



Parish Presbyterian Church

615-574-1029 / office@parishpres.org

Newsletter for Sunday, December 22nd, 2019

Christmas Eve

Please join us for a Christmas Eve Carol service this Tuesday at 5 PM. Come celebrate the birth of the Savior with beloved Christmas Carols, Scripture readings, and a children's sermon from Pastor Grant.

Parish Christmas Schedule

Sunday School will not meet for the next two weeks, resuming on January 12th. There will also be no nursery care provided during the hour between services on these Sundays. Please note that the Church Office will be open on a limited schedule for the next two weeks.

New Year's Day Prayer Vigil

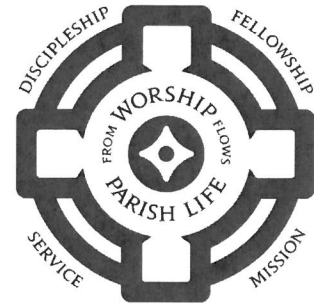
Let's begin 2020 praying together. From dawn to dusk on New Year's Day we will pray in half hour shifts, in our homes, for our world, our nation, our community, and our church. Sign-up sheets and prayer guides are available in the lobby. According to J. Sidlow Baxter, "Men may spurn our appeals, reject our message, oppose our arguments, despise our persons, but they are helpless against our prayers." So, let's go before the throne of all grace with our petitions and supplications for the coming year.

Ladies' Bible Study

The Ladies' Bible Study on evangelism continues for the winter season, as we complete our study of Scripture with *Learning Evangelism from Jesus* by Jerram Barrs. Join us on Tuesday, January 14th at Susan Comer's home from 6:30-7:30 PM. Contact Karen Grant (karen@parishpres.org) with questions.

Prayer Board

A. C. Dixon has wisely said, "When we rely upon organization—we get what organization can do. When we rely upon education—we get what education can do. When we rely upon eloquence—we get what eloquence can do. And so on. But when we rely upon prayer—we get what God can do." Let's take advantage of the opportunity to pray for one another so that we're not relying on ourselves, but on the God of all grace. Stop by the prayer board and take a request to pray for during the week—and please, be sure to leave any requests that you might have.



Calendar

Today—

Worship 8:30 and 11 AM

Tuesday—

Christmas Eve Service: 5 PM

Nursery Volunteers for Next Week

First Service—Kimberly Yates,
Matt/Ginny Morrison, and
Brandon Goodin

Second Service—JoEllen Thatcher,
Daniel Noor, and Julia Bender

Linens

December—Karen Grant

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The Twelve Days of Christmas

Every day, from December 25 to January 6, has traditionally been a part of the Yuletide celebration. Dedicated to mercy and compassion—in light of the incarnation of Heaven's own mercy and compassion—each of those twelve days between Christmas and Epiphany was to be noted by selfless giving and tender charity. In many cultures, gift giving is not concentrated on a single day, but rather, as in the famous folk song, *The Twelve Days of Christmas*, spread out through the entire season.

Though theories vary on the origin of the song (it first appears sometime during the advent of Protestantism in Tudor England) it is likely an urban legend that it was intended to be a secret catechism song during those difficult times of persecution.

That fanciful interpretation of the song has attached very specific meanings to the symbols: the partridge in a pear tree, for instance, was taken to be Christ, Himself: He is represented as a mother partridge feigning injury to decoy predators from her helpless nestlings. The two turtledoves were taken to represent the Old and New Testaments. The three French Hens supposedly symbolized faith, hope, and love. The four calling birds were said to portray either the four Gospels or the four evangelists. The five golden rings were supposed to be the five books of the Old Testament Pentateuch. The six geese a-laying were said to be the six days of creation while the seven swans a-swimming were taken to be the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. The eight maids a-milking were supposed to be the eight beatitudes while the nine ladies dancing supposedly represented the nine Fruits of the Holy Spirit. The ten lords a-leaping were taken to mean the Ten Commandments. The eleven pipers piping were supposed to be the eleven faithful apostles and the twelve drummers drumming were either the tribes of Israel, the elders of Revelation, or the points of doctrine in the Apostle's Creed.

Most of these interpretations are likely dubious legends. For one thing, all of the first seven gifts actually refer to birds of varying types. The fourth day's gift, for instance, was originally four "colly birds," not "calling birds" (the word "colly" literally means "black as coal," and thus these would be blackbirds). The "five golden rings" does not refer to five pieces of jewelry, but to ring-necked pheasants.

But, even though interpretive maximalism likely goes too far, it is equally excessive to assume that the song is "strictly secular," as one debunking web site dubbed it. Indeed, secularism in 16th century England was altogether unknown. The answer to overly anxious allegoricalism is not the equal and opposite error of overly anxious reductionism. Symbols don't have to mean everything in order to mean something—nor do they have to mean nothing.

Very likely, this delightful folk song was just intended to generally and joyously portray throughout the Yuletide season the abundant Christian life, the riches of the Church's covenantal inheritance, the Gospel's ultimate promise of heaven, and the call for us to give, just as we have received.

Lessons abound for us in this: the holiday season constantly presents us with temptations to either over-read or under-estimate the celebratory expressions all around us. That is why Scripture needs to be our first and surest lens through which to understand everything else.

Sunday

Luke 2:1-7

St. Luke tells of the birth of Jesus.

Monday

Micah 4:1-7

All nations shall find peace from the God of Jacob.

Tuesday

Luke 2:8-14

The angels proclaim the birth of Christ to the shepherds.

Wednesday

Psalms 98

The Lord has made known his salvation.

Thursday

Luke 2:15-20

The shepherds go to the manger.

Friday

Philippians 2:5-11

The humility of Christ.

Saturday

Titus 2:11-3:7

The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.