.

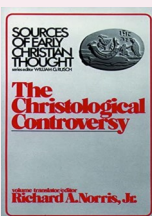
Proverbs 31:20: She opens her hand to the poor and reaches out her hands to the needy.

From the Pastor's Shelf...



"The Coming of the King: 25 Readings for Advent"
-JC Ryle

This little advent devotional is actually available for free in our Church narthex. Be sure to pick one up! I chose this devotional for 2023 because JC Ryle is probably not a name many are familiar with, but you should be. Ryle was an Anglican bishop in the 19th century. He was a preacher and a writer, which means he had a passion for presenting deep truths in an understandable way. In this advent devotional, Ryle encourages the reader to ponder not only the first advent of Christmas but also the future second advent of Christ's return. I hope this is a blessing for your family this Christmas season.



"The Christological Controversy"
- Richard A. Norris

Who doesn't enjoy some controversy? If you read the article of this newsletter and found yourself curious as to how the early church wrestled with the two natures of Christ and the various councils and heresies surrounding that topic - or if you're just a history buff - you might enjoy this book. Richard Norris doesn't just summarize those discussions and debates but actually provides some of the primary source writings. This isn't light reading, but it is fascinating and enriching and will give you a deeper appreciation of how God's church has been defending the truth throughout the ages.

It is by far the most amazing miracle in the whole Bible – far more amazing than the resurrection and more amazing than the creation of the universe.

The fact that the infinite, omnipotent, eternal Son of God could become man and join Himself to a human nature forever, so that infinite God became one person with finite man, will remain for eternity the most profound miracle and the most profound mystery in all the universe.

Wayne Grudem

Reference: Systematic Theology, Zondervan, 1994, p. 563. Used by Permission.

Fellowship News

Girlfriends in Faith

Our next event will be on Saturday, December 16th from noon to 2:00 pm. at the home of Marcia Daniel. All ladies are welcome! Find more information in the announcement on page 2.

Men's Book Study

Our Men's Bible Study meets on Thursday's at 7:00 pm. We are studying 1 Corinthians. This is a wonderful opportunity to gather with other men around God's Word, fellowship, and prayer. Contact Gregg Coniglio for more information.

Ladies Bible Study

We meet on Tuesdays at 6:30 pm and are studying True Woman 201, the 10 "design elements " of Biblical Womanhood. All are welcome at any time during the study. There is a video and discussion around the topic. We would love to have you! Contact Sara Cleveland for more information.

BOOK NOOK

Check out the bookshelf in the Narthex. We have excellent books available for your Christian growth.

The November Session Meeting was held on Thursday, November 2nd, at the church.

The Session will begin a new reading on John Knox and discuss it at the December meeting. The following scriptures were read at tonight's meeting and a discussion of hospitality (Romans 12:13; Hebrews 13:2; Matthew 25:34-46; Leviticus 19:34; 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8; 1 Timothy 5:10).

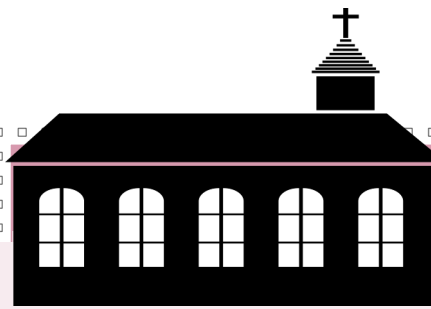
The Session made plans to set the 2024 budget meeting during the first two weeks in January.

The Session approved a new copier contract with Tri-Copy Office Equipment. 2024 Elder and Deacon candidates were discussed.

Various prayer concerns were discussed and raised to God.

The next Session meeting will be December 7th at 5:30 PM and this is planned to be a prayer meeting with no agenda topics.

John Cleveland, Moderator
Dan Patterson, Clerk
Gregg Coniglio
Keith Lovern
Mark Watts



Calendar

- ◆ December 2 Youth Hangout
- ◆ December 3 The Lord's Day
- ◆ December 3 Communion
- ◆ December 5 Ladies Study
- ◆ December 7 Men's Study
- ◆ December 10 The Lord's Day
- ◆ December 12 Ladies Study
- ◆ December 14 Men's Study
- ◆ December 16 Ladies Luncheon
- ◆ December 16 Youth Christmas
- ◆ December 17 The Lord's Day
- ◆ December 17 Carols & Cookies
- ◆ December 24 The Lord's Day
- ◆ December 24 Candlelight Service
- ◆ December 31 The Lord's Day



December 2023

Financial News

Donations:

\$23,362.00

Expenses:

\$26,556.23

P.O.P. Fund:

\$900.00

Mortgage Principal:

\$776,689.50



Are you a
4th to 12th
grader?

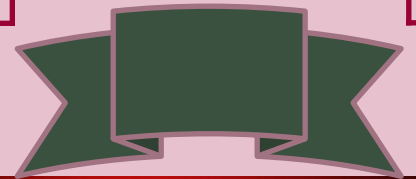
You don't want to
miss out on the fun
and excitement of
our hangouts!

Our next hangout

is

December 2nd
at 6:00 pm and a
Christmas party on
December 16th.

Bring a friend!



Christmas Eve

*Candlelight
Service*



5:00 pm

Outreach News

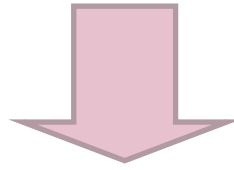
If you have a need that arises, or know of anyone that is in need, please reach out to our Deacons for assistance. They have the ability to reach out to the congregation on your behalf as well as physically meet your needs, or they can point you in the right direction for help.

Deacons of Faith

Jimmy Brock
Alan Dennis
Cameron Dennis
Zohrab Najarian

Children's Sunday School

We have Sunday School classes for all ages!
We are in need of teachers!
Contact Susan Jones if you are interested in serving the children of Faith!



Mission of the Month

Helping In His Name Food Pantry

www.helpinginhisname.org

Needs

boxed cereal, breakfast items, canned ravioli, spaghetti-o's, ramen noodles, vienna sausage, canned meat, peanut butter, jelly, canned soups, crackers

Please place your items in the mission box in the back of the sanctuary.

Thank you for always giving so generously to those in need!



Are you sending out Christmas cards this year? If so, a "mailbox" is located in the narthex for you!

The box has alphabetical folders inside. Place your cards by LAST NAME in the appropriate hanging folder. Then everyone can collect their cards from the folder.

Simple and Easy!



Volunteers Needed For Fellowship Time!

If you would like to provide refreshments, there is a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board by the kitchen. Speak to a Deacon if you have any questions!



*Join us on
Sunday evening
December 17th
At 6:00 pm
for an evening of
singing Christmas
Carols and sharing
cookies.*

*Come and enjoy some
Christmas fellowship,
ready to sing and bring a
plate of cookies to share!*

UPDATE FROM JENNY COON

Firmly Rooted:
Living in Lebanon:
November Update

Marhaba!

On Monday, a Shia Muslim from south Lebanon walked into my clinic in need of therapy due to a broken hand that was not healing correctly. He used to have a good job, but like so many people during the economic collapse he lost everything and now can not afford treatment. He was driving his taxi and his customer just happened to be an old patient of mine and she convinced him to give our clinic a try. By the end of our session, I find out that his son has a developmental disorder with multiple issues including seizures and is searching for the same medicine that we try to keep in supply for one of our pediatric patients with a similar problem. Later that day, a Sunni Sudanese woman underwent surgery for breast cancer covered by another NGO and our generous donors. We all prayed over her prior to her appointment and reminded her she was not alone, even though she often felt alone as she walked through this scary road of cancer in a foreign country, a husband who left her, and kids far away. I then had a young, Orthodox Syrian mom referred to me by our psychologist who was struggling with near daily panic attacks due to the fear of death/dying and so many triggers all around her as she struggled to care for her 3 children under the age of 6 by herself. I could have just given some exercises for the man with the fractured wrist, wrote a check for the lady with breast cancer, and sent the mom with panic attacks back to the psychiatrist for a

medicine refill. Because that day, our clinic saw a record number of patients and frankly was overwhelmed. But that's not why our clinic is here. Because the man with the fractured hand saw that we saw him as more than just another number, but looked towards the needs of his family as well, it opened up a conversation about faith and why I was here. The woman with breast cancer was able to see what it meant to weep with those who weep when we prayed together. And I was able to share with this young mom about the body, mind, and soul how they all interconnect.

I am so grateful that our little clinic, born out of the disaster of the port explosion 3 years ago, by God's grace is still able to live up to its mission in times like these. As we continue to expand to meet the growing needs of our community, we remain dependent on our donors. Our clinic is walking by faith next year as we still have not met our budget needs. We are so grateful for your support and I think of many of you personally when patients thank us for the care they received. If you feel led to donate specifically to this ministry, the link is just below.

As I devoted last month's newsletter mostly to the conflict happening south of us, I do not have much to add to that today. However, I was invited back onto a podcast courtesy of the global ministry of Liberty Bible Church in Indiana on the topic of "War in the Middle East: What does it mean for Gospel Workers?." Here is the link if you would like to listen: <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/go-a-great-commission-podcast/id1612140352?i=1000635062367>

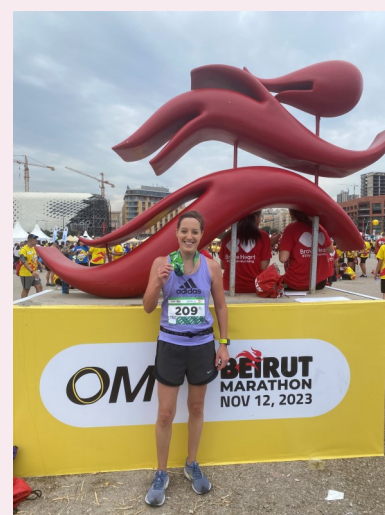
Please continue to pray for peace in our region.

As always, I am so grateful for each and every one of you and how you pray, support, and encourage the ministry here in Lebanon as well as me personally.

With gratitude,
Jenny



A patient who has become a dear friend. We went on a little trip that was only the second time she has been outside of Beirut since



Celebrating my 20th marathon and 3rd time running Beirut!



To the glory of God, Faith Presbyterian Church has been called together to faithfully proclaim the Gospel, to make and equip disciples for Christ, and to advance God's Kingdom in our families, community, and world.



Faith Presbyterian Church is a congregation of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (www.epc.org) and the Presbytery of the Southeast (www.epcsoutheast.org).

Our Church Website:
www.FaithMcDonough.com

Church Email:
faithepcrus@gmail.com

Church Phone Number:
770-648-5288

Mailing Address:
Faith Presbyterian Church EPC
1185 East Lake Road
McDonough, GA 30252

O Come, O Come
Emmanuel



Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way.

When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us).

When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son.

And he called his name Jesus.

Matthew 1:18-25

CHOIR NEWS

If you would like to join our choir, contact Nancy Lowry! We would love for you to join us!

If you are interested in joining Faith Presbyterian Church (EPC), you may do so by a profession of your faith in Jesus Christ, by a re-affirmation of your faith, or by a transfer of your membership from another church. Please speak with the an Elder if you have any questions about joining.

HAPPY DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS!



Tammy Martin	12/03
Donna Crumbley	12/04
Brooke Echols	12/04
Sandra Echols	12/06
Nate Hawkins	12/07
Randy Cononge	12/07
Cindy Peters	12/09
Jeremy Evans	12/11
Caroline Echols	12/17
Tracy Cononge	12/18
Skeet Echols	12/22
Melinda Hawkins	12/24
Audrey Harper	12/26
Gene Morris	12/31



CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

December 2023

Sun

Mon


Tue

Wed

Thu

Fri

Sat

					1	2 <i>Youth Hangout 6:00 pm</i>
3 Communion 9:00 Sunday School 10:00 Fellowship 10:30 Worship	4	5 6:30 Ladies Bible Study	6	7 7:00 Men's Bible Study	8	9
10 9:00 Sunday School 10:00 Fellowship 10:30 Worship	11	12 6:30 Ladies Bible Study	13	14 7:00 Men's Bible Study	15	16 <i>Ladies Luncheon Noon-2:00</i> <i>Youth Christmas Hangout 6:00 pm</i>
17 9:00 Sunday School 10:00 Fellowship 10:30 Worship 6:00 Carols & Cookies	18	19 6:30 Ladies Bible Study	20	21 7:00 Men's Bible Study	22	23
24 9:00 Sunday School 10:00 Fellowship 10:30 Worship 5:00 Candlelight Service	25 	26	27	28 7:00 Men's Bible Study	29	30
31 9:00 Sunday School 10:00 Fellowship 10:30 Worship						