

# Grapevine Newsletter

# January 2026

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## A PRAYER FOR THE NEW YEAR

God of this new year, we are walking into mystery.  
 We face the future, not knowing what the days and months will bring to us or how we will respond.  
 Be love in us as we journey.  
 May we welcome all who come our way.  
 Deepen our faith to see all of life through your eyes.  
 Fill us with hope and an abiding trust that you dwell in us amidst our joys and sorrows.  
 Thank you for the treasure of our faith life.  
 Thank you for the gift of being able to rise each day with the assurance of your walking through the day with us.  
 Thank you for our families and our church families.  
 God of this new year, we praise you as we join in building your kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

Amen.

Joyce Rupp

# The Pastor's Pen: January 2026

## *“A New Year of God’s Amazing Grace”*

### By: Rev. Don Mitchell

*“Amazing Grace! How Sweet the Sound, that saved a wretch like me!”*

Over the years, how many times have we sung that wonderful old hymn, *Amazing Grace*, written by John Newton back in 1779? Each time, something deep stirs within us, and we’re reminded of the constancy and wideness of God’s mercy and grace.

If we look closely at the lyrics (UMH #378), we find that its six powerful verses carry us through each stage of our faith journey from “the hour we first believed” to the moment “when flesh and heart shall fail”...and we enter eternity with God and all those saints who have passed before us. “Grace,” as another hymnwriter says: “...can pardon and cleanse within. And God’s grace is greater than all our sins.”

Based on all the ways the word is used in beloved hymns of the past, as well as in religious and secular ways in modern day, you may have wondered what is God’s grace really all about? What’s so amazing about it? And why is it so important in these lives of faith we share? If so, you’ll want to join us for our **Winter Wednesdays Bible Study beginning January 21<sup>st</sup> and continuing through Ash Wednesday, February 18<sup>th</sup>** (3:00 until 4:15 pm) in the upstairs Armstrong Classroom.

Our topic each Wednesday afternoon will be “Grace for the Journey” as we explore the Rev. Max Lucado’s book entitled *Grace: More Than We Deserve and Greater Than We Imagine*. After prayer and a brief

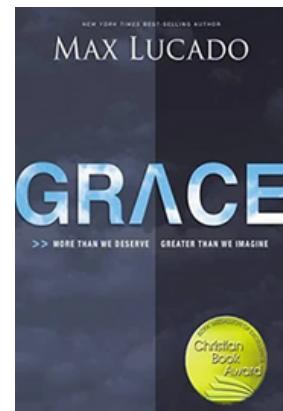
DVD segment we’ll spend time talking about various Scripture passages that describe grace, and how to live as grace-filled disciples of Jesus Christ in 2026.

This New Year, do you need a little more grace? Or... is there someone to whom you may need to give a little more grace? If so, join us for some warm and open conversations among friends. For surely, “through many dangers, toils, and snares, we have already come. It was grace that brought us safe thus far; and grace....*God’s amazing grace....will lead us home.*”

May every day of 2026 be filled with amazing grace and blessings for you and your families as we continue our journey in ministry. I look forward to our study of grace as we explore God’s Living Word together.

With love and appreciation,

*Pastor Don*



# January 2026 Sermon Series: “Walk with Me”

## January 4 - Epiphany Sunday

*Celebration of Holy Communion*

“Paying Homage”

Isaiah 60:1-6; Psalm 72:1-7 and 10-14

Matthew 2:1-12

## January 11 - Baptism of our Lord Sunday

Isaiah 42:1-9; Psalm 29; Acts 10:34-43;

Matthew 3:13-17

## January 18

“Calling Names”

Isaiah 49:1-7; Psalm 40:1-11;

John 1:29-42

## January 25

“Fishing for People?”

Isaiah 9:1-14; Psalm 27:1, 4-9;

1 Corinthians 1:10-18; Matthew 4:12-23

# January Bible Study

## *Grace: More Than We Deserve and Greater Than We Imagine*

A New Bible Study led by Pastor Don will begin on Wednesday, January 21<sup>st</sup> at 3:00 pm upstairs in the Armstrong Room.

It's entitled: *Grace: More than We Deserve and Greater Than We Imagine* by Max Lucado.

The series will run for five weeks, ending on Ash Wednesday, February 18<sup>th</sup>.

**Week One: January 21: Session One: *The Grace-Shaped Life***

**Week Two: January 28: Session Two: *Jesus Stooped Low to Take Our Place***

**Week Three: February 4: Session Three: *You Can Rest Now***

**Week Four: February 11: Session Four and Five: *Accepting the Gift of Wet Feet and Coming Clean Within Grace that Abounds.***

**Week Five: February 18: Sessions Six and Seven: *Chosen to a Guaranteed Place in the Family and Sustaining and Sufficient Grace***

# Flower Ministry

We have all of 2026 dates available for Sunday morning flowers on either the Retable or in the Narthex. Please sign up for flowers using this link:

[\*\*Flower Calendar\*\*](#)

# Chapel Concert Series

Music concerts are held the first Thursday of each month from 7-8 pm in Mt. Sylvan's Chapel featuring Christian music groups from the Durham area. There is no cost, and refreshments are available. If you have any questions about the Chapel Concert Series, please direct them to Kent Dixon.

\*For new music from Kent Dixon and Neil Allen, check out their YouTube Station:

[Dixon & Allen](#)

There is no Chapel Concert in January.  
Our next Chapel Concert will be on February 6, 2026, at 7:00 pm with Larry Chason

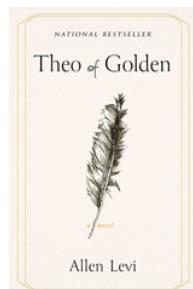


## Book Club

On January 13, at 7 pm, we will have a meeting of the Mt. Sylvan Book Club!

We will read *Theo of Golden* by Allen Levi, and look forward to a great discussion!

We will meet in the Armstrong Room, and refreshments will be served.



## Stewardship Update

The final balance of giving and expenditures will be included in the next newsletter. If you have any questions, please contact one of the Finance Co-Chairs: Nancy Smith or Tom Herbert, Treasurer, Lori Browning, or Assistant Treasurer, Jim Davidson.

As we plan for the New Year of ministry and service together, please be sure to turn in your 2026 Estimate of Giving/Pledge Card as soon as possible.

*Thank you!*

# Congregational Care

## Azalea Estates Retirement Community

700 N. Estes Dr., Chapel Hill, NC 27514

Alvis Hardy - Apt. 235

## Croasdaile Farms Retirement Community

2600 Croasdaile Farms Parkway, Durham, NC 27705

June Armstrong - 202 C Heritage

## Eno Pointe Assisted Living

5600 N. Roxboro Rd., Durham, NC 27712

Beverly Robbins - Room 314

Maxine Rogers

## Solista Durham

205 Emerald Pond Lane, Durham, NC 27705

Mike Brooks - 227

Gail Chappell - 339

## TerraBella

Pat & Clarence Hill

140 Carriage Club Dr., Apt. PM8

Mooresville, NC 28117

## Parkview Health & Rehabilitation Center

1716 Legion Rd., Chapel Hill, NC 27517

Anna Andrews - Room 912

## Roxboro Assisted Living (Cambridge Hills)

5660 Durham Rd., Roxboro, NC 27574

Carolyn Brooks - Room 303

## The Meadows at Briar Creek

11700 Arnold Palmer Dr, Raleigh, NC 27617

Linda Stevens - Apt. 213

## Woodland Terrace

Pat & Millie Jackson - Apt. 233

300 Kildaire Woods Dr, Cary, NC 27511

## Eagle Point Apartments

901 W. New Hope Rd., Goldsboro, NC 27538

Peggy Cates - Room 235

Rev. Bess Hunnings

6977 Crestpoint Dr.

Apollo Beach, FL 33572

## Prayer Concerns:

Betty Acre, Rosetta Anderson, Chip Andrews, Kathy Bryan, David Bryant, Linda Cheatham, Herb Cimburke, Priscilla Coleman, Tricia Deal, Pat Dixon, Johnny Duncan, Willard & Elizabeth Flintom, Isabella Fortier, Philip Hardy, Ray and Bill Hauver, Terry Janes, Marvin & Juliane Jones, Mike Kelley, Yvonne McFarland, Betty Mitchell, Phyllis & Bob O'Keef, Everett Pace, Tommy & Susan Parker, Thomas Satterwhite, Bob and Linda Skinner, Tom & Susan Taylor, George & Kaye Tilley, Beth Walton, Tanya Watkins, Susan Weldon, Gay Williams, Hilda & John Wrenn, Kathy Wynne, & Kenneth Wynne. Family of Kitty Forton. Prayers for those who have lost a family member: Kim Cyprian, Missy Flintom, Cindy Knapp, Bettye Wendt, Yvonne Wilkins

## Church Staff:

Rev. Don Mitchell, Rev. Kathie Wilkinson,  
Heather Thompson, Rev. Bill Nordan,  
Allison Brown, Bobby Pettiford, Hannah Horne,  
Jennifer Scarlett, Lynn Lee, & Preschool Staff

## Connectional Ministry

Bishop Connie Mitchell Shelton,  
D.S. Rev. Claire Clyburn

## Our Partners in Ministry:

North Durham School Partnerships

## Serving Our Country:

Dan Armour, Mike Armour, Darren Edwards,  
Thomas Glenn, Jonathan Lecky, Thomas Lecky,  
Chase Murray, Craig Taylor, Bryan Thompson, &  
Madison Thompson, all our military & veterans

# United Methodist Men

Prayer Breakfast Thursdays at 8:00 am

January 1- No Meeting  
January 8 - Silver Spoon Diner  
January 15 - Fellowship Hall  
January 22 - Fellowship Hall  
January 29 - Fellowship Hall

**Peanuts are for sale!**  
If interested, contact Charlie Thompson,  
Larry Smith, or Tommy Wade

## United Women in Faith



UWF Circle Meetings for January	
<b>Faye Watkins Circle</b> Monday, January 5 7:00pm Action Class	<b>Beulah Cole Circle</b> Wednesday, January 21 9:45 am Parlor
<b>Ruth Cook Circle</b> Thursday, January 8 6:00pm Parlor	<b>RosaBelle Mangum Circle</b> Sunday, January 4 Epiphany Luncheon 2:30 pm Trackside Tavern
Executive Committee January 11 at 4:00pm	

# Missions

## January Food Collection:

Due to the holiday, please drop off your January Food donations in the blue bins near the Fellowship Hall.



*Thank you!*

## Dates:

January 3

February 7

- Cereal
- Oatmeal
- Instant Grits
- Cereal Bars
- Shelf Stable Milk

## Fellowship Dinners



Our Wednesday Night Fellowship Dinners will resume on February 11.



## RosaBelle Mangum Circle

The RosaBelle Mangum Circle will have an Epiphany Luncheon on Sunday, January 4. The luncheon will be held at the Trackside Tavern in Roxboro, and will begin at 12:30 pm!

## Grief Share



Join us as we learn more about surviving grief and encourage one another on the journey. For more information, contact Pastor Kathie or Kathy Rhodes.

# Assisting in Worship

## January 4

**Greeters:** Katy & Roy MacDonald, Barbara Peoples  
**Ushers:** Lorri Givens, Susan White, Wayne & Ruth Booth  
**Crossbearer:** Riley Honeycutt  
**Acolytes:** Drew Honeycutt & Paisley Lee  
**Sound Technician:** Tim Wilkinson  
**Slide Operator:** Melanie Rogers  
**Streaming Operator:** Miles Brown

## January 11

**Greeters:** Jennifer Morton, Denise Glymph, Donna Bowers  
**Ushers:** Mt. Sylvan Children  
**Crossbearer:** Aleah Spears  
**Acolytes:** Emerson Brown & Carolyn Hair  
**Sound Technician:** Tim Wilkinson  
**Slide Operator:** Chandler Hair  
**Streaming Operator:** Patrick Miller  
**Trustee:** Chandler Hair

## January 18

**Greeters:** Mary Ann Sellers, Kathy Temple, Debbie & Ron Fielhauer  
**Ushers:** Audrey & Gary Fisher, Rick & Kathy Ebersohl  
**Crossbearer:** JohnPaul Rodio  
**Acolytes:** Blaire Flintom & Colton Flintom  
**Sound Technician:** Tim Wilkinson  
**Slide Operator:** TBD  
**Streaming Operator:** Patrick Miller

## January 25

**Greeters:** Elaine Williams, Kit Chappell, Naida Upchurch  
**Ushers:** Judy & Lin Jones, Gary Miller, Luke Rogers  
**Crossbearer:** Izzy Blalock  
**Acolytes:** Hutchins Brown & Adeline Wilkinson  
**Sound Technician:** Tim Wilkinson  
**Slide Operator:** Lance Rogers  
**Streaming Operator:** Kim Cyprian

## R Wave Respite



Beginning on Monday, February 2, 2026, Algersgate UMC will be offering *R Wave Respite*, which is respite care for partners of mild to moderate dementia-afflicted individuals. This will operate every Monday from 10:00 am - 2:00 pm. For more information on this important ministry or to volunteer/sign up, please contact [rwaverespite@alerdersgate.org](mailto:rwaverespite@alerdersgate.org) or click the link: [R-Wave-Respite](http://R-Wave-Respite)

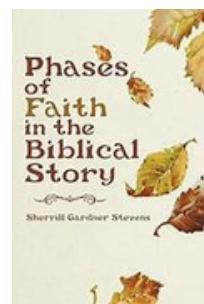
## Families Moving Forward

A bi-annual coordinators meeting was held recently. Here are a few of the facts she told us about homelessness in Durham, according to Entry Point Durham. As of December 15, there are 37 unsheltered families and 15 at risk of facing homelessness in the next 14 days. At the end of September, FMF had served 50 families in the NEST (FMF shelter) and 47 in the Branching OUT aftercare program. Mt. Sylvan's host dates for the first half of this year are March 10 and June 2. Reach out to me if you are willing to help serve a meal on either of those nights. Current needs are all listed on this FMF In-Kind link: [FMF](http://FMF)

Kit Chappell, coordinator

# Phases of Faith

Resuming on January 7 at 11:30 am on Zoom. In this weekly study, we are learning more about the writers of the Scriptures and their beliefs about God at the time they were written. Learning more leads to greater understanding as we think about hard questions. You are invited to join this study hosted by Pastor Kathie and taught by author Dr. Sherril Stevens. The Zoom link is in the Wednesday Constant Contact each week.



Contact Pastor Kathie if you have any questions.

## Youth Room Open House



## Thank You Notes

On behalf of your pastors and church staff, we want to thank you for the generous Christmas Love Offering that has been distributed among all the staff. We are also grateful for the many cards, baked goods, gifts, and acts of kindness we have received throughout the month of December. We love you and are grateful to serve in ministry alongside this faithful church family. As 2026 begins, we look forward to all that God has in store for us as we continue to work, minister, and serve together.

Mt. Sylvan Church Staff

Thank you so much for your support and prayers during my recent knee surgeries. Your care through flowers, a prayer quilt, and cross were so appreciated and made a big difference in my recovery. I feel so blessed to have found this church community.

Thanks again and God Bless,  
Donna Grier

Thank you for the bag of goodies, cards, and visits. I really appreciate it!

Gail Chappell

# Creation Care

In *A Christmas Story*, much of the film is centered around mealtime, including a minor plot line about the ongoing challenge of getting Randy, Raphie's little brother, to eat. Randy wastes a lot of food, and he is not alone: According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, approximately one-third of all food produced worldwide is wasted. It is obvious how food waste contributes to food insecurity, but what is less recognized is the significant contribution it makes to climate change. This discarded food often ends up in landfills, where it decomposes anaerobically (without oxygen) and releases methane, a potent greenhouse gas.

In addition to food waste, we create a tremendous burden on creation with single-use plastic food packaging. 82 million tons of plastic waste are generated in the US each year from food packaging, and 95% of that ends up as waste after just a single use. Plastic waste does not decompose; instead, it breaks down into increasingly smaller pieces that end up everywhere: in the soil, in the water, in food, and even in our bodies.

By making mindful choices at home, supporting community initiatives, and advocating for systemic changes in the food industry, we can all contribute to building a more sustainable future. Addressing food waste not only helps protect our planet but also ensures that precious resources are used efficiently and equitably. There are several simple things that everyone can do immediately to help reduce the waste generated from our food system:

- Use reusable shopping bags.
- Save leftovers in reusable containers.
- Organize food storage at home to see what food needs to be eaten.
- Compost food scraps.

Mt. Sylvan's Creation Care Team is focusing on reducing waste associated with food in 2026. We hope the entire congregation will join us in this effort.

## December at Mt. Sylvan





# January Birthdays



Joy Hollar - 1/1  
Luke Vincent - 1/1  
Clif Flintom - 1/2  
Randall Clark - 1/4  
Archer Wilkinson - 1/4  
Heidi York - 1/4  
Anne Young - 1/4  
Kathie Wilkinson - 1/5  
Mike Brooks - 1/7  
Sandra Jones - 1/7  
Donna Bowers - 1/9  
Laurie Flintom - 1/11  
Kale Synan - 1/13

Ashley Rogers - 1/14  
Carolyn Jackson - 1/15  
Joanne McLees - 1/15  
Joyce Pendergrass - 1/15  
Gloria Rabon - 1/15  
Barbara Hertz - 1/16  
Cindy Knapp - 1/16  
Tim Wilkinson - 1/18  
Isabella Fortier - 1/20  
Mike Hall - 1/20  
Ron Pendergrass - 1/20  
Kathleen Karamanian - 1/21  
Derek Morton - 1/21

Bryan Poer - 1/21  
Annetta Andrews - 1/22  
JohnPaul Rodio - 1/23  
Sam Edwards - 1/25  
Jim Davidson - 1/27  
Susan Dunnagan - 1/27  
Kathy DeLuck - 1/28  
Judy Jones - 1/28  
Blaire Flintom - 1/21  
Darren Pieh - 1/31



## Youth Ministry

**January 4**  
9:30a Youth Sunday School  
5:30p Youth Band  
6:00p UMYF

**January 11**  
9:30a Youth Sunday School  
5:30p Youth Band  
6:00p UMYF

**January 18**  
9:30a Youth Sunday School  
5:30p Youth Band  
6:00p UMYF

**January 25**  
9:30a Youth Sunday School  
5:30p Youth Band  
6:00p UMYF



### CAN YOU FEED OUR YOUTH ON A SUNDAY EVENING?

We need volunteers to feed the youth each Sunday evening.

We aren't too picky, and we usually have about 25 youth and counselors.

Sign up using the Sign Up Genius below or see Jennifer Rogers for any questions.

The youth and counselors thank you for your support of our youth ministry.

[Youth Dinner Signup](#)



MT. SYLVAN UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
*Children's Ministry*  
JANUARY 2026

## WHAT WE'RE TEACHING... JANUARY 2026



**EXTRA-ORDINARY: A 4-Week Series from the Gospels on Jesus' Early Life & Ministry**

### CHILDREN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL

**9:00AM-10:15AM IN THE TREEHOUSE (Children's Center)**

**PRESCHOOL/LOWER ELEMENTARY (3 YRS. - 2ND GRADE)**

**UPPER ELEMENTARY (3RD - 5TH GRADE)**

SCAN FOR MORE CHILDREN'S  
MINISTRY RESOURCES



Inventors take ordinary objects and transform them into extraordinary innovations with some creativity and a lot of tinkering. But Jesus didn't need tools, blueprints, or a workshop to make extraordinary things happen. On the outside, Jesus may have seemed ordinary, but his life, actions, and love regularly defied expectations. He transformed ordinary people and situations, showing us what an extraordinary God can do. In this 4-week series, kids will learn that **Jesus is one of a kind, Jesus is humble, Jesus trusted God, and Jesus calls us to follow.**



MT. SYLVAN UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
*Children's Ministry*  
JANUARY 2026



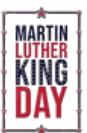
## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

### **Serve in the Children's Ministry!**

The Children's Ministry is looking for your help! We are looking for volunteers to help with Sunday School, Children's Small Group, Disciple Scouts, Nursery, and Children's Events.

If you are interested, please contact Heather Thompson  
([heather@mtsvlvan.org](mailto:heather@mtsvlvan.org))

# January 2026 at Mt. Sylvan Church

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
<b>4</b> 9:30a Sunday School 10:30a Worship <b>12:30p RosaBelle Mangum Lunch</b> 6:00p Youth	<b>5</b> 12:00p Staff Lunch 7:00p AA Meeting <b>7:00p Faye Watkins /Luster Gold Smith Circle</b>	<b>6</b> 11:00a Sylvan Seniors 6:00p Al-Anon <b>7:00p Missions</b>	<b>7</b> 10:30a Preschool Chapel 11:30a Bible Study 6:30p Mt. Sylvan Ringers 7:30p Choir Practice
<b>11</b> <b>9:15a Youth Open House</b> 9:30a Sunday School 10:30a Worship <b>4:00p UWF Executive Committee Meeting</b> 6:00p Youth	<b>12</b> 3:00p Staff Meeting 7:00p AA Meeting <b>7:00p SPRC</b>	<b>13</b> 11:00a Sylvan Seniors 6:00p Al-Anon <b>7:00p Trustees</b> <b>7:00p Book Club</b>	<b>14</b> 10:30a Preschool Chapel 11:30a Bible Study 6:30p Mt. Sylvan Ringers 7:30p Choir Practice
<b>18</b> 9:30a Sunday School 10:30a Worship 6:00p Youth	<b>19</b> Office Closed 7:00p AA Meeting  	<b>20</b> 11:00a Sylvan Seniors 6:00p Al-Anon <b>7:00p Finance Committee</b>	<b>21</b> <b>9:45a Beulah Cole Circle</b> 10:30a Preschool Chapel 11:30a Bible Study 3:00p Bible Study 6:30p Mt. Sylvan Ringers 7:30p Choir Practice
<b>25</b> 9:30a Sunday School 10:30a Worship <b>12:00p Church Council Planning Meeting</b> 6:00p Youth	<b>26</b> 3:00p Staff Meeting <b>6:30p UWF General Meeting</b> 7:00p AA Meeting	<b>27</b> 11:00a Sylvan Seniors 6:00p Al-Anon	<b>28</b> 10:30a Preschool Chapel 11:30a Bible Study 3:00p Bible Study 6:30p Mt. Sylvan Ringers 7:30p Choir Practice

Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>1</b> Office Closed 	<b>2</b> Office Closed	<b>3</b> <b>10:00a Food Collection</b> 5:00p AA Meeting
<b>8</b> 8:00a UMM Prayer Breakfast 10:30a 4C's Bible Study 12:30p Prayer Shawl Ministry <b>6:00p Ruth Cook Circle</b>	<b>9</b> 12:30 Prayer Shawl Ministry <b>12:30p Fabulous Friends</b>	<b>10</b> <b>9:00a More Than Neighbors</b> 5:00p AA Meeting
<b>15</b> 8:00a UMM Prayer Breakfast 10:30a 4C's Bible Study 12:30p Prayer Shawl Ministry	<b>16</b> 12:30p Prayer Shawl Ministry	<b>17</b> 5:00p AA Meeting
<b>22</b> 8:00a UMM Prayer Breakfast 10:30a 4C's Bible Study 12:30p Prayer Shawl Ministry	<b>23</b> 12:30p Prayer Shawl Ministry	<b>24</b> 5:00p AA Meeting
<b>29</b> 8:00a UMM Prayer Breakfast 10:30a 4C's Bible Study 12:30p Prayer Shawl Ministry	<b>30</b> 12:30p Prayer Shawl Ministry	<b>31</b> 5:00p AA Meeting

**Rev. Don Mitchell**

Lead Pastor

[don@mtsylvan.org](mailto:don@mtsylvan.org)

**Rev. Kathie S. Wilkinson**

Pastor of Congregational Care

[kathie@mtsylvan.org](mailto:kathie@mtsylvan.org)

**Allison Brown**

Office/Communications

[allison@mtsylvan.org](mailto:allison@mtsylvan.org)

**Jennifer Scarlett**

Business Administrator

[bizadmin@mtsylvan.org](mailto:bizadmin@mtsylvan.org)

**Heather Thompson**

Children's Ministry Coordinator

[heather@mtsylvan.org](mailto:heather@mtsylvan.org)

**Rev. Bill Nordan**

Minister of Music

[bill@mtsylvan.org](mailto:bill@mtsylvan.org)

**Lynn Lee**

Preschool Director

[mtsylvanpreschool@msn.com](mailto:mtsylvanpreschool@msn.com)

**Hannah Horne**

Nursery Coordinator

[nursery@mtsylvan.org](mailto:nursery@mtsylvan.org)

**Rev. Bess Smith**

Pastor Emeritas

5731 N. Roxboro Rd., Durham, NC 27712

919-471-0032, [www.mtsylvan.org](http://www.mtsylvan.org)

You Tube: @mt.sylvanchurch-durham1571

Facebook: @mtsylvanchurch

## Sylvan Seniors Programs

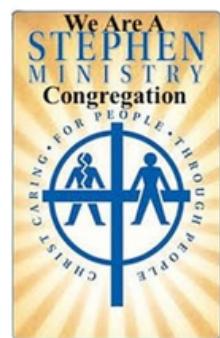
Tuesdays at 11:00 am  
in the Fellowship Hall

**January 6**  
Installation of Officers - Epiphany

**January 13**  
Program Reflections and Suggestions

**January 20**  
Singing and Soup Day

**January 27**  
Music by Jane Sellars



**Church Office Hours:**

Monday - Friday: 9:00 am - 4:00 pm