



McCarter Presbyterian Church is an inclusive community of faith, gathered and empowered by the Spirit of God. We declare that our mission is to proclaim and exhibit, by word and deed, the grace, mercy and love of God as revealed and made known by our Lord Jesus Christ.



Greetings! As the Apostle Paul says, "Grace to you and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!" As you know by now, my husband Matt, pastor of St.

Giles Presbyterian Church, has taken a call to First Presbyterian Church, Champaign, Illinois. I will be going with him and will be discerning what kind of call God has for me when I get there. I look forward to continuing the kind of work I do here up there. I have been preparing the way for what comes next for you all, getting you all set up with a moderator for your session and supply pastors until you all can determine who will be here more regularly. Rev. Justin Cazel has already agreed to preach several Sundays in January. I have spoken with the Committee on Ministry about your situation, explaining to them the Legacy Project as well as other possibilities for you all to continue being a beacon of light to the community around you. I charge you all during this Advent season to listen for the Spirit of God speaking to you. Remember the hope, peace, joy and love of Christ. Allow the fullness of Christ to direct you. Then, "all will be well," says Julian of Norwich, "All manner of things will be well." I have loved my work here at McCarter and I will miss you all dearly.

Peace,
Rev. Rachel Matthews

McCarter Messenger

December 2017

Recent and Upcoming Events

December 10, 11:30am Congregational Meeting

December 24, 5:30pm Young Family Christmas Eve Service at St. Giles
9pm **McCarter combined Christmas Eve Communion and Candlelight Service at St. Giles Presbyterian**

December 31, 10:30am Lessons and Carols, Rachel's last Sunday.

Sunday School at 9:15AM

Sunday Worship at 10:30AM



ADVENT SEASON

Last week, several members were busy preparing the sanctuary for the Advent Season. Advent is preparing for the birth of the Messiah, and begins on the first Sunday in December.

Marian Elliot and Tempie Perry gathered live cedar greens to make the beautiful circular Advent wreath located next to the communion table. This is no small task and the ladies did a great job.

The Advent wreath is assembled with four candles around it with a large white candle in the center of the wreath. Three of the four candles are purple and one is lit each Sunday to represent hope and peace. The pink candle is lit on the third Sunday and represents love. The fourth purple candle is joy as we await the birth of the Christ child. The large white candle in the center is the Christ candle that is lit on Christmas Eve in celebration of the Christ child birth

The first purple candle was lit on Sunday, December 3, 2017 by Kerry and Dixon Caldwell. This candle represents hope. Kerry read scripture from 1 Corinthians.

“He will keep you strong in the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Corinthians 1:8 NIV

The Poinsettia

Red live poinsettias also decorate our church during Advent Season. The lovely flowers are donated by members of McCarter. This year, we remember those folks for whom the flowers were given in honor or in memory of them.

Dixon & Kerry Caldwell in memory of Mrs. Anna Turner & Mr. and Mrs. H.D. Caldwell, Jr.

Carolyn & Jim Greene in honor of their granddaughters, Emma, Ida & Opal and in memory of their parents.

Betty Kunz in honor of her sister Frances Kuykendall.

Rachel Matthews in honor of McCarter Session and in memory of Barbara Matthews.

Tempie & Jack Perry in honor of their sons and in memory of their parents.

Judy Pew in memory of John Pew.

There is an old Mexican legend about how poinsettias and Christmas come together that goes like this:

There was once a poor Mexican girl called Pepita who had no present to give the baby Jesus at the Christmas Eve services. As Pepita walked with sadness to the chapel, her cousin Pedro tried to cheer her up.

“Pepita”, he said, “I’m sure that even the smallest gift, given by someone who loves him will make Jesus happy.”

Pepita didn’t know what she could give, so she picked a small handful of weeds from the roadside and made them into a small bouquet. She felt embarrassed because she could only give this small present to Jesus. As she walked through the chapel to the altar, she remembered what Pedro had said. She began to feel better, knelt down and put the bouquet at the bottom of the nativity scene. Suddenly, the bouquet of weeds burst into bright red flowers, and everyone who saw them were sure they had seen a miracle. From that day on, the bright red flowers were known as ‘Flores de Nocha Buena’ or ‘Flowers of the Holy Night’.

The shape of the poinsettia flower and leaves are sometimes thought as a symbol of the Star of Bethlehem which led the Wise Men to Jesus. The red colored leaves symbolize the blood of Christ. White leaves represent his purity.

DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE ADVENT HYMN?

The Advent hymn below is a favorite of mine written by Charles Wesley, brother of John Wesley.

Come thou long expected Jesus, born to set thy people free;

From our fears and sins release us;

Let us find our rest in Thee.

Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art;

Dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart.

Born thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a king,

Born to reign in us forever, now thy gracious kingdom bring.

By thine own eternal spirit, rule in all our hearts alone;

By thy all sufficient merit, raise us to thy precious throne.

Charles Wesley

THE ORIGIN OF THE CHRISMON TREE

On Saturday, several church members and Pastor Rachel gathered at the church to hang the wreaths and decorate our balsam fir or Christmas tree with Chrismons. The

word "Chrismon" is a combination of the words "Christ and monogram. Christmons are symbols of Christianity and represent events in the life of Jesus.

The idea of a Chrismon tree originated with Mrs. Frances Spencer in her church, Ascension Lutheran Church in Danville, Virginia. Since Frances was a proficient maker of Christmas ornaments, she was asked to decorate the church's Christmas tree.

Rather than decorate the tree with secular Christmas ornaments, Frances decided to use the traditional symbols of Christianity in the main liturgical colors of Christmas, gold and white. In 1957 she coined the term Chrismons for her creations and began the Chrismon ministry. The practice of using Chrismons has spread and is now a popular way for churches and families to retain a sense of the sacred amid the secularization of this important Christian holiday.

Several years ago, Agnes Houston inspired many of the women in McCarter to make and replenish our aging supply of Chrismons. She gathered and purchased necessary materials for the project and taught the ladies how to create these beautiful Christian symbols that adorn our tree today.

Since the first Chrismons were created, many designs and patterns are available, but the ornaments are required to be made by hand in only white and gold. They may be a monogram, a sign, a symbol, a type or a combination of such figures.

The *Latin Cross* symbolizes that Christians believe that Jesus died for everyone on the cross.

The *Calvary Cross* is the Latin Cross, but the base of the Cross has three steps that

symbolize faith, hope and love.

The *Anchor Cross* reminds Christians that Jesus is the anchor of their faith.

The *Anchor Cross with Fish* symbolizes the faithful.

The *Celtic Cross* has a circle at the top of the cross which represents eternal life.

The *Fish* is one of the oldest Christian symbols. The letters from the Greek work for fish (ichthus) stand for Jesus (I) Christ (X), God (Q), Son (Y), Savior (S). Some of Jesus' disciples were fishermen.

The *Star of David* (6pts.) is a symbol that Jesus was a Jew and a descendant of King David.

A *Five Pointed Star* represents the five wounds of Jesus on the cross.

An *Eight Pointed Star* represents baptism and regeneration.

The *Crown* is the symbol that Jesus is King. It shows that Christians believe Jesus is ruler over heaven and the earth.

The *Triquerta* and *Trefoil* represent the Christian Trinity of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. The Triquerta is made of loops to make a triangle that represent the Trinity, and the Trefoil is three equal circles intertwined to make the Trinity

The *Angel* reminds Christians of the angels who told the shepherds about the birth of Jesus. It can also represent the second coming of Jesus which the Bible says will start with an Angel blowing a trumpet.

Crown of Thorns and Nails is a passion symbol of the crucifixion of our Lord.

The *Descending Dove* with a Three-Rayed Numbus (halo) around its head is a symbol of the Holy Spirit.

The *Butterfly* symbolizes the resurrection and life everlasting for the believer.

The *Sand Dollar* is known as the Holy Ghost shell. Its markings recall events in the life of Christ.

Brazen Serpent on a Tau Cross refers to John 3:14, "And Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up."

The *Lamp* and the *Candle* both represents that Christians believe that Jesus is the light of the world.

The *Empty Manger* represents the manger that Mary placed Baby Jesus in that night in the stable.

This is only some of the Chrismons that can be found on our Chrismon Tree.

UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS

Jim Green-December 6, 2017

Jean Lindsey-December 27, 2017

Kerry Caldwell-January 9, 2018

Charlotte Rigby-February 15, 2018

Betty Kunz-February 16, 2016, 2018

Earl Kalbach-February 19, 2018

CURRENT FINANCIAL REPORT

General Fund	\$ 1,905.
Building Fund	\$14,970.
Money Market	\$10,408.
CD	\$51,616.
DP	\$25,681.

UNITED MINISRIES WINTER COAT DRIVE IS STILL ONGOING.

This is a reminder that United Ministries sponsor a coat giveaway during the winter monhs. They are now collecting coats for this event-all weather coats are preferred. Although there is a need for all sizes, the greatest need is for large, xlarge and xxlarge in both women's and men's sizes. You may drop off your new or gently used coats and/or donations to the Administration Building, 606 Pendleton Street, Greenville, SC. They are open to receive donations from Mon-Thursday 8:00am-5pm and Friday from 8:00am-12noon

They also give away warm gloves, hats and socks during this drive and all winter. All donations are greatly appreciated.

THORNWELL MINISTRY

On Saturday, December 2, 2017, Rachel Matthews, Carolyn and Jim Greene, and Mandy Turner drove from McCarter to Clinton, South Carolina to deliver five large laundry baskets filled with items such as pillows, towels, stuffed toys, toiletries, etc. to Thornwell. The welcome baskets are given to children and youth who come to live in the cottages and make Thornwell their home.

The group from McCarter also watched the children from Thornwell ride in the Clinton

Parade. The Home sponsored a float and the children enjoyed waving from the windows on the Blue Polar Express float. (See picture below.)

Following the parade, Rachel, Carolyn and Jim, and Mandy were invited back to Thornwell to enjoy hot cocoa and socialize.



THORNWALL BLUE POLAR EXPRESS



We praise you God and glorify your name.
We extend our thanks for your abundant love, joy, hope and blessings.

We pray for church members: The McCallister Family, Christine Ferguson, Jean Lindsey,

Charlie and Frances George, Montie Burger, Nancy Trentina, and Charlotte and Dan Rigby, caretakers for Charlotte's father, and for her dad and for loving caretakers everywhere.

God bless Rachel, our pastor, and Matt her husband as they embark on a new Christian journey to Illinois and leave behind their churches, sons and friends. Strengthen their faith and give them courage to do your will whatever that may be. Bless and protect them these coming weeks as they pack away boxes of memories and head in a new direction. May your peace be with them at all times.

God bless and protect children everywhere. Remember the young men in uniform who serve to protect our freedom and our country. Bless medical workers, police, fire fighters, and emergency teams who serve to keep us safe and healthy. Bless all missionaries who witness and serve in dangerous areas of our world. Remember the poor and needy. Keep them warm and fed. Bless those in prison. In Jesus name we pray. AMEN

This week, all members of McCarter received a letter from our minister and friend, Rachel Matthews. She gave us surprising and even shocking news that this month would be her last one as our minister. Her husband Matt had accepted the position of Senior Minister at First Presbyterian in Champaign, Illinois. They would be leaving in January to begin a new Christian journey together with the congregation there.

When I read the letter, I was shocked, but then I realized that God calls us to leave the comfort of now so that we may grow and expand our witness to others. Can you imagine what God has in store for Rachel and Matt? We don't know, they don't know,

but how reassuring it is to know that God has a plan for us, wherever he sends us. How exciting it must be that God is sending them to a larger congregation where they will be able to share the good news to many more worshippers. Yes, God is good!

I will miss Rachel's angelic voice that sang God's praises on Sunday morning. I will miss her radiant smile and stories she shared with us. I will miss her love and sharing of scripture in Sunday School. But I know Illinois will love that beautiful smile and voice. Peace, Betty

IS THERE A SANTA CLAUS?

Yes, Virginia, There is a Santa Claus by Francis P. Church, The New York Sun, 1897.

Dear Editor: I am 8 years old. Some of my friends say there is no Santa Claus. Papa says, "If you see it in THE SUN, it's so." Please tell me the truth.

Virginia O'Hanlon
115 West Ninety-Fifth Street

Virginia, Your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the skepticism of a skeptical age. They do not believe except they see. They think that can't be which is not comprehensible by their little minds. All mind's whether they are men's or children's are little. In this great universe of ours, man is a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect, as compared with the boundless world about, as measured by the intelligence capable of grasping the whole of truth and knowledge.

Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy. Alas! How dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus. It

would be as dreary as if there were no Virginias. There would be no childlike faith then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence. We should have no enjoyment, except in sense and sight. The eternal light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished.



Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!!

Not believe in Santa Claus! You might as well not believe in fairies! You might get your papa to hire men to watch in all the chimneys on Christmas Eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if they did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove? Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign that there is no Santa Claus. The most real real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see. Did you see fairies dancing on the lawn? Of course not, but that's no proof that they are not there. Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders there are unseen and unseeable in the world.

You may tear apart the baby's rattle and see what makes the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world which the strongest man, not even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived, could tear apart. Only faith, fancy, poetry, love, romance, can push that aside that curtain and view and picture the supernal beauty and glory beyond. Is it all real? Ah, Virginia, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding.

No Santa Claus. Thank God ! He lives and he lives forever. Virginia, nay, ten times ten thousand years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood,

I BELIEVE IN SANTA CLAUS