



SPRING HILL MESSENGER

DECEMBER/JANUARY 2020/2021

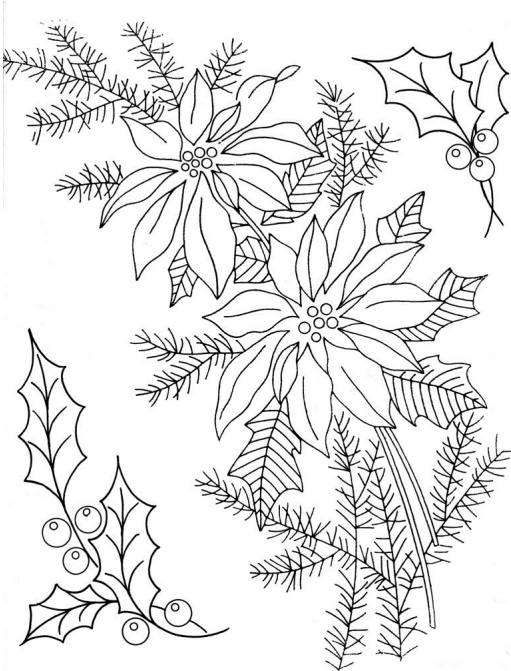
Dear Spring Hill Presbyterian Church Family,

Welcome to Advent! As the calendar year of 2020 draws to a close, the church year (based on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus) is just beginning. In this season of Advent, we focus the attention of our hearts and minds on the mystery of all mysteries: the good news of God's "love begotten" in the world through the birth of Christ. If we slow down just enough to actually take in the reality of the words that we say (and sing) during this time of year our souls just might gasp in wonder, our fears might retreat and hide, our hopes might begin to burn with embers of the ages stoked by the breath of God's Spirit. I know that this year of 2020 with all its diseases, disasters, disappointments, and divisions may seem more broken than normal, but I pray that means that in our brokenness there is even more room for the inbreaking of God's transformative love to "rule the world with truth and grace." So this Advent, come! Come! Whether in person or online, whether in joy or in sorrow, come! Come together with you church family, come safely and wisely with the health of all in mind, come! Come for worship and fellowship, come to all the events described in this newsletter, come!

*"O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant;
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem!
Come and behold Him, born the King of Angels!
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!"*

Grace and Peace,

Buz



POINSETTIAS WILL BE PART OF THE SANCTUARY DECORATIONS DURING the Advent and Christmas Season. These plants will be taken to shut-ins in the name of the church. Please call the church office (342-1550) or email Sallie Connell sconnell@springhillpresbyterian.org if you wish to place a memorial for a loved one. The cost is \$18.00, and the deadline is **December 10**.

PLEDGE CARDS

Pledge cards can still be turned in on Sundays or mailed to the Church office. You can also pledge online at www.shpc.us/pledge.

Dear Friends,

Advent is a season of longing, of waiting, of hope. This year more than others, these feelings are readily at hand. I don't know about you, but I long for normalcy. I wait with anticipation for a vaccine, for this deadly virus to disappear. I know this longing I have, is just a taste of the deeper longing we all have for our Savior, our Messiah—the hope we have as we wait for Christ to come again. We hope for a time when all mourning and pain—all tears will be wiped away.

Maybe that's why already, even before Thanksgiving has started (at least as I am writing this), I see so many people decorating and preparing for Christmas early. Even staunch pastors who are liturgical snobs are putting their lights and wreaths out early. Now more than ever, we need the reminder that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, that “the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it” (John 1:5). I join with the throngs putting my wreath on my door, setting up lights, reminding myself that Christ's light is shining even in the midst of this dark time.

Our theme for this Advent is “O Come, All Ye Faithful.” It might seem strange to have this invitation to come as our theme for Advent when we can feel far apart. You might not be able to come in person. But no matter where we are, Christ invites us to come, to be part of this good news of great joy for all of the people. Christ has come into the world. We, like the shepherds are invited to leave our fields to behold this miracle—Emmanuel, God with us.

While this is a strange Advent, it does not mean that Christmas is canceled. In fact, so many wonderful things are still able to happen this season—just in different ways. First, if you have a child or a youth hopefully an “angel” has already come to deliver an Advent Calendar with tons of fun things for your children and youth to engage in this Advent. For adults, a devotional is being emailed to you; I am excited because it is featuring devotions from years past. **December 6 at 4:00 pm** our children and youth will have a **Christmas BLAST and youth small groups**. On **December 13** we will have an **outdoor Christmas pageant at 4:00 pm** for the entire church to attend on the front steps of the Sanctuary (don't forget your chair or mask). **December 20** we will have a **church-wide Sunday school class via Zoom** with one of my dear friends from seminary, **Rev. Kate Buckley**. Kate has just written a book of poems about this pandemic time called **Bless It**. I think we can all find solace, comfort, and hope from her wisdom and words. Then, our hope is that we can have three outdoor Christmas Eve services at 3:00 pm for children (and families), 5:00 pm and 9:00 pm for adults, so that everyone is invited. I am so excited that we have found a way not to limit the faithful who long to come and that we are able to gather safely.

This Christmas and Advent season looks different. Yet, I am reminded of one of my favorite quotes from Leonard Cohen, “Ring the bells that can ring. Forget your perfect offering. There's a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in.” Much may be different, but let us continue to ring the bells that we can. Let us continue to come to behold the Christ child. Let us celebrate in the ways that we can this good news of God's love.

Grace and Peace,

Anna

MOBILE'S SINGING CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS CONCERT WATCH PARTY

There will be an outside watch party on **December 5 @ 7:00 pm** on SHPC church grounds. Bring a chair, a mask and come enjoy an evening of Christmas music.

Advent 2020 Schedule
"O Come, All Ye Faithful"

Sunday Worship & Church Programs

(Sunday morning worship at 10:30 AM, in-person & online)

November 29 - 1st Sunday of Advent: Ransomed Exiles Called Home

December 6 - 2nd Sunday of Advent: Elizabeth & Zechariah Called in Silence

4:00 PM **Advent-themed B.L.A.S.T. & Youth Small Groups**

December 13 - 3rd Sunday of Advent: Mary Called to Bear Christ

4:00 PM **Outdoor Christmas Pageant**

December 20 - 4th Sunday of Advent: Service of Lessons & Carols

Christmas Eve Worship Services (four worship services)

-Online Communion Service

-3:00 PM Children's Service (outdoors)

-5:00 PM Candlelight Service (outdoors)

-9:00 PM Candlelight Service (outdoors)



Be sure to get your **2020 Advent Devotional Booklet** with some of our favorite reflections written by church members over the last few years. Online versions are included in the weekly church-wide email and hard copies are available at the church. Check our YouTube channel and Facebook page for weekly video devotionals as well.

Christmas Eve Worship Details:

The "holy night" on which we celebrate Jesus' birth is the central focus of the season of Advent, and worshipping together as a church family with singing and candlelight on Christmas Eve is such an important tradition. We often welcome neighbors, visitors, and extended family to these services as well. However, during this time of COVID-19, we find ourselves at alarmingly increased risk by large crowds, shared indoor ventilation, singing, and other critical factors. So, in order to keep our church family safe and keep the essential core of these traditions intact, the church staff and worship committee have been hard at work planning and expanding our Christmas Eve worship opportunities. This year there will be **FOUR SERVICES** for you to choose from as you prayerfully and safely discern how to join in worship.

Online Communion Service: There will be an entirely online option with a full Christmas Eve worship service. This service will include a children's message, homily, and the sacrament of communion. The service will "premier" as a video on our YouTube and Facebook pages beginning at noon on December 24. This is the safest option and the service that includes elements for all ages worshipping together.

3:00 PM Children's Service: This service (along with the other in-person options later in the day) will be planned to occur entirely outside and will be led from the front steps of the sanctuary similar the evening vespers services we have become used to. This service is designed specifically for children and their families. Thus, it will include an extended children's message but no homily for adults. Because the service is entirely outside, with social distancing and masks, we plan to include some limited singing of special Christmas carols. In the event of inclement weather, this service will be moved to the gym in the Bullard Building.

5:00 PM Candlelight Service: As with our other in-person options, this service will occur entirely outdoors with mask-wearing and social-distancing required of all worshipers. These safety precautions will allow us to engage in limited singing of beloved carols in addition to music led by soloists. At the conclusion of the service we will continue the candlelight tradition but with an adjustment for safety and outdoor weather requirements. This year we will use battery operated electronic candles that will not blow out from the wind and will not require a large group of people exhaling at the same time to extinguish. Because the service will occur outdoors after dark we encourage all in attendance to dress accordingly for the cold and to be guided by luminaries on the church ground that will lead you to the worship space. The sanctuary will be the backup location if weather requires the service to be moved inside.

9:00 PM Candlelight Service: Our final service on Christmas Eve will follow the exact same pattern and details as the 5:00 service. In the event of inclement weather, this service will also be moved inside to the sanctuary following time for cleaning and rearranging of seats after the 5:00 service.

We hope that you will carefully consider all the options and risks as you decide which service to attend on Christmas Eve. If you have any questions about these safety protocols please contact Leslie Sweeney (chair of the Worship Committee) or Buz Wilcoxon.

Statement as of October 31, 2020		
Total Annual Budgeted Revenue	\$	860,365
Year-to-date Received	\$	654,362
Other Receipts	\$	27,786
Total Receipts	\$	682,148
Benevolences	\$	43,806
Salaries and Programs	\$	387,683
Office Expenses	\$	9,350
General and Plant Services	\$	19,956
Other	\$	150,985
Total Expenses	\$	642,183
Excess Receipts over (under) Expenses	\$	39,965

Accounting has a few reminders for the NEW YEAR:

1. Contribution envelopes are mailed to your home each quarter. They are great reminders to write your contribution and capital campaign checks and we are glad to provide them for your use.

a. If you have changed over to automated banking to submit your contributions, you may not want envelopes mailed to you any longer

b. If you make your contribution once a month, the first quarter mailing should provide enough envelopes for the whole year...just change the date

Just let Susan Richardson (251-342-1550 or Accounting@springhillpresbyterian.org) know and she will accommodate your request.

2. Payments for multiple purposes (regular contribution, tithe, capital campaign, flowers, etc.) can be made on one check, but PLEASE let us know the breakdown by purpose and amount. If there is no notation on the check, note attached, or noted on your contribution envelope, we will assume it is your regular contribution.

3. If you use stock transfers to our Charles Schwab account for contributions, please notify Susan Richardson that it is coming and the fund you are sending it for. Schwab will not divulge the contributor.

Memorials

Andy Harper Ashley Brown Dick Coats Dot Chambers Mike Belue
Nancy McCrummen Pat Ray Robert Edington

Cammie Belue Richard & Elizabeth Britton Larry & Claudia Brock
Isabelle Campbell Mitch & Sally Cobb Marcy Harris
David Heidorn John & Susan Hoitt Jacobs Family
Roy & Gail Kennedy Margaret Miller Emily Mouron
Angela & James Payne Jimmie & Debbie Shumock
Debra Snider Richard & Jennifer Wiggers
Scott, Susan, Morgan & Luke Walker



Prayer List

Kaye Bradshaw, Edith Cox, Bobby Gewin, Robert Hennig, Lauren Henson, Kay Korb, Norma Magee, Sue McLean, Marilyn Michel, Margaret Miller, Betty Minto, Cort Schlichting, William Shreve, Gladys Sheets, Ransome Sheets, Nicholas Vrakelos, all our military members: Haley Harrell, Susanna Hedrick, Stuart Rubio; **The children in our Big Brother/Big Sister program:** Krystyn, Maylasia, Makenzie, Milaishia, Morgan, Taliah & Xayvion.

The prayers and sympathy of the congregation go to Alla Zakharova on the death of her brother, Vladimir Korneyev, in Moscow, Russia, and to Jain Ann Lane on the death of her sister, Sarah Browning King, on November 8 in North Carolina.

CHRISTMAS IS A TIME for GIVING TO OTHERS
...and you can do that by “shopping” SHPC’s ANNUAL ALTERNATIVE GIFT MARKET
(AGM) form for some of the BEST GIFTS EVER
in honor of your family and friends.

Our AGM order form features representative gifts of hope, benefitting our local community and the world beyond. Forms will be available in November and December on the church website, in newsletters, e-news, bulletins, and in the church office. Gift selections and donations may be made any time prior to December 31 by submitting your gift order form and attached donation check in the offering plate or sending them to Susan Richardson in the church office. Gift cards for you to send to honored friends and family may also be obtained in the church office.

Agencies selected for our 2020 ALTERNATIVE GIFT MARKET

Victory Health Partners Wings of Life
 Penelope House McKemie Place
 Home of Grace Family Promise
 Heifer International
 The Presbyterian Mission Agency (PCUSA)

PLEASE HONOR A LOVED ONE WITH A GIFT FOR OTHERS



John 1:16 - “From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.”

“It is more blessed to give than to receive.”



Thank you! Thank you! All 40 angel cards for children and senior adults have been selected from our tree as a SHPC Act of Faith this Christmas. Gifts need to be delivered to the church Fellowship Hall (Sundays) or the church office (Mon-Thurs.) no later than **Sunday, December 6**. Questions? Please contact Vera Lynn Sheets (call/text 251-454-8646; sheetsvl@aol.com).

Church Calendar – December 2020

- 1- Committees
- 2- PW Coordinating Team
- 6- Advent Festival
Blast and Youth small groups-Crafts-4:00 pm
- 9- PW Circles
- 13- Children’s Choirs
Outdoor Christmas Pageant – 4:00 pm
Youth Christmas Party
- 15- Session - 6:00 pm
Diaconate 7:30 pm
- 20- Service of Lessons & Carols
- 24- Christmas Eve Candlelight Services
Online service
3:00 pm Children’s Service
5:00 and 9:00 pm Candlelight Services
- 30/31– Church office closed for New Years



SHPC YOUTH MINISTRY
SUNDAYS AT 4:00 PM OUTSIDE BRING A MASK AND CHAIR

Jan. 3: Youth Sunday Planning in Small Groups

Saturday, Jan. 9: Day-Long Retreat 2-5 pm @ Baytreat

Jan. 24: Youth Sunday Planning in Small Groups

Feb. 7: Youth Sunday Planning in Small Groups

Feb. 21: Youth Sunday Planning in Small Groups

Mar. 7: Youth Sunday Finale Practice

Mar. 14: Youth Sunday Dress Rehearsal

Mar. 21: Youth Sunday Vespers (evening)

Apr. 11: Youth Small Groups

Apr. 25: Youth Small Groups

May 2: Graduation Sunday and End of the Year Celebration

May 23: Commission Youth Trips at 10:30 am

To Sign-Up for trips, Youth Sunday, and etc. contact Anna at anna@shpc.us, 803-517-7444



Current Issues

Dec. 6 - Deliverance Stories (Class study of the book *Inspired* by Rachel Held Evans)

Dec. 13 - War and Wisdom Stories (Class study of the book *Inspired* by Rachel Held Evans)

Dec. 20 — Church-wide Sunday School for all adult classes with guest speaker Rev. Kate Buckley.

Dec. 27 — No Sunday School — *Merry Christmas*

Church Calendar January 2021

3- Blast/Youth Small Groups 4:00 pm

5- Committees

6- PW Coordinating Team 10:00 am

9- Youth Retreat at Baytreat

10-Ordination & Installation of Officers

Vespers 4:00 pm

13- Circles

18- Church office closed for MLK

19- Session 6:00 pm

Diaconate 7:30 pm

24-Blast/Small Youth Groups – 4:00 pm

31-Worship 10:30

Vespers – 4:00 pm



Exploring Relationships
For the Alphabet Generations and Millennials Too! 9:00 a.m. on Sunday Mornings
(20s-40s Group)

This Winter, we hope that you will join us as we explore Relationships. All of us have relationships and hope to strengthen the bonds we have with our friends and family. Join us on Sunday mornings in January and February on Zoom for fellowship, support, and conversation.

Jan. 10: The Five Love Languages with Amy Patterson and Courtney Perry

Jan. 17: The Sandwich Generation with Stephanie Jacobs (How to care for your aging parents)

Jan. 24: Growing with our Children with Sara McGough

Jan. 31: Church-Wide Sunday School to Share the Budget

Feb. 7: The Enneagram (with Anna or Buz)

Feb. 14: The Enneagram (with Anna or Buz)

Feb. 21: Marriage with Ryann Wilcoxon

Feb. 28: Self-Care with Marian Boteler

Mar. 7: Looking Ahead, a Planning Meeting



Bible Discovery

Dec. 6 - Continue Study of Worship

Dec.13 - Continue Study of Worship

REMINDER

There will be limited church staff in the office the week between Christmas and New Year's. If you need something important from the staff please arrange to work with them before Christmas.

Health and Safety Update

In the spring of 2020, the Session of Spring Hill Presbyterian Church appointed a Coronavirus Commission and adopted a four-step plan to guide decision making about our return to in-person activity at the church. Out of an abundance of caution, SHPC has consulted all the resources available for how to safely begin regathering for worship in our sanctuary, while honoring the directives provided by federal, state, and local government. The full details of this plan can be found on the church website and attached to the weekly church-wide emails. We are still in step 2 of that 4 step plan. In October we made an additional adjustment to allow for a hybrid model of some in-person worship along with livestream/simulcast of Sunday services. The Coronavirus Commission is meeting on a weekly basis and carefully assessing the health data for our community and the changing needs of our church family. Please stay safe this holiday season!

Children's Ministry

BLAST: Bible Learning and Sharing Time is for children ages 3-5th grade. We hope that you will join us at 4:00 on Sunday evenings outside near the front of the church with a mask (and a parent) for a story, craft, games, and music!

CHILDREN'S CHOIRS: Will be meeting the opposite weeks of BLAST outside with masks (the same weeks as Vespers) at 4:00 pm. Pick-up and drop-off is outside the Edington Building. We hope that you will join us as we make a joyful noise!



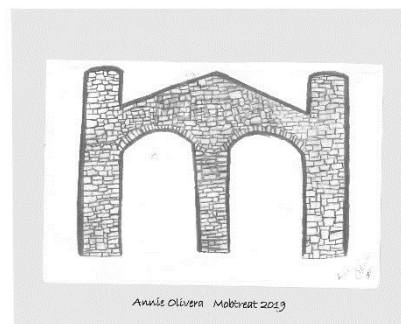
Jan. 3:	BLAST
Jan. 10:	Children's Choirs
Jan. 24:	BLAST
Jan. 31:	Children's Choirs
Feb. 7:	BLAST
Feb. 21:	BLAST
Feb. 28:	Children's Choirs
Mar. 7:	Children's Choirs
Mar. 14:	BLAST
Mar. 21:	Youth Sunday Vespers
Mar. 28:	Children's Choirs Sing (Palm Sunday)
Apr. 4:	Easter
Apr. 11:	BLAST
Apr. 18:	Children's Choirs
Apr. 25:	BLAST
May 2:	Children's Choirs
May 9:	Children Sing

Montreat Trips: Save the date and reserve your spot for our 2021 Summer Trips! Our trips are for completed 5th-8th graders (Montreat Middle School) and completed 8th-12th graders (Montreat High School). Montreat High School will be June 5-11 and Montreat Middle School: July 15-18. To sign-up please email Anna at anna@springhillpresbyterian.org. Cost is \$280. A \$100 deposit is due Feb. 1. Scholarships are available.

MOBTREAT: A Day-Long Retreat with Spring Hill Presbyterian and Government Street Presbyterian

Saturday, January 9, 2021, Youth grades 6-12 are invited to join us for a day-long retreat at Baytreat (18249 Scenic Highway 98, Fairhope, AL). We will be doing this retreat with Government Street Presbyterian. Parents can drop off their youth at Baytreat from 2:00-5:00 pm. We will have time for games, study, sharing, and fun! Don't forget your mask and chair. Cost is \$10. If you sign-up before Jan. 1, you get a free t-shirt! To Sign-Up Email Anna at anna@shpc.us

Also, We need help planning! Join us Dec. 13 at SHPC outside from 2:00-3:00 pm to help us plan. Bring a chair and mask.



Singing with the Spirit--- but Silently

Notes From Randy Sheets, Director of Music Ministries and Organist

Since we resumed in-person worship, people in attendance have said “how hard it is **not** to sing or say the unison prayers and responses.” How different worship feels when we can’t participate with our voices. We can still meditate on the words while the cantor sings or the pastors speak, but we are not able to share a fully-embodied worship.

This a time of musical fasting--- of consciously and prayerfully refraining from audible singing in order to take care of each other, showing our love for each other and all God’s children.

During this time of musical fasting, we have the opportunity to deepen our musical and spiritual experience in a very real way--- by cultivating the ability to whole-heartedly sing and pray and speak while being silent--- to fully engage with the songs and prayers in every way except with our vocal cords--- to sing with our spirits. Here are some thoughts about doing so.

Singing engages our total selves--- not only body, but also mind and spirit. Through intentionally focusing the mind and directing the spirit, we can remember how our bodies feel and sound while singing, and then re-live the experience while listening silently while the cantor sings. In fact, isn’t this what happens when we listen to a favorite song in a setting that normally doesn’t involve our singing, for example in a movie theater or classical concert hall?

Here are some thoughts about cultivating and practicing vital singing—using every part of ourselves except our voices.

Sing silently with the same, or even more, mental and physical energy, focus, alertness, and spirit as when you sing out loud.

Always feel the beat and rhythm. Rhythm is the heartbeat of music. To engage with music, begin with rhythm. Feel the beat--- internalize it so that it pulses within you. If you have trouble connecting with the music, tap your toe inside your shoe or a finger on your thigh.

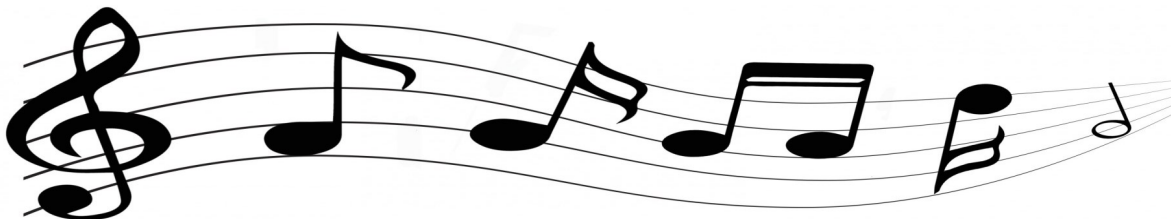
Breathe. When you sing silently, breathe in the same places and with equal vigor as when you sing out loud.

And finally, let us remember two of the instructions from John Wesley’s *Directions for Singing* (1761), and practice them as *Directions for **Silent** Singing*. (Although I am serious about this, I also smile and offer this with tongue-in-cheek; “Singing lustily but silently....!!!”)

Let not a slight degree of weakness or weariness hinder you. If it is a cross to you, take it up, and you will find it a blessing.

Sing lustily and with a good courage. Beware of singing as if you were half dead, or half asleep. Above all, sing spiritually. Have an eye to God in every word you sing. Aim at pleasing God more than yourself.... In order to do this attend strictly to the sense of what you sing, and see that your heart is not carried away with the sound, but offered to God continually; so shall your singing be such as the Lord will approve here, and reward you when he cometh in the clouds of heaven.

Until such time as a vaccine makes it possible for us to return to pre-Covid singing practices, let us praise our God by Singing with the Spirit- just silently.



The Staff at SHPC would like to wish you a

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

