

"In the bleak midwinter
Frosty wind made moan
Earth stood hard as iron
Water like a stone."

Words by Christina G. Rossetti, 1872 from the song "In The Bleak Midwinter", UMH #221 (CCLI #1607994)

I've always found the New Year to be a strange time. I make resolutions and goals that require my energy, hope and optimism, but the dark, cold month of January dampens my desire to do anything but stay at home under blankets. I seem to forget the boisterous, warm joy of Christmas once the bleak midwinter hits.

"In the bleak midwinter
A stable place sufficed
The Lord God Almighty,
Jesus Christ."

Words by Christina G. Rossetti, 1872 from the song "In The Bleak Midwinter", UMH #221 (CCLI #1607994)

Into the dreariness of winter, the season of Epiphany comes to us as the burning star did for the Magi. We revel in the confounding mystery that God, the Creator of light itself, would choose to make a dwelling with us in this dark world (John 1:1-14). Epiphany invites us to celebrate while the world slumbers, to worship even now in the bleak midwinter for Jesus Christ, God in flesh, has been revealed to us.

~~ Lauren W. Birch

NEW AND IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Lake Junaluska Music and Worship Arts Week – Call For Participants

It's never too early to make summer plans!

We will again this year be taking a group of children (rising 4th graders and up), youth and adults to Lake Junaluska Assembly in the mountains of North Carolina from Sunday, June 23rd through June 28th. This is an annual event designed for worship leaders, musicians, pastors, and singers of all ages. We attend worship services, choir rehearsals, concerts a youth talent show and music-related classes to name a few. There are activities for children and youth including crafts, games, swimming, walks around the lake and, of course...the ice cream shop!

Our group will stay in a large house overlooking the lake. If you or your child/youth is interested in attending, contact Leigh McFalls at 919-818-3317 for more information. The deadline for **early bird** registration is January 15th, so let me know ASAP!

Safe Sanctuaries Training

What is Safe Sanctuaries? Safe Sanctuaries is an overt expression in making congregations safe places where children, youth, and elders may experience the abiding love of God and fellowship within the community of faith.

Why do I need to come? - Even if you have been trained in the past, this time will be a refresher. If you haven't been, you'll want to come learn procedures and best practices we will have in place to keep our church family safe.

For Whom? If you volunteer in youth, chaperones, VBS, or plan to volunteer (this includes all activities), please make every effort to attend.

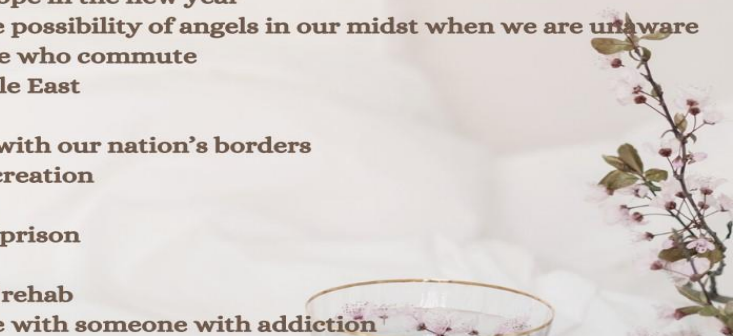
When? - Jan. 21st from 3-5 PM in the church fellowship

Our Duke pastoral intern, Lauren Birch, will be leading the session. If you have questions, please contact the church office.

Prayers

We know the power of prayer in our lives and in our world. God continues to heal, perform miracles, and offer grace and mercy in unexpected ways. We give thanks for the ways the Holy Spirit moves among us. Provided below is a prayer list for the month of January. We'll have a new list each month with prayer prompts for us each to grow in our intercessory prayers and broaden our circles to those we might not consider in our daily prayers. Use this list, pass it on, and let it guide you closer to others and to God in 2024!

January Prayers

- 1st Those preparing for new beginnings.
 - 2nd Those who are expecting a baby in the new year.
 - 3rd Teachers returning to school.
 - 4th Students returning back to school
 - 5th- Bus drivers that keep children safe to and from school.
 - 6th- For God to be revealed in our lives as we celebrate the gift of Jesus as the magi did years ago.
 - 7th- Coaches on sports team
 - 8th- Life coaches and counselors
 - 9th- New friendships to be formed
 - 10th- To be supportive to friends and family
 - 11th - Our church family
 - 12th- Our shut-ins
 - 13th -Those who are sick and facing surgery
 - 14th- Those who are starting new jobs
 - 15th- Those returning to college/higher education
 - 16th- For all those dealing with Flu, COVID, or RSV
 - 17th- For our homes to be places of peace
 - 18th- For those who are experiencing homelessness
 - 19th- For God to be our peace in the new year
 - 20th- For God to guide us in hope in the new year
 - 21st- For God to open us to the possibility of angels in our midst when we are unaware
 - 22nd- For safe travels for those who commute
 - 23rd- For stability in the Middle East
 - 24th- For refugees
 - 25th- For guidance in dealing with our nation's borders
 - 26th- To be good stewards of creation
 - 27th- For those in prison
 - 28th- For those coming out of prison
 - 29th- For those in rehab
 - 30th- For those coming out of rehab
 - 31st- For families that struggle with someone with addiction
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Calling All Committee Chairs in January

Friends,

We are needing to change the time of our meeting on the 28th to 4:30 to set the calendar. The SPRC will be at Camp Chestnut Ridge until 4 for a gathering and we will need some to drive back! Thanks for understanding. Mark your calendars! –Laura

Please check out opportunities to learn and grow in January in your leadership roles! Make every effort to have a meeting with your committee in January and brainstorm priorities, ideas, and commitments for the year. Please set dates for committee meetings for the 2024 year at your January meetings. We will meet together as a church to put everything on the calendar on Jan. 28th at 4:30PM, so please plan to attend this meeting along with our first covenant council meeting of the year on Monday, January 29th, at 7:00 PM.

Newly Forming Evangelism Team

Are you interested in evangelism? Want to reach out to others and visitors we have at church? Want to help with follow-up when we have guests and share ideas to help us to continue to grow? Please see Pastor Laura. We are hoping to form a team soon and would love for you to be a part of this new work!

Sunday Nights Return in February

We are starting back Sunday nights in February after a month of planning in January. We'll meet at the same time 5:30-6:00 dinner, 6:00-7:00 Kids Krew, Bible Study, and Youth Group. Nursery will be provided during the 6-7 hour for families with preschoolers and infants. Come join in on the fun! If you can't make it every week, no worries-we're happy to have you when you are able. We'll start back Feb. 18th and go to March 17th for the winter/spring time. Make sure to add Sunday Nights Together to your calendar as we grow closer to God and grow together as a church family!

We need your help! Sign up to help lead Kids Krew (a lesson will be provided). Please click the link below if you want to help with Kids Krew: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/409044FAFAD29A AFF2-46901879-kids>

Also, please consider signing up to bring food one night. Meals could be provided by families, Sunday school classes, or leadership teams. For questions about the meals, contact Lorraine Hines at 919-619-1090 or lhines0130@gmail.com. You can sign up at: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/409044FAFAD29A AFF2-sunday1>

Tithes and Offerings

We have four ways to give to our ministries. If you would like your offering to be allocated towards a specific ministry, please indicate it in the memo of your check or you will be prompted on the website.

1. Give during our weekly Worship Services.
2. Mail in a check to 7215 Walnut Grove Church Road, Hurdle Mills, NC 27541.
3. Use our church [website](#). Click GIVE in the upper right corner.
4. Use our online giving app "Vanco Mobile".

Budget News as of December 31, 2023

Year to Date Income - \$ 226,509.03

Year to Date Expenses - \$ 224,998.29

Difference - \$ 1,510.74

Matthew 25:35 Fund Balance: \$ 9,020.54

Harvest Festival Fund Balance: \$ 71,769.48 (Note: This figure does not include repairs to the parsonage from the storm damage that we have already received payment from the insurance claim to cover.)

JOYS & CONCERNS

Prayer List

- Family of Betty Roberts (Claiborne Roberts, the family of Debbie Gates, and the family of Lora Cunningham)
- Betty Sue Hyder (cancer treatments), Margaret Williams' sister and Sharyn Gates' aunt
- Pat Sykes
- Debbie Haywood (cancer treatments), friend of Ann and Bruce Richardson.
- Dana Kimrey. He is the brother of Lorraine Hines.

Quilts

Miles Houser, a 2 year-old from Hurdle Mills, NC who has had two surgeries and been in the hospital for 11 days. His parents are Sabrina Crowder and John Houser. They are friends of Emma Beckham.

(The prayer quilt will be at the front of the sanctuary on Sunday. You're invited to tie a knot and say a prayer over the quilt before and after the service.)

Upcoming Birthdays

Friday 1/12 – Alysha Berezny

Saturday 1/13 – Keith Berry

Monday 1/15 – Joanne Cates, Ashley Cecil Howard

Tuesday 1/16 – Martha Long, Worth Miller, Clint Taylor

Wednesday 1/17 – Korie Dean, Emily Sykes Donovan, Taylor Oakley, Susan Taylor

Thursday 1/18 – Amanda Matherly

Friday 1/19 – Sara Bordeaux, Owen Merritt

Saturday 1/20 – June Bumgarner, Michael Dow, Matt Roberts

If your birthday is incorrect or missing, please contact Kim at the church office at 919-732-5722 or by email at office@walnutgroveumc.org so we can update our records.

STAYING CONNECTED

[WG YouTube](#)

[WG Facebook](#)

[Website](#)

[Sign UpHere! For Online Sign-Up](#)

Serving in Worship

January 14th

Acolytes: Anna Robinson/ Max Kemnitz

Greeters: Stephanie & Tyler Smith

Ushers: Pat Beck/Jenny Blalock

Nursery: Ashley Parker/Katie Whitaker

Scripture: Scott Humphrey

Trustee Open/Close: Patty Maseth

January 21st

Acolytes: Isabella Conway/Kennedy Dunlap

Greeters: Margaret Anne Dow/Dale Smithson

Ushers: Jimmy & Brenda Berry

Nursery: Stephanie Smith/Cheryl L Parker

Scripture: Kara Roberts

Trustee Open/Close: Sharyn Gates

NOTE: If you're unable to serve in your role listed above, please find someone to serve in your place and notify the church secretary of the change. This will allow us to have an updated listing to publish each week.

Upcoming Happenings

Fri-Mon, Jan. 12-15	Youth Winter Retreat
Sunday, January 14	9:30am Sunday School 10:30am Worship Service 10:45am Children's Church
Wednesday, January 17	7:00pm Worship Choir
Sunday, January 21	9:30am Sunday School 10:30am Worship Service 3:00pm – 5:00pm Safe Sanctuary Training – fellowship hall
Wednesday, January 24	6:30pm Worship Band 7:00pm Worship Choir
Friday-Sat., Jan. 26-27	Walnut Grove Crafters
Sunday, January 28	9:30am Sunday School 10:30am Worship Service 10:45am Children's Church 4:30pm Calendaring session for committee chairs
Monday, January 29	7:00pm Covenant Council meeting
Wednesday, January 31	6:30pm Worship Band 7:00pm Worship Choir
Sunday, February 4	9:30am Sunday School 10:30am Worship Service
Wednesday, February 7	6:30pm Worship Band 7:00pm Worship Choir
Saturday, February 10	5:30pm Valentine's Dinner
Sunday, February 11	9:30am Sunday School 10:30am Worship Service 10:45am Children's Church
Wednesday, February 14	11:00am Mary Martha Busy Ladies 7:00pm Ash Wednesday Service Worship Choir (following Ash Wednesday Service)

Sunday, February 18 9:30am Sunday School
10:30am Worship Service
4:30pm Worship Choir (Easter)
5:30pm Dinner
6:00-7:00pm Kids Krew, Youth, Bible Study, Nursery

Wednesday, February 21 6:30pm Worship Band
7:00pm Worship Choir

Friday-Sat., Feb. 23-24 Walnut Grove Crafters

Sunday, February 25 9:30am Sunday School
10:30am Worship Service
10:45am Children's Church
4:30pm Worship Choir (Easter)
5:30pm Dinner
6:00-7:00pm Kids Krew, Youth, Bible Study, Nursery

Wednesday, February 28 6:30pm Worship Band
7:00pm Worship Choir

See You Sunday!!