



TRYON TRUMPET

Tryon Presbyterian Church

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The Shepherds, Page 5

Taste for mission, Page 6

Kids in costumes, Pages 16-18

Advent season promises joy

Advent begins November 30, but we will see special events during worship even before then.

We just celebrated All Saints Sunday, and here's what's coming up:

November 9 is Commitment Sunday, when we respond to our Stewardship Campaign with pledges of financial support and gifts of time and talents. Our new Children's Choir will sing during worship for the first time. The Adult Choir also sings, and we will have a guest musician, oboist Daniel Ellis. There will be a congregational meeting immediately following worship to elect three Session members.

November 16 will see the commissioning of our Shepherds and the official start of our Shepherd Ministry.

November 23 will be our "Thanksgiving Sunday." The Adult and Children's choirs will sing. Guest musician Buddy Deshler will play trumpet and our Hank Sibley will play trombone.

November 30 is the first Sunday of Advent. Pastor Allan Purtil begins a weekly Advent study called "The Will to Dream" at 9:30 a.m. (See Page 2 for more about that.)

December 7 is Communion Sunday. Breakfast at 9:30 a.m., with the Advent study.

(See ADVENT on Page 2)



(From ADVENT on Page 1)

December 14 will have a special “Christmas Choir” focus with guest musicians during the 10:30 worship service. Advent study at 9:30. We will send off a group of Christmas carolers at 4 that afternoon.

December 21 will bring our cherished Christmas Pageant during the 10:30 worship service. (There will be a full rehearsal on Saturday, December 20, from 10 a.m. to noon. If you are interested in getting involved, please see Deanna Bancroft or Amy McGrath for more information.) Advent study at 9:30.

December 24 is our 6 p.m. Christmas Eve service.

December 28 will feature Lessons and Carols. The Advent-Epiphany study continues at 9:30 a.m.

January 4 is Epiphany Sunday. The final Advent-Epiphany study is at 9:30 a.m.

We will share a joyful and meaningful celebration of the Advent and Christmas seasons.

Special study begins on Advent Sunday

Pastor Allan Purtill and Director of Children’s Ministry Amy McGrath will lead an Advent study called [“The Will to Dream.”](#) Curriculum notes state:

“When the world feels weary – divided and uncertain – hearts ache, communities long for justice and souls hunger for hope. In these moments, while many search for a way forward, the act of dreaming becomes holy resistance. Dreams remind us of possibility: There is enough love, mercy and courage for all.

“ ‘The Will to Dream’ highlights the stories of Advent-Epiphany as witnesses to God’s dream of a new world. From Isaiah’s visions to Mary’s song, from Zechariah’s prophecy to the defiant journey of the magi, these scriptures call us to nurture prophetic imagination.

“As we journey through Advent’s holy longing into the wonder of Christmas and the revelations of Epiphany, we learn to dream not as escape, but as sacred action. This season, gather your community to lament honestly, hope boldly and imagine together the world God is making.”

The study will be at 9:30 a.m. Sundays, through Epiphany Sunday on January 4, and will include breakfast on December 7.

Listen to “The Will to Dream” song [here](#).



Church of the Annunciation, Nazareth.

'Blessed are those who mourn'

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted" – Matthew 5:4.

This second Beatitude is one that none of us can ignore. There will be no escape from it.

The paradox here is that our world wants to enjoy life, yet Jesus says grieve, which is a huge denial of worldly standards. Most of us have grieved profoundly and wept so long and so much, we thought there would be no end.

A good question is: What kind of mourning brings us blessing? What on earth was Jesus referring to when we lose the love of our life?



The problem is our instinct to avoid pain, all kinds of pain. I think that is true for all of us. Most of us conceive that life is given only for our comfort. So, when whatever kinds of problems overtake us, we are shocked. Often we rebel against pain, or maybe evade it, pretend nothing is wrong. Instead of learning from it, and making the whole event an oblation, our instinct can decide to rebel against it.

Hopefully, most of us who follow our Lord will come to terms with the pain or loss, take it upon ourselves to look around us and give of ourselves to help others who are experiencing that with which we are acquainted, which affords us the privilege of entertaining "angels unawares" (Hebrews 13:2). The problem is that many of us would rather not get involved. Many folks are just not cut out to bring the kind of comfort that is required for these kinds of life experiences.

One scholar suggests a deeper meaning to this Beatitude: "Blessed are they that mourn for their sins." Their conscience perhaps is quicker than those who rarely ponder what might be considered personal sins. It is good, however, to recognize our sins and do like the tax collector who said, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13).

Recognizing the sins of the world and just how lost we are comforts those who seek to care more about this thing called death. Those who are lost and have no hope are terrified of death. In not knowing Jesus as Lord and Savior, their fear is palpable. They who live with this fear have no comprehension of our joy when those we love are taken to the Lord.

Our joy is expressed by John in Revelation 21:1-8. I ask you to read all of it, but I quote only part for our purposes now: "I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'See, the home of God is among mortals. He will

(See BLESSED on Page 4)

(From BLESSED on Page 3)

dwell with them as their God; they will be His peoples, and God Himself will be with them; He will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more, mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.' ”

John continues by reminding us, “Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true. Then God said to John, ‘It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life. Those who conquer will inherit these things. I will be their God and they will be my children.’ ”

I will let you read verse eight. My passion in life is to give hope to all, knowing full well there is another side to ponder!

By Rev. Mary A. Potter

‘Treasure Hunt for Grace’ concludes Sunday

Our Stewardship Campaign, “Treasure Hunt for Grace,” has carried us through a sea of blessings. Now that we have charted our map to grace and discerned how to share our gifts, it is time to offer the pledge by placing it in the treasure chest. This will help guide our ship through the year ahead.

Remember, our gifts go beyond the financial but include our time and talents. This is important as we launch a new Shepherd Ministry, plan the next phase of our Christian Education program, continue to help our region’s recovery from Hurricane Helene, tackle the problem of hunger in our own community and look for more ways to love God and neighbor as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Thanks for sailing with us, and thanks to God for so many treasures.



Terri Hendrix, above, has led our Stewardship Campaign. Left: The pirate theme has been fun, with even Pastor Allan participating from the pulpit, briefly.

Shepherd Ministry begins service this month

The Congregational Care Committee is pleased to report that after several months of thoughtful and intentional work, a new pastoral care ministry will begin its work this month. This ministry is an invitation to all who are part of our church, regardless of membership, to find connection, comfort, compassion, friendship and fellowship with other followers of Christ.

This ministry provides a means for shepherds, ministers and staff to be attentive and responsive to the immediate and long-term pastoral care needs of our congregation. Our goals and hopes are to always be mindful of the needs of our congregation and community and to share the light and love of Christ with all.

In the coming month, you can expect to hear from your shepherd. And, at least once a quarter, he or she will contact you. As a member of a flock, you can contact your shepherd anytime to share pastoral care needs and prayer concerns. And, of course, anyone can contact Pastor Allan to share pastoral care needs and prayer requests at any time.



Stained glass in the Episcopal Church of the Holy Cross, Tryon.

During our worship service on November 16, our church will commission 19 people who have stepped forward to serve as shepherds. Please pray for each of those who will be commissioned and will serve in this ministry. They are the following:

Doris Clark
 Tom Clark
 Gretchen Morris
 Susan Speight
 Charlie Speight
 Ellen Hendrickson
 MaryAnn Sloan
 Caroline Brown
 Gail Muir
 Catherine Lynch
 Cherie Brooks
 Bonnie Sakos
 Joanne Alderman
 Gayle Casterline
 Denny Hill
 Kim Boswood
 Woody Headden
 Jacque Headden
 Amy McGrath

For more information, contact Bonnie Sakos, chair of the Congregational Care Committee.

Mission conversation flavors breakfast

Breakfast was served with a mission before church on Sunday, November 2.

Pete Bellamy, Woody Headden and Steve Habel prepared French toast, bacon and fruit, and Amy McGrath led a presentation on how we meet our Mission Statement: To be and make disciples of Jesus Christ, who love God and their neighbor.

This was part of a series of First Sunday breakfasts, which are seasoned with lessons for the whole family. Attendance has been good.

Missions Committee Chair Bill Sullivan gave the Moment for Stewardship during worship, and Amy's program was a more detailed preview. As St. Francis may or may not have said: "Preach the Gospel at all times, and if necessary use words." We are called to live out the Gospel in large part by serving others.

As Bill said, mission isn't something we do occasionally, it's an attitude we have.

Our church has a strong record of supporting and doing mission, abroad and in our community. It has taken our members as far away as Taiwan and Guatemala, while we also serve others through the Blessing Box in our parking lot or opening our doors to people who have needed a place with electricity, running water and internet connections after last year's hurricane.



Amy McGrath leads a program about missions.



First Sunday breakfasts have been popular with young and older folks.

We live out our love for God when we show love for neighbors – and in a changing environment, we must always look for new or more effective ways to meet community needs. Amy mentioned some mission ideas circulating around our church right now. They include:

A coat drive for the Polk Referral Center. Assembling bagged meals for our Blessing Box or food drives. Collecting clothing and

hygiene items for needy students at Polk County High School and Middle School. Providing gift bags for adult clients of the Department of Social Services. Placing a laundry/shower trailer outside our church.

The last idea would meet the needs of local people who still don't have clean water or laundry/shower facilities at home more than a year after Helene. Many details would have to be worked out, but donated funds designated for long-term relief work are available.

Amy asked how we want our church to live out the commandments Jesus gave us. The answers flow from our Mission Statement.

Please help keep food in our Blessing Box

During November, the Missions Committee is collecting food items for the Blessing Box to support those in need this winter. Your generous donations of the following items will make a big difference: Canned meats, canned pasta, canned stews and soups, cereals, crackers and bread.

Please bring your donations to the church by the end of November. Let's work together to ensure everyone has the food they need during the colder months. Thank you for your kindness and support!



Program offers help with grief during holidays

Are you, or someone you know, grieving the loss of a loved one? The holidays are challenging when you're grieving a loss, but this free two-hour event provides encouragement, support and valuable tools to navigate the holiday season. Join us for this holiday seminar on Saturday, November 8, at Tryon Presbyterian Church from 10 a.m. to noon.

To register, go to griefshare.org/holidays and search for our church. If you have questions, you can email Kim Boswood at GriefShare.tpc@gmail.com.

Tryon Trumpet

The Tryon Trumpet is a publication of Tryon Presbyterian Church and its Membership Committee, chaired by Rennie Habel. The editor is Doug Clark, dougclark55@gmail.com. Your contributions – suggestions, articles, devotionals, photographs – are welcome.

Thanks for help with this edition go to Mary Potter, MaryAnn Sloan, Jacque Headden, Amy McGrath, Bill Sullivan, Janet Gilchrist, Jane Wilson, Lynnette Sills, Bonnie Sakos, Terri Hendrix, Susan Speight, Michael Meissner, Kim Boswood, Wes Elam, Allan Purtill, Kim McPherson and the Presbytery of Western North Carolina.

Step forward for Christian Education

It's time to have another conversation about Christian education. Is it a requirement for a church to offer Christian education? And what exactly does that encompass? What does Christian education mean to the Tryon Presbyterian Church family? And how do we embody it in our ministry?

We Presbyterians have always embraced the values of education, asking questions and exploring our beliefs. But if worship is the only time we receive our "Christian education," then when do we ask questions and explore our own beliefs? For many adults, it is in small groups or book studies. But for many of us, including our children, perhaps there is no other opportunity to bolster our Biblical knowledge and explore our beliefs in a loving community.

And this is where we find the true value and opportunity in our Christian Education programs. Our thoughts and beliefs can only get us so far – until we reach a point where we really need answers. While "Jesus loves me" might be enough for a 3-year-old, it gets more complicated for a 13-year-old.

So, where do we look for answers? Friends? Family? The internet? The world? Where are our children learning about God? The playground? The dinner table? Their friends? All these can contribute to personal development, but time spent intentionally with the word of God is something we don't find many places.

So where do we fit Christian Education into our busy schedules? Do we continue in the traditional Sunday School model? Before the worship service? After? During? Every week, or two or three Sundays a month? What works best for most of us and for most parents?

What should be taught? Bible stories and lessons? Christian values in a contemporary context? Some combination? Importantly, who will teach? Do we have enough adults willing to take on this responsibility? Should that even be a question?

Director of Children's Ministry Amy McGrath and our Christian Growth Committee, currently led by Michael Meissner, are asking these questions. They hope for answers, ideas and support from our congregation. This fall, Sunday School as it had been the previous spring and fall took a step back. Instead of weekly classes for children, breakfast has been offered at 9:30 a.m. the first Sunday of each month, and with it a short lesson for

(See EDUCATION on Page 9)



Amy McGrath leads Time with Young Disciples.

(From EDUCATION on Page 8)

the entire family. Attendance has been good, but is it providing a consistent Christian education for our adults and children alike?

Let's step forward and make a plan. After all, Presbyterians aren't known for flying by the seat of their pants. We plan our worship services months in advance, we anticipate building repairs years in advance, and we already know when next year's Thanksgiving dinner will be served. Our plan for Christian Education should be no different.

As we find ourselves in the midst of another stewardship season, many of us are looking for new ways to share our gifts with our church family. Is your gift teaching? Is your gift showing up? Is your gift listening? Is your gift learning? A Christian Education program requires many gifts and all ages to be successful.

If you are feeling called to lead, attend or support our church's Christian Education programs, please plan to attend an informational session on Sunday, November 23, after worship in the Fellowship Hall. We hope you will be a part of this very important ministry of Tryon Presbyterian Church!

Thanksgiving comes early at TPC

We will celebrate Thanksgiving as a church family – one week early.

Our Fellowship Committee and Cook Team will serve a traditional Thanksgiving dinner on Thursday, November 20, at 5:30. Last year's dinner was very popular, so be sure to make your reservations. The cost will be \$10 for diners 12 and over and \$5 for ages 6-11. Kids under 6 eat free. Remember, no takeouts! Stay and share Thanksgiving in our Fellowship Hall.

Then, plan for fun with the Tryon Family Christmas Drop-in from 5:30 to 7 on Saturday, December 13. The party will include Christmas tree decorating, children's activities, adult fellowship and heavy hors d'oeuvres. No charge! More details to come.

The Fellowship Committee and Cook Team have given us a year of wonderful events, but they aren't done yet. 'Tis the season!



Our last fellowship meal was October 19.



Mary's Song delivers timely Advent message

One of the most stirring Advent messages was delivered by Mary during her pregnancy with Jesus, as recorded in Luke 1:46-55. The passage is known as Mary's Song or the Magnificat.

She speaks in the present tense, but her words are prophetic.

"His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation," she says of the One "who has done great things for me."

"He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty," she adds in verses 51-53.



In these lines we see "in sharpest focus what has been called a classical statement of God's activity: the lowly are raised and the lofty are brought low," according to the late Fred B. Craddock, who was New Testament professor at Candler School of Theology, Emory University. "More is involved than the social message and ministry of Jesus in behalf of the oppressed and poor. That will follow, to be sure, but here we have a characteristic of the final judgment of God in which there is a complete reversal of fortunes: the powerful and rich will exchange places with the powerless and poor."

William Barclay, the late Scottish Bible interpreter, put the implications of the passage simply: "A Christian society is a society where no man dares to have too much while others have too little, where every man must get only to give away."

"There is loveliness in the Magnificat but in that loveliness there is dynamite. Christianity begets a revolution in each man and revolution in the world."

When wealth inequality in our country and across the world is rapidly expanding – indeed, when there are signs of increasing food insecurity in our own community – Mary's song is an Advent statement of utmost urgency.

By Doug Clark

The illustration is "Mary Great With Child," a fresco painted in 1974 by Ben Long. It is in St. Mary's Episcopal Church in West Jefferson, N.C. Several Ben Long frescoes can be seen at St. Mary's and in Holy Trinity Episcopal Church in nearby Glendale Springs. They are well worth a visit!

Endurance run supports Old Fort recovery

I wouldn't consider myself a runner. Not even an athlete. But maybe just someone who doesn't fully think through all her decisions.

When we moved here and I was looking for a job, I needed something to do that didn't cost any money to break up the application process. I started walking and hiking, sometimes for hours at a time because ... I didn't have anything better to do. And then one day when I was hiking, I saw someone running on a hiking trail and I decided I wanted to try that. I started trail running with mixed results – lots of slips and falls, but I got to spend time in my favorite place – the woods. I immediately liked the fact that it was a mind and body experience. I had to pay attention to every step or else I would wipe out, step on a snake or miss a turn. The dirt trails weren't as hard on my ankles, knees and hips (serious concerns for an aging runner). And I often have the pleasure of sneaking up on wildlife.



Amy recently completed the Ache Around the Lake at Lake Lanier.

These runs became the highlight of my week. Time when I could think, pray, cry and shout to God, "What do you want me to be doing?!" But my runs were never very far, they never lasted very long, and I sure wasn't breaking any land speed records. They were comfortable.

But sometimes we aren't meant to be comfortable. Last fall, after Hurricane Helene devastated much of Western North Carolina, I became overwhelmed by how much need there was. Like many, I wanted to help but wasn't sure what to do or where to go. Lives lost,

homes destroyed, communities broken, natural areas devastated – where do you even begin?

For me, I had to go back to the woods, and I had to look up. After carefully navigating so many downed trees, I looked up to see more sunlight breaking through the canopy. And I knew that sunlight means growth, sunlight means opportunity, and sunlight means change. This was my hope for life after Hurricane Helene: growth, opportunity and change. But it has been slow, and I still feel more helpless than helpful in the wake of the storm.

Then, a few months ago, I received an email about a trail race to raise money for the town of Old Fort. The email came from Camp Grier, a Presbyterian summer camp about an hour away from us. The camp where Jesse had his first overnight camp experience and learned how to mountain bike. The camp where a handful of other children from TPC have gotten to experience God, friendship, nature and so much more. The camp that is surrounded by a small community that was nearly destroyed during Hurricane Helene.

Camp Grier responded quickly after the storm, creating a new nonprofit called Old Fort Strong that had the goal of raising \$2 million to rebuild Old Fort. They have already done tremendous work, but the work is not

(See **ENDURANCE** on Page 12)

(From ENDURANCE on Page 11)

over, and they are still working to raise more money. And one way is through the [Old Fort Strong Endurance Festival](#).

This is what caught my eye. Running in the woods to raise money for the community that houses Camp Grier seemed like a no-brainer. Or perhaps, as I stated earlier, I just didn't fully think through my decision.

I am now one month away from this race, and honestly, I'm not sure what I was thinking when I registered for it two months ago. I have good days and bad days when I am running. I feel joyful and light as a feather some days and angry and heavy as a boulder other days. A lot of times, the word "I" runs through my head: "I don't think I can do this," "I wasn't made for running," "I think I'm going to die."

But when I finish a run, I remind myself that this isn't about me. This is about the people of Old Fort. I'm not doing this to win or break a record. I'm just doing this so I can raise money for folks who have lived through something terrible. The discomfort I have chosen is different from the type of discomfort they didn't choose. This discomfort is a privilege I am lucky to have.

If you would like to support Old Fort Strong, you can make a donation through my fundraising page [here](#). And don't worry, I don't have to finish (or even survive) the race for your support to go to good use. If you would like to support me, I would greatly appreciate your prayers!

By Amy McGrath

A 'band of witnesses' helps during ordeal

My granddaughter, Hannah, is off to a great start in the nursing program at the University of South Carolina. She has found a great group of friends and is soaking up the entire college experience. However, her former high school boyfriend has turned into a stalker. The final straw was when he posted a picture online posing with a gun and issuing a threat.

At that point, Hannah went to the campus police. They listened to her, *heard* her, and went into action. Hannah was assigned a victim's advocate to help her through the process and who also secured pro bono lawyers to handle Hannah's case for a restraining order.

Needless to say, this has been a scary situation for our family. The court date was October 16. Charlie and I drove to Columbia to be there as



Susan Speight's granddaughter had to bring a case against a stalker.

(See WITNESSES on Page 13)

(From WITNESSES on Page 12)

support. Before going into the courtroom, I stepped into the restroom. That's when God showed up! He was in the form of a woman custodian, April, and she prayed a beautiful prayer over all of us.

The next surprise was in the courtroom when we met three lawyers from the best law firm in the state there to represent Hannah's case. The victim's advocate was there, too, along with two of Hannah's roommates and, of course, her mother.

Due to a glitch in serving a subpoena to the ex-boyfriend, we were all sent home without a resolution. When we left the courtroom, there was April again with a send-off prayer. We had a host of friends and even strangers as far away as Texas praying for Hannah that morning, and I literally felt their prayers encircling her and all involved. I felt uplifted and overflowing with gratitude. We were truly surrounded by a "band of witnesses." To God be the glory.

The next court date is November 13.

By Susan Speight

Presbytery news

Green Mountain congregation returns home

The town of Green Mountain in Yancey County was severely damaged by the waters of the Toe River following Helene last year, and that included Green Mountain Presbyterian Church. More than a year later, we have good news to share. Rev. Garland Honeycutt reports:

"Yes! We were so excited to have our first worship service back in our church building this past Sunday (October 19). It was a powerful moment, a true homecoming! In light of all the enthusiasm and energy, we did not get the chance to take any pictures. Folks were just way too excited to be back, and we forgot!

"Suffice it to say, our congregation was delighted to be back home in our building. This marked our first worship service back in the building since Easter Sunday. From Easter until then, we had been meeting every Sunday across the river from the church under a neighbor's carport.

"Although renovation of our building is far from completed, we are blessed to have the opportunity to worship again in our sacred space. Our congregation recognizes that Sunday's victory was only made possible by the gracious support and help of sister churches, generous donors, compassionate neighbors, as well as help from FEMA and N.C. Emergency Management Services. We are thankful!"

(See PRESBYTERY on Page 14)



The church before flooding from Helene.

(From PRESBYTERY on Page 13)



This is Rutherfordton Presbyterian Church during worship before the meeting of our Presbytery October 28. We can spot our pastor, Allan Purtill, and our former music director, Lesley Bush. Can you?

Presbytery elects General Assembly commissioners

The Presbytery of Western North Carolina, meeting at Rutherfordton Presbyterian Church October 28, elected six commissioners and a young adult delegate to the 2026 PC(USA) General Assembly.

The three teaching elder commissioners will be: Leah Epps, pastor of Greenway Presbyterian in Lenoir (who is also the current moderator of the Synod of the Mid-Atlantic); Michael Poulos, pastor of First Presbyterian of Spruce Pine (who is the current chair of the Commission on Ministry); and Dan Commerford, senior pastor at First Presbyterian of Gastonia.

The three ruling elder commissioners will be: Barbara Massey Arnold of Third Street Presbyterian in Gastonia; Barbara Nagy of Waldensian Presbyterian Church and former mission co-worker in Malawi; and Bob Forsythe of Trinity Presbyterian in Hendersonville, our Presbytery's parliamentarian.

Our young adult delegate will be: Marcus Sigmon of First Presbyterian in Newton, currently a student at Catawba Valley Community College.

General Assembly meets June 22-July 2 in Milwaukee.

Our cross is restored



Workers from Western Carolina Stucco & Stone completed repair and repainting work on the cross gracing the front of our church last month. First, they had to assemble extensive scaffolding and place protective plastic covering on the building. The job was not for the acrophobic! Thanks to the Property Committee for making sure our exterior is once again in splendid condition.



In and around Tryon Presbyterian



Trunk or Treat October 26 brought out plenty of trunks and treats, not to mention creative costumes and displays. Thanks to everyone who made it a fun Halloween celebration for church kids and visiting families!







Clockwise from top left: Rennie and Steve Habel and Bill Sullivan greet guest preacher, the Rev. Rebecca Albright, after worship October 26; Sully McGrath rings the bell for worship as Dad Jon watches; Wes Elam hangs out with Sam Waymon, Nina Simone's brother, at the Tryon International Film Festival; Richard Kennedy and DeAnne Zaeske; John McGrath is taking on more responsibility in our sound room during worship.



Top left: Ready for worship. Right: The church grounds barely showing the colors of autumn. Above: Crosses shine with the light of Christ.