



December/January TOWER TOPICS

Not Quite Home...

In those days Caesar Augustus declared that every-one throughout the empire should be enrolled in the tax lists. This first enrollment occurred when Quirinius governed Syria. Luke 2:1-2

I am sure that most people – especially those of us prone to be in churches – have heard these verses read around the Christmas Season. But even beyond the normal church crowd, when the story of **Jesus' birth is told, Luke's gospel is the most popular** and even then, these two verses are not left out. I believe that most people think they are there to give a historical marker to the story. This is very problematic since not much is known about **the exact times Quirinius was "governing"** (the Common English Bible gives a really accurate and non-specific translation of the Greek word there) or about how the Judeans would respond to such a decree during a time that is not exactly known. For instance, we know that during an earlier attempt to **"enroll" people, up to 6,000 members of the Pharisees refused to participate because they had to declare Caesar as "father of the country."**

If we try to use these two verses to nail down the **exact time of Jesus' birth, it is difficult at best and would require huge leaps of faith or conjecture that history just doesn't provide.**

What we can know for certain from the inclusion of these verses is that Luke intended us to see that even while the powerful sat on their thrones and used power to govern and order people around, God was at work preparing to upset the whole power structure. The Son of God was about to enter this world in the humble setting of a stable. That is very important for us to recall this Christmas Season.

It is easy to believe that we can identify the powerful by how much they are able to accomplish

in ordering people and setting up structures that keep people in the proper social order.

God was having nothing to do with that as God sent salvation to earth. Instead, God turned every-thing topsy-turvy and said, **"If you want to see the most powerful One in the universe, look for a baby wrapped in cloth and lying in a manger."**

This is an important reminder for us this Christmas and every Christmas because it can keep us from getting wrapped up in all the wrong things. It can keep us from losing focus on what God is preparing to do even today. Constantly looking at the baby in the manger reminds us that the omnipotent God decided that humility was the best way to show power.

I do hope and pray that you have a blessed Christmas this year. I hope your celebration turns out close enough to what you imagined it would be that you find joy and happiness in its celebration. However, if you find that things go sideways, if you discover that things you hoped for and worked **towards don't go exactly as you had planned and directed in your mind**, if things just suddenly go topsy-turvy on you, then remember this story: the power this world thinks it has is an illusion that is shattered by the cry of a baby in the manger. Caesar, Quirinius, and whoever else was ruling at the time could not overcome the humble work of God in bringing the greatest gift this world has ever received – Jesus.

Merry Christmas everyone!! May it be filled with **humble presence of Christ and the joy of Jesus'** presence among your presents!

Grace and Peace,

Pastor Scott

Special Gift This Christmas

Did you realize that close to 85% of people who start attending worship services on a regular basis do so because a friend invited them? (Less than 5% start attending based upon an advertisement!) So, if you have a friend that you need to give a great gift this Christmas Season, give them the gift of learning about the Good News of Jesus Christ. Invite them to come to church with you during Advent or even on Christmas Eve. **It's a gift that could last for an eternity!**

Advent Series

Advent, Christmas and Epiphany are the first three seasons of the Christian Year. Advent starts four Sundays before Christmas, is followed by Christmas Day and any Sundays until January 5th, and then Epiphany is the closest Sunday to January 6th. **This year's Advent and Christmas theme will be "Words for the Beginning". The series artwork is based upon the concept of a quilt and quilting pieces. The various themes for each week are:**

- December 1 **"Hope - You Are a Blessing"** Luke 1:26-29; Isaiah 43:1-7
- December 8 **"Peace - We Can't Go Alone"** Ruth 1; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12
- December 15 **"Joy - Do the Good that Is Yours to Do"** Luke 3:7-16; Isaiah 58:9b-12
- December 22 **"Love - Hope Is Worth the Risk"** Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:46-55
- December 24 **"The Christ Candle - Love Knows YOUR Name"** Luke 2:1-20; Isaiah 9:6
- December 29 **"Don't Forget to Laugh"** Luke 2:10; Matthew 2:10
- January 5 **"Epiphany - The Road Isn't Straight"** Matthew 2:1-12; Isaiah 43:16-21

Christmas Eve Services

5:00 pm - This service is a bit less formal but still includes a Christmas Eve message, Communion, and Candle Lighting Service.

11:00 pm - This service is a bit more formal and will include a Christmas Eve message, Communion, and Candle Lighting Service. No live Nativity. However, the service tends to end just before Christmas Day arrives, so it is a wonderful way to start the Holy Day!

Special Note - Pastor Scott will be leading a Christmas Eve Service at Central UMC at 7:00 pm on Christmas Eve. If neither of the above two fit into your schedule, the people of Central UMC would welcome your presence with them.

Worship Liturgists and Scripture Readers for Jan & Feb

As we continue to live into the new model of a single Pastor led church, we would like to invite more regular participation of laity in the worship service. We are specifically looking for those who wish to serve as liturgists (leading the call to worship and other acts of worship) and Scripture readers. If you are willing to serve in either capacity, please text WORSHIP and the date you are willing to help please contact Forrest Wamsley who is coordinating these for us now. He may be reached at (681) 203-3911.

News from the Woods

Winter is an exciting time at Asbury Woods as winter sets in and heaters are turned on. Please join us for the following events happening at Camp this winter:

1. First Annual Christmas Market on Saturday December 14 from 10:00am to 3:00pm. Father Christmas may grace us with his presence to bring Christmas Cheer to Camp and all in attendance. Have the kids bring their wish lists to share while everyone can browse potential Christmas presents offered by over 14 local craft businesses. Holiday drinks and baked goods will also be available for sale.
2. Live in Love Winter Retreat will be hosted by Asbury Woods on February 7th through the 9th. Kids 3rd through 12th are invited to brave the winter cold to warm themselves as they will share in a weekend together at Asbury Woods. Registration is available now. See below QR code for registration.
3. Stay tuned to our Facebook page for current news and events. If we get a decent snow, we may just announce a spontaneous sledding day down the Asbury Hills

Thank you all for your continued support in our mission to be a Campground and Retreat Center for all in the local community and beyond.

United Women in Faith

We may have a new name, but it has not slowed us down. Thanks to our donations, the flower sale, the brunch and the Cookie Walk , we were able to donate \$2600 to the ongoing Missions of UWC. Locally, the Dorcas Circle have learned about ongoing missions and have donated generously to their work. In 2022, we supported Branches, Homeless Veterans, Cridlin, and Scott's Run (for the Celebration of Mission Event), and Harmony House. We keep in contact with our shut-ins our shut-ins, write letters to legislators, collect bedding for flood victims. We made health kits and helped fill flood buckets. Next month, we will be filling Valentine's bags for out shut-ins.

MISSION Update: Busy Hands

Our First Church family has served as Jesus' hands in many ways this holiday season. Here are a few of the ways you served:

- Adopted 21 Ebenezer Angels and four children from the Homeless veterans program.
- Provided food, clothing, gloves , hats and volunteers
- The Mitten Tree produced a bountiful crop of 150+ items-hats, gloves, mittens, scarves, socks, and blankets-which were distributed to Ebenezer Outreach, Cridlin, Branches, City Mission and Cabell-Huntington nursery.
- Tie blankets to warm the needy
- Clothes and supplies for Homeless Veterans
- Animals, water, honey, and trees for heifer Project
- Cookies to Branches , Ebenezer, and the City Mission

Cridlin Pantry

96 boxes of cereal in December
96 cans of vegetable soup in January
Drop off donations at the church office or by the soda machine downstairs.

SEASON OF PREPARATION ORDER FORM

CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATES CRIDLIN FOOD/CLOTHING PANTRY

2024 "Warmed and Fed" Campaign
Now through
12/31/24



A Season of Preparation

"She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger..."

HONOR SOMEONE YOU LOVE and PROVIDE
A New Coat (\$20) - Nutritional Food (\$5/person/day)
For Someone Who Can Least Afford It!

Please make checks payable to:
Christian Associates
P. O. Box 595
Huntington, WV 25710-0595

Enclosed please find a check for:

\$ _____

.....
_____ Please check here if you would like a Gift
Acknowledgement Card/s

_____ Please indicate the number of cards requested.

THANK YOU!

Church Affiliation _____

Wesley Children's Choir

December is a busy month for the children. They will be singing for church Dec 8 AND having their DRESS REHEARSAL for "Meet Me at the Manger" after church that same day. Susan Nickels will provide pizza in the Panel Room and then children will need their parents' help getting costumed. Rehearsal will begin as close to 12:30 as possible & conclude by 2:00. Once again, we'll need parents' help with costumes.

EVERYONE is invited to MEET ME AT THE MANGER, the children's musical, which will be presented Wednesday evening, Dec 11 at 6pm in Grubb Fellowship Hall. The children (& quite a few adults!) are excited to perform this Christmas story and hope everyone will attend. It will be the culmination of many weeks of preparation. Sign up for our 5:00 meal and then you'll have a great seat to watch the show.

There will be no Wesley Choir rehearsal Dec 18 but we'll resume Jan 8th.

The Sanctuary Choir

The Sanctuary Choir, along with Lincoln Brass will be presenting a very special service of Christmas music on Dec 22nd at 10:45. Expect to sing along with many of your favorites as well as listen to many new favorites.

Sanctuary Choir will resume rehearsals on Jan 8th.

BRAVA & THANKS to our young pianists who shared their music recently during our worship services: Vivian Yoost & Rebecca Hamilton. They both were wonderful and we look forward to hearing them again.

Wed, Jan 8th would be a great time to join Sanctuary Choir. We'll be staring at a folder full of brand new, unfamiliar music and would love to have extra singers. If you're toying with the idea, talk to a choir member or Debbie or just be brave & show up. We've never kicked anyone out!

Cookie Walk

Sunday, December 8 after church

Get ready for the fastest 20 minutes on the church calendar. For just \$7.00/lb, you can stock up on a banquet of cookies for the holiday season. All proceeds go to benefit the Mission projects of United Women of Faith. But, we can't sell cookies if we don't have bakers, buyers, and eaters!

Dorcas Circle

Dorcas Circle will meet on Tuesday, December 10 and Tuesday, January 14. Join us!

Video Lectures

Grace Gooding is facilitating a Video Lecture Series for Advent on Adam Hamilton's "The Journey". In "The Journey" Adam Hamilton travels from Nazareth to Bethlehem in a fascinating look at the birth of Jesus Christ. This class will take place Wednesdays nights from 6:00-6:45pm in the church library.

Yoga

Yoga has started back up on Wednesday nights at 6pm upstairs in the Yoga room above the Sanctuary! Led by our Office Manager (and formally trained yoga teacher), Allie, this hour long class is slow and meditative. We would be delighted to have you and your friends/family join us!



End of the Year & The Year to Come

Church Family,

I wanted to take a moment to say thank you. It is coming up on a year since I have stepped into my new role of Director of Youth and Young Adults. I am still learning and trying to figure out how to navigate this new role; yet the more time that passes the more comfort I feel in this and the hopes for the future. This past year we changed youth from Wednesdays to Sundays which has caused out numbers to double, and some days, triple. We have gotten to open our doors to some amazing young youth and we are looking forward to the formation of small groups and would love for you to join us in this transition. If you are feeling a stirring for more this is the time.

Young adults, hiking church has been a great ministry and we will be trying to keep it up; weather permitting, during the cold months. And we will be combining the youth and hiking church during the winter months so we can do it when it is at its warmest.

We also started our first young adults Bible Study on Wednesday nights. We put a pause on it for Christmas and will be starting back up on Wednesday January 8th. We are having a get together during the break so please reach out, we would love to have you.

With that being said; there are new adventures that I hope God guides us in and I just ask for grace and prayers as we go into this Holiday season and the new year.

With Love,
Schauna Chambers

Youth Christmas Party

It is the best time of year to celebrate. Our annual Youth Christmas Party will be December 8th from 5-7pm. Come in your best or tackiest Christmas attire to enter to win a prize. Bring a white elephant gift that is fun for everyone that costs \$15 OR LESS and something to eat. The night will be filled with games, prizes and food! For more information please contact Schauna Chambers 304-634-9684

Confirmation Class of 2025

Last year we tried to do confirmation class a little bit differently, by doing an all day class. We are changing that so the youth have more time to ask questions, and think about what they have learned instead of consuming all the information at once. Confirmation is a process where the youth have the opportunity to learn the beliefs of being a United Methodist and have the choice afterwards of confirming your faith and becoming a member of First United Methodist church. If there are any questions please feel free to reach out. Please let Schauna know if you will be participating in confirmation so she can reach out and make the correct preparations for the class.

Youth NEWS

Important Dates for Youth

December 8 - This will be our Youth Christmas Party and last Youth until after the New Year.
**Cherries should be in by the end of this week.

December 15 - Youth will be at 3pm with Hiking Church at Rotary Park. It will last between 1 and 1.5 hours.
It is also the last day to let Schauna know if you are going skiing with the Youth in January.
And the last day to let Schauna know if you will be participating in Confirmation in 2025.

January 12 - Youth resumes

January 25 - Youth Ski Trip

January 26 - No Youth

Youth Ski Trip

The youth will be going skiing in January to Winterplace. We always invite families to come and participate. We need as many adults as we can. It is always one of the favorite things the youth do each year. We need to know by December 15th who will be going and if you will be renting gear. Those that rent have the option for a meal card that saves a money while we are there. Remember this is an up and back trip. Drivers will be needed. If you want to come and hang out with us and be our safe spot to gather, we would love to have you. For more information contact Schauna Chambers 304-634-9684



DECEMBER

Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat

1 5:00pm Dinner Theater	2	3	4 5:00pm Dinner -Hamburgers	5	6 6:30-9:00pm NA Meeting	7
8 12:00pm Cookie Walk 12:30pm Dress Rehearsal	9	10 1:00pm Dorcas Circle	11 5:00pm Dinner - Lasagna 6:00pm Children's Choir Performance	12	13 6:30-9:00pm NA Meeting	14 10:00am-3:00pm Asbury Woods Christmas Market
15 3:00pm Hiking Church/ Youth at Rotary Park	16	17	18 Wednesday Night Activities End until the New Year	19	20 6:30-9:00pm NA Meeting	21
22 Music Sunday 12:00pm Reception	23	24	25	26	27 6:30-9:00pm NA Meeting	28
29	30	31	<div style="border: 2px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>Wednesday Night Activity Schedule</p> <p>5:00pm ~ Dinner 5:45-6:30pm ~ Children's Choir 6:00pm ~ Bible Study/Video Lecture Series, Bell Choir, Yoga 6:30 ~ KFC 6:45pm ~ Sanctuary Choir 7:15pm ~ Youth Handbell</p> </div>			

- 12/01 Trinity Casto
- 12/03 Rhonda Kueck
- 12/05 Andrew Canterbury
- Joseph Eddins III
- 12/06 Grace Gooding
- Charlene Thomas
- Susan Wylie
- 12/07 **Leah O'Roark**
- Steven Powers
- Elizabeth Sergeant
- 12/08 Joey Bacon
- Jacqueline Ward
- 12/10 John Baker
- Allie Bright
- Ben Chiles
- Megan Kueck
- Missy Young
- 12/11 Jonathan Bartram
- Carter Matthews
- 12/12 Wesley Tebbetts
- 12/15 Lauren Cundiff
- Brett Lemley
- 12/17 Paige Cruz
- Tyler Cummings
- Ryan Smith
- Brooks Anderson
- 12/18 Molly Sergeant
- Jack Welch
- 12/19 Quentin Neighborgall
- 12/20 Ken Bannon
- 12/21 Marie Archambault
- Kristy Coleman-Burgess
- Caleb Morgan
- Ray Joyce
- Conner Smith
- Fenton Thomas
- 12/22 Pamela McCoy
- 12/23 August Cooke X
- Linda Eddins
- Elise Hager
- Katherine Reid
- Vivian Yoost
- 12/25 Kevin Dillon
- Donna Rhoten
- 12/26 Kira Turbayevskiy
- 12/27 Geneva Straub
- 12/28 Jolie Eddins
- Brenda Tanner
- 12/30 Aiden Broce
- Arianna Broce
- Avery Peel

January



Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat

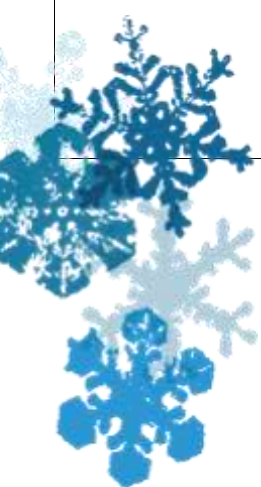


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 6:30 ~ KFC 6:45pm ~ Sanctuary Choir 7:15pm ~ Youth Bells

	1	2	3	4
5	8	9	10	11
12	15	16	17	18
19	22	23	24	25
26	29	30	31	

- 01/01 Brittany Gibson
- 01/03 Levi Krantz
- Hadley Massie
- Killian Rowe
- 01/06 Jacob Eddins
- Teresa Trimble
- 01/07 Josh Linville
- 01/10 William Thomas
- 01/11 Sophia Wylie
- 01/13 Sarah Thomas
- 01/14 Hope Brown
- Allie Turbayevskiy
- 01/15 Tina Goings
- 01/17 John Archambault
- 01/18 Alexee Powell
- 01/19 Jay Shepherd
- 01/20 Sarah Young
- 01/23 Jack Patrick
- 01/25 Brady Blake
- Alexander Bradley
- Holly McKenna
- Kevin Ray
- 01/27 Marikate Polcyn
- 01/30 Alex Hagan
- Kerry Winkler
- 01/31 Cassie Bacon
- Zendal Tatum
- Emily Tschop



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Pastor: Scott Sears
Music Director: Debbie Bradley
Director of Youth & Young Adult
Ministry: Schauna Chambers
Director of Children's Ministries:
Katrina Lee
Finance Secretary: Amy Ward
Church Hostess: Susan Nickels
Office Manager: Allie Bright

Sunday Worship Opportunities
Small Groups 9:30 a.m.
Morning Worship 10:45 a.m.



Next Tower Topics Deadline: January 24

In Our Thoughts and Prayers

*Eternal God! Grant us gratitude enough to look backward and be thankful; courage enough to look forward and be hopeful; faith enough to look upward and be humble; kindness enough to look outward and **be helpful.** Together let us pray... For those who are grieving, sick, or homebound.*

Dawn Aikin, Kathy Bartram, Pris Beard, Pat Broce, Chase Childers, Chris Chiles, Debbie Conley, Mark Cornell, Myra Creek, Linda Eddins, Jackie Eplion, Sandee Folsom, Sonny Hammer, Emma Mace, JD & Diana Maue, Jane McColgan, Steven McGill, Beth McVey, Bob Palmer, Nancy Palmer, Jack Patrick, Sally Richards-Bartram, Marlene Sheets, Dan Smith, Ed & **Alice Stone, Family of Lucille Thaxton (Sue Welch's Aunt),** Jean White, Carolyn Waggoner, Gene Weekly, Carole Wilson

