

Grace United Methodist Church

9833 Hixson Pike, Soddy Daisy, Tennessee 37379 423-842-5872



January, 2023

BLESS US
in this new year, Lord.



My future is in
**YOUR
HANDS.**
PSALM 31:15, NLT

Gleanings

Yes, another Christmas has passed. Some of us had days of excitement filled with expectations and joy. Some of us experienced the quiet peace that reminds us of the holy moment of birth. Some of us wept for loved ones no longer with us, and wondered how we would make it through another Christmas. It is, and will always be, a day that is filled with emotion. I doubt we would continue to celebrate it otherwise.

What is it about Christmas that grabs at our hearts? I don't know what touches you, but I find in this season a reminder that God loves us and wants to help us through our journeys. Thus, Christmas is about helping us to remember the greatest love that has ever been.

From the moment of creation to this very day, God has been doing everything he could to show creation just how precious it is to him. The inhabitants of the seas, the sky, and the land, along with all growing things benefit from God's perpetual care. Sunlight, rain, heat, cold, storm, and peaceful day are present to benefit all that lives. Wherever we look we see the mark of God, and that reminds us of the one who came.

Emmanuel.

Translated *God with us*, we see Christmas as the greatest reminder that God wants nothing more than for us to know him, receive his love, and pass that love on to all others. And this is not because we deserve it. No, the love that God pours out upon all comes because of who God is, not because of who we are. The love that God pours out is, thus, a reminder and an invitation.

This statement, attributed to St. Athanasius, best expresses the reason behind the incarnation for me: "God



became what we are, so that we might become what he is.” The birth of Jesus is *the* gift that keeps giving. Do you need hope? Jesus’ birth tells us that God knows what we need and gives it so that we might be filled. At the heart of Christmas, we find the reminder of God’s hope for us, that we might learn to be like God in all that we think, do, and say.

I pray that this season has been filled with God’s presence in your life. Though we have struggled to celebrate in times of war, of natural and human-created disasters, and with the continuing effects of poverty, disease, and the lack of medical care, God has shown us, once again, that faith, hope, joy, and love are ours in Jesus. May the gift that is Jesus be a warm light within your soul that shines forth to bless others.

Pray for peace,
Pastor Braxton ><



January 3 - Rose Hamby
January 6 - Lindsey Burgess
January 9 - Axl Swiney
January 14 - Sherri O'Daniel
January 15 - David Johnson



All ladies are invited to a meeting at the church on Tuesday, January 23, at 6:30 p.m. This will be our planning meeting for the first half of 2024, so come with ideas of mission projects, crafts, outings, or anything else you would like to see us enjoy and share for the next several months. Hope to see you there.



Weber Family	Larry Taylor
Buddy Mattox	Steve Garrett
Ellen Baker	Our Church
Gary Blankenship	Our Country
Becky Woodward	Teachers & Students