



SOUTHMINSTER
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, USA



1124 Montgomery Highway, Vestavia, AL 35216



A Word from Dr. Tom

Advent is a strange time of year. It must be all but impossible to explain what the Advent Season is to a person that only sees the "Secular Christmas." The world is in Christmas full gear as early as September, moving at a break-neck speed, but the church is slowly, patiently, quietly saying, "wait for it." Advent is a counter-cultural event. It is the excited anticipation, not only of the celebration of Christ's birth, but the anticipation of his return. Not only do we follow the star and look toward Bethlehem, but we look to the day that we will live in a new age with our Creator and Redeemer.

Please, don't misunderstand me. I love the Christmas parades, hearing the bells ringing at department stores, the 24-hour Christmas music channels on the radio, seeing that same Folger's coffee commercial that has played since my childhood, and the lights on the houses that twinkle so brightly. However, Advent is far more than any of these things. Instead of the "hurry up" lifestyle, we are invited to sit, to wait, and to listen with the hope that comes only from God for a new day, the Lord's Day. We are invited to come together as a community of faith and share our wonder for how God's mysterious love can feel so intimate. Finally, after this time of powerful anticipation, we can declare with voices of jubilation that God has come to live among us, that a child is born, and a savior is given for all of creation.

My prayer for all of us this Advent season is that we will continually seek out ways to avoid the race of the culture around us and that we will help one another wait in hopeful anticipation for the coming of our Messiah. It is not always easy, but we can come together in the midst of the hustle and the bustle and remind each other that we are waiting for something much bigger than a man that comes down our chimneys on Christmas Eve. We are waiting for a little child that has been born for all of us. May the peace of God's abiding presence rest with us all this Advent season.

*You may ask me what I want this year,
and I try to make this kind and clear
Just a chance that maybe we'll find better days,
'cause I don't need presents wrapped in strings
and desire and love of empty things
Just a chance that we'll find better days*

*So take these words, and sing out loud
'cause everyone is forgiven now
'cause tonight's the night the world begins again*

*And it's someplace simple where we could live
and something only you can give
and that's faith and trust and peace while we're alive
And the one poor child that saved this world
and there's 10 million more who probably could
if we all just stopped and said a prayer for them
-Better Days by the Goo Goo Dolls*

God Bless you all, Happy Advent, and Merry Christmas,

Tom

Ministry Unit Meetings

A reminder that Ministry Units meet this week. Congregational Care meets Monday, December 3rd, at 10:30 AM in Grace Hall. All other Ministry Units meet **Wednesday, December 5th, at 5:30 p.m.** Please note that dinner will not be served this night due to the Christmas Party being held on Friday night, December 7th.

Attention Session Members

Moderators are to submit Ministry Unit reports by Sunday, December 9th. All Session members are asked to pick up minutes, agenda, and reports following worship on the 9th in preparation for the Stated Meeting on **Monday, December 10th, at 5:30 PM in Grace Hall.**

Fellowship Ministry Unit

Wednesday Night Suppers are winding up for 2018. This is such a busy time with holiday shopping and entertaining. Why not take a break from the busyness and enjoy a great meal and program at the church on Wednesday evenings? Sign up on the Attendance Pad in the pews or call the Church Office (822-1124) by Monday at noon to make your reservations!

December 5th:

No meal this night. Ministry Units do meet at 5:30 p.m.

December 12th:

Menu: Santa Fe Soup, Bread and/or Crackers, Tossed Salad and Brownies

Program: Tom continues the video series, "Making Sense of the Scriptures."

December 19th:

Menu: Spaghetti, Garlic Bread, Tossed Salad, and Dessert.

Program: Tom wraps us the video series, "Making Sense of the Scriptures."

God Speed



Sunday we said goodbye to long-time members Rod and Judy Boyes as they prepare to move. We are so thankful for them and will miss them tremendously. Please know you always have a home at Southminster. Their new address is:

**Rod & Judy Boyes
10441 Scotland Avenue
Indian Land, SC 29707**

Clerk of Session Report

A summary of the actions taken in the November Stated Session meeting is as follows:

1. In an electronic vote, the Session elected Heather Benoit as alternate Commissioner to the November Presbytery meeting.
2. The Session approved the Worship Ministry Unit recommendation to invite Reverend Sid Burgess to preach and provide worship leadership on Sunday, November 18.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Christians

Annual Adult Christmas Party



When: Friday, December 7th, 6:30 PM

Where: Southminster's Grace Hall

Meal by Savoie Catering: Wedge Salad with Bacon Crumbles and Tomato/Ranch and Balsamic Vinaigrette, Char Grilled London Broil/Steak House Sauce, French Green Beans with Sesame Seeds, Potato au Gratin with Sour Cream, Soft Dinner Rolls, and Mini Crème Brulee Cheesecake.

Entertainment by Dr. Melinda Doyle; Associate Professor of Music, University of Montevallo, and University of Montevallo Concert Choir Choral Group.

Nursery will be provided



Passing of the Peace During Cold & Flu Season

During this time of cold and flu season when so many germs can be passed so easily, we ask that during the Passing of the Peace, you refrain from hugging. Instead, we ask that you give a fist bump or an elbow touch. As soon as this germey season passes, we will return to our hugging and hand shaking. We want everyone healthy for the holiday season!!!

Generosity Ministry Unit

He has indeed led you all to a very exciting month in the life of Southminster!! Thanks to each of you who have been part of all the celebrations that your church planned. The Generosity Brunch was a tremendous success with about 72 members present with pledging units at 63. We are still under what was pledged last year by about \$12,000, but there are still about 14 families who pledged last year who have not done so this year. Please consider a pledge and maybe a 5% increase in that pledge so we can plan for our extended Faith Formation program as well as other ways that we can witness to Jesus Christ. Also, new pledges are very needed to help with our 2019 budgetary planning for Southminster.

Again, thanks to all of you—your ministry, both in time and talent, as well as your monetary contributions are all amazing!!

Let God Lead!!

Note of Thanks

thank
=YOU=

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your many acts of kindness to me during my recovery from surgery. They were all very much appreciated. Blessings to you all during this season of great joy!

Belinda Dickinson

Outreach Ministry Unit

"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."- Galatians 6:2

Thanks to a congregation filled with giving hearts and helping hands, Southminster has touched so many lives in 2018. We kicked off the year with collecting money for Rise Against Hunger. In partnering with First Presbyterian and with help from the Day School, we were able to reach our goal and pack 20,000 meals again this year. Throughout the year we've provided several meals for First Light as well as given them donations from our Outreach Closet and donated earrings for the Christmas bags. We collected funds and clothing items for the YMCA family that lost everything in a house fire. We collected school supplies for Matthew 28. We collected cans for GBM and put together summer bags for Presbyterian Home for Children. We were gracious in our special offerings and collected duffle bags for The WellHouse. We took SOS day on the road where many hands showed up to help at Dereck's church with the maintenance on their church building. We have donated funds to several organizations throughout the year as well. Thank you *all* for being generous givers for the Lord.

In the year to come, Southminster Presbyterian will be focusing our mission work on Hunger and Homelessness. After Outreach looked at the big picture, we noticed hunger and homelessness is something our church supports on a consistent level. So, instead of skimming the surface on several different areas, we've decided we're jumping all in. We're going to center our focus on Presbyterian Home for Children (they have some amazing things going on right now) with ways we can help and support them, but we will also continue helping other organizations in the same area such as First Light, Rise Against Hunger, etc. Throughout the year there will be so many different types of opportunities for everyone to help at any level. We are so excited for what's to come and to see what a difference we can make together! Look for more information in January!

Merry Christmas,

Sara Brown, Moderator

Chrismon Tree Gift Giving

This year Southminster will be trying something new with the Chrismon Tree Gift Giving. We will be collecting gifts for some of the children at Presbyterian Home for Children. PHFC has given us a list of items to donate from off of the children's wish lists. Under the Chrismon Tree this year you will find the same small boxes as you have in the years past, but what you find inside those boxes will look a little different. Each box has a specific item listed inside. Please purchase that item and drop it off in the Christmas box in front of Grace Hall on or before **December 16th**. The gifts with red bows have smaller items in them and boxes with green bows have larger items in them. Feel free to grab a friend and purchase a larger item together. We will also be collecting non-perishable food items for GBM. Thank you for your generous giving hearts and understanding as we explore this new opportunity. For any questions, please contact Sara Brown.





Jesus was sent to lead his people, pointing to God through love and justice, peace and compassion, forgiveness and humility. We can never match God's perfect gift in Jesus, but through the Christmas Joy Offering, we can testify to who we have known God to be.

Our gifts reflect our generous God. Our gifts support leaders in our Church and world – past, present, and future.

For some, these gifts have taken the form of Emergency Assistance Grants after the devastation of Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico – active and retired pastors, as well as other church workers received assistance. For others, it was in the form of scholarships to Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color, allowing students to not only receive an excellent education, but to explore their faith intimately to become better leaders with values, ethics, and moral character.

Please give generously to the Christmas Joy Gift Offering on **Sunday, December 23rd!!!**

Day School News

As we approach the holiday season, we would like to invite you to our annual Christmas program on December 18th at 6:30 pm at Metropolitan Church of God located at 2800 Metropolitan Way, Birmingham 35243. It is a wonderful way to start your holiday and we would love to see you there!

Santa's Workshop is coming to Southminster on Monday, December 3rd from 7:30 to 12:30 in Fancher Hall. GLLAM Boutique will have a booth full of clothing, jewelry, stocking stuffers, and accessories. Also, the Southminster Day School Christmas Shop will be open too! Come by and pick up a beautiful door hanger, Christmas Cards, a Nativity, and other handmade items. All funds support the 4th grade's trip to Washington., DC next year.

Southminster Day School wishes you and yours a very Merry Christmas! May you experience the love of Jesus during the Christmas season and all year long.

Jeanie Covin

Presbyterian Women Mission Monthly

As we begin our monthly news, we wish a safe journey to Rod and Judy Boyes as they move to retire near their children. Judy has earned our warmest thanks and our congratulations for her leadership role as PW Coordinator, serving Southminster in so many ways. We will miss you, Judy.

Our chosen mission for the month of December is the Presbyterian Children's Home, located in Talladega, Alabama. As many in our Presbytery already know, the Home originally began in 1868 after the conclusion of the Civil War serving children orphaned by the devastating effects of poverty and homelessness. Today, the Home continues to serve homeless children, families and young adults, many of whom leave the foster care system with no adult guidance whatsoever. Those served are sheltered during their transition to independent adult living, learning the academic and life skills necessary to become fully self-sustaining individuals. Ascension Leadership Academy is a school featuring small class size that allows a structured academic learning experience tailored to the specific needs of each child, many of whom have attended school sporadically prior to their residence at the Home. Of the graduates, 33% continue on to a four-year college.

We will be collecting and purchasing items for "Welcome Baskets" containing personal hygiene items and bedding to be distributed to each new resident family. Our team leader, June Hyer, deserves special recognition for her outstanding organization and coordination preparing the Welcome Baskets. Combining her excellent coupon clipping skills and her supreme knowledge of the Black Friday holiday sales, June was able to purchase many items needed at discount prices. June is the perfect example of our Presbyterian thrifty Scottish heritage! June continues her efforts this year. I encourage all congregation members to speak words of sincere appreciation to June for her volunteer work. June, you never cease to amaze!

After financially donating to the Home each year, I can personally attest to the life changing program of the Home. Through their efforts with counselling, training and academic preparation of the residents, the Home facilitates meaningful change to break the cycle of poverty caused by a lack of learning and absence of mentors in the life of the children and young adults. The Home is currently conducting a capital campaign. If you wish to make a holiday charitable donation, I cannot encourage a better way to truly support a positive outcome so needed in our current society.

As always, we invite all women of Southminster to join with us in achieving our mission goals. Even if you are not able to attend on a monthly basis, we have an all church women luncheon coming up and the Spring Gathering Saturday, March 23, 2019. Carpools are available for a day of fellowship with your faith sisters of our Presbytery.

Until next month,

Charlotte Worsham, Secretary, Presbyterian Women

Lectio Divina

November our praying in John included stopovers in Chapters 9 thru 11. In Chapter 9 Jesus heals a blind man and presented us with a very deep discussion on God's purpose in suffering when Jesus said, "He was born blind so that the words of God might be revealed in him." That is a hard saying that has caused many to stumble! But we moved on to the much easier scene in Chapter 10 where Jesus states that he is the Good Shepherd and has a sheepfold with many sheep, many of who are in different folds. That is a very exciting thought that many of God's children are in places we can't even imagine! Chapter 11 brought us to perhaps Jesus' greatest miracle - the raising of Lazarus from the dead. Jesus even waited an extra four days to ensure Lazarus was very dead! Chapter 11 ends on the ominous note of the Sanhedrin's plot to kill Jesus. It was here that we could hear Caiaphas prophesying about Jesus' death, according to John. And we all know who is speaking in a prophesy, right?!? Join us on Wednesday's at 5:00 PM as we continue our journey though John!! Questions? Contact George Van Kirk.



Lessons & Carols December 16th - 10:30 Service

"The world has waited long to hear the heavenly story." Thus begins a beautiful new Christmas carol by Allan Bullard. This carol, along with many others new and familiar, will be presented in the annual Service of Nine Lessons and Carols, based on the original service at King College, Cambridge. This meaningful service intersperses music with readings from Holy Scripture that tells the story of Christ's birth from Genesis through the Gospels. We hear the story beginning with Gabriel's revelation to Mary all the way through the familiar stories of shepherds, wise men from afar and the Christ child in a manger. The story ends with a statement from John's gospel of our hope in Christ, the Light of the World.

I invite all of you to come, bring friends and family, to share in this beautiful service that celebrates the coming of God in humble human form to offer redemption and eternal life to all. Your Chancel Choir will be joined by a few guests and a chamber orchestra consisting of strings, brass, woodwinds, and percussion, along with our exceptional organist, David Renaker. You don't want to miss this Southminster tradition. I hope to see you there.

May the grace and peace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, be with you now and always.

Larry

CHRISTMAS POINSETTIA DEDICATION

The Christmas Poinsettia Order List and Dedication Forms are posted on the bulletin board outside of Grace Hall. The cost per plant is \$13.00. Please sign the list, noting the number of plants you wish to dedicate. Take and complete an order form, attach your payment, and return both to Betsy Murphy in the Church Office by Wednesday, December 12th.

Southminster Presbyterian Church Foundation for Ministry, Inc.

The Southminster Presbyterian Church Foundation has announced the 2018 Grants for the following programs. Grants totaled \$29,000.

1. Assistance League of Birmingham (Operation School Bell)

This program targets economically disadvantaged children. The mission of Operation School Bell is to provide new school clothing, personal care items and shoe vouchers. They anticipate that self-esteem in these children will be enhanced in the early school years, thereby increasing school attendance and academic achievement. This grant will help clothe 90 children in the community.

2. Congo Partnership Team, Presbytery of Sheppards & Lapsley

This grant will support ten Seminary students in the School of Theology of Sheppards & Lapsley University (UPRECO) in Ndesha, DRC. There is a continuing need in the Congo Presbyterian Church for pastors who have Christian training.

3. Presbyterian World Mission (South Sudan Education and Peace Building Project)

The goal of this project is to increase access to basic Christian education in South Sudan (with a special emphasis on girls) and to promote peace and reconciliation in South Sudan necessary for schools to function, the nation to heal and communities to develop.

4. Better Basics (Motivation of Reading)

This program is designed for kindergarten through 3rd Grade students in Birmingham lower-income neighborhoods. Through small groups and individualized instruction this program will give students tools to strengthen comprehension.

5. Junior League of Birmingham (Diaper Bank)

This grant will help meet the immediate needs of many throughout our community who struggle daily to provide diapers for their children. JLB purchases necessary supplies for distribution to families in need and issues thousands of diapers a month to vetted local organizations who then distribute them to local families in need.

6. UKirk Birmingham (College Conference at Montreat)

UKirk Birmingham is a PC(USA) campus ministry serving college students and young adults in the Birmingham area. Its purpose is to foster strong relationships among UKirk students from different campuses and support their faith formation. This grant will go toward travel, room, board, and conference fees for at least 12 students and 3 adults to attend the College Conference at Montreat, January 2-5, 2019.

7. Buckhorn High School Chorale Department (Learning outside the Classroom)

This grant will provide students at Buckhorn High School in Madison County the opportunity to learn outside the classroom by attending musical events offered in our state and region including clinics, workshops, and honor choir festivals.

8. Presbyterian Home for Children (Secure Dwellings)

This program serves homeless children and their female caregivers. 100% of these are classified as at-or-below the Federal poverty level. After immediate needs of food and shelter are met, the family is assessed for their needs to regain independence. The program works with the adults to help them develop job skills, refine social skills, and basic living skills. Education is provided to the children of the family so they can catch-up and then excel in their education.

Presby BYG Events

The year is quickly winding down and we only have a few more meetings. Make your plans to join us on **Sunday, December 9th at Edgewood Presbyterian at 5:00 PM.** We will continue our Beatitudes study and have story time and work on an art project.

Then on **Sunday, December 16th** we will once again gather at Edgewood Presbyterian, but this time from 3:00 to 5:00 for our Christmas Party. We will have Xmas Cranium Xtreme with movie trivia, karaoke, Pictionary, etc. We will enjoy some good crockpot Hot Chocolate and some cookies. Join us for a festive time together before we settle down with our family and friends for a Merry Christmas.

Questions about any of the BYG events? Contact Betsy Murphy at 822-1124.

FOLLOW THE STAR TO LIVING RIVER

FOR THE PRESBYTERY OF SHEPPARDS AND
LAPSLEY'S ELEMENTARY EPIPHANY RETREAT

WHEN: Friday, January 4 and Saturday, January 5

January 4: Registration @5PM with dinner @6:30

WHO: 1ST graders (with a parent) – 5th graders (2nd-5th graders do not require a parent to attend, but a ratio of 1 adult to 6 children is required by the Presbytery.)

Friends welcome.

WHAT TO BRING:

- Sleeping bag or sheets and a blanket
- Pillow
- Towel
- Personal articles
- Warm casual clothes
- Flashlight
- Bible
- Hiking shoes
- Water bottle
- Money for souvenirs (t shirts \$15)

Individuals register
with their church by
December 25.

We will do energizers, sing songs, explore scripture and have fun with friends from Presbyterian churches throughout Central Alabama. Chaperones will stay with children in the cabins and lead small groups with other adults.

JANUARY
4 & 5
2019

COST: To be determined

Church to pay some of the cost

For registration and information, please contact
Pat Goodman or Betsy Murphy

Churches must turn in the Elementary Retreat Attendee List to Jenny at Living River by **Thursday, December 27.** All adult chaperones must have a clear National background check on file with their church. Church payments to Presbytery are due by **Monday, January 7.**

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Southminster Presbyterian Church
1124 Montgomery Highway
Vestavia Hills, AL 35216

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Church Fax: 205/822-6739
Website Address: <http://southminsterpcusa.org>
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Staff Members

The Rev. Dr. Tom Bryson, Pastor
Larry Hardin, Dir. Of Music Ministries
David Renaker, Organist
Jeanie Covin, Dir. Of Day School
Betsy Murphy, Church Administrator
Dereck Stewart, Sexton



SOUNDS OF SOUTHMINSTER

*"For unto you is born ... a Saviour,
which is Christ the Lord."*

CHRISTMAS BLESSINGS

Luke 2:11