December

2025
SMOKE SIGNAL

Our Mission Statement
Sharing the love of Christ with ALL people.

"*Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven*."
Matthew 5:16

Burnt Factory Church
P. O. Box 399
Stephenson, Virginia 22656
burntfactory.org
PH: (540) 667-4993

This letter is from one of my favorite Christian writers, Max Lucado. I think he says very well what Advent and Christmas is all about.

"The idea of grace is so foreign and antithetical to the popular misconceptions about God and even other religions that when the bible talks about salvation as a free gift of God's grace, many people respond with a blank stare. There is a mental and emotional disconnect. We are so used to receiving conditional love, "I will love you if ….." or "I love because …." that unconditional grace is an unfamiliar and even uncomfortable concept.

Religion is man's attempt to please God. Grace is God reaching down to man. The big idea behind many religions is that you must work, strive, and put forth great effort in order to get God to like you.

So God came to earth as Jesus essentially to say: “You guys got it wrong!” Of course doing good things matters, but it doesn’t make me love you any more or any less. My love for you is unlimited, unchanging, and undeserved. So let me teach you a new concept called grace. You can’t purchase it, work for it, or be good enough to merit it. It’s a gift that will cost me a lot, but it’s free to you.

While many religions are based on the word “do” salvation is based on the word, “done.” When Jesus died for you on the cross, he exclaimed, “It is finished!” It’s extremely important to note that Jesus didn’t say, “I am finished,” because he wasn’t. Three days later, he came back to life, resurrected from death, and walked around Jerusalem for forty days. He met with individuals and groups of up to five hundred people before ascending back to heaven.

So what was finished? The payment for your salvation! The phrase, “it is finished” means “paid in full” Religion says “do” Jesus says, “done!” He has already taken care of the expense of your salvation.

Years ago, a guy asked me, “What must I do to get to heaven?” I shocked him by replying, “You’re too late.” He didn’t expect that answer and anxiously responded, “What do you mean, it’s too late to do anything?” I said, “What needed to be done was done for you two thousand years ago by Jesus. All you need to do is accept what he’s already done for you. There’s nothing more to add. It’s grace plus nothing.”

Our Christmas gift from God comes by grace through faith. Jesus is the best gift the world has ever received!

Merry Christmas

Pastor Steve

December Birthdays

1st Judy Sue Kempf
2nd Kathy Feight
3rd Maureen Dick
4th Nikki Prami
6th Sam Lentz
Mike Sipe
11th Austin Luttrell
12th Rylee Jenkins
Emily Rees Hartman
13th Eric Russell
14th Clayton Sutphin
18th Elie Ratliff
19th Angela Hart
22nd Ashley Sutphin
23rd George Kempf
24th Christian Fairbanks
25th JESUS!
26th Polly Duvall
27th Tom Duvall
28th Don Duvall
29th Bonnie Henry
30th Melissa Clemons
31st Edna Chase

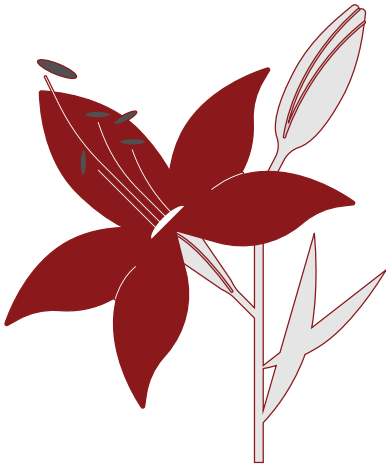
Happy Anniversary

6th Stuart and Judy Wolk
12th Jim and Sharon Pitzvada
21st Jay and Ann Kackley
28th Tim and Ann Perrault

"But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord."
- Luke 2:10-11

CONDOLENCES

As many have experienced the loss of a loved one, please remember them in prayer:



- Sandra Bouder's sister, Jeanette, claimed the promise of the resurrection.
- John Conley claimed the promise of the resurrection.
- Jan Loeffler's great nephew claimed the promise of the resurrection.
- Merlene Black has claimed the promise of the resurrection. After 95 years on this old earth, she has now received her new home in heaven.
- Randy Wilfong has claimed the promise of the resurrection.

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted."

- Matthew 5:4

Children's Ministries!!

Blessed Holiday Greetings!

I want to say what an honor it has been to serve this church as the Children's Pastor for 12 years. So many long days planning events, researching curriculum, writing policies and procedures to protect our precious children, visiting and watching games, recitals, and competitions. Long nights of studying curriculum to teach, praying over children and families, and building sets, props, and backdrops for VBS and Christmas plays, studying and learning songs with movements to teach, stuffing Easter eggs, and of course Sunday Morning hugs and smiles! Last Sunday two little boys came to me and each gave me a little Jesus, said they both were for me, (a little double Jesus for me!) I have carried them in my pocket for two weeks and I can tell you that every time I reached into my pocket, Jesus was there! I thought about the innocent hearts that wanted me to have these little pocket Jesus' and heavenly joy filled my soul. We should all carry pocket Jesus' everywhere. I have truly been blessed and I know that I will be blessed in my new role as Associate Pastor in a whole new way. This church means so much to me, and I am truly blessed to have such a place to come to work every day in the office, and serve outside the campus as well. I look forward to what the new year will bring for Burnt Factory Church and the new positions. I will still be in prayer for our children and families, I will still from time to time go to their activities to cheer them on, and I will still look forward to all the Sunday morning hugs and smiles because a child's love is so pure and innocent, so intentional and that is a true blessing from the Lord. May this holiday season bring you all wonderful blessings, heavenly joy, and peace that only God can give.

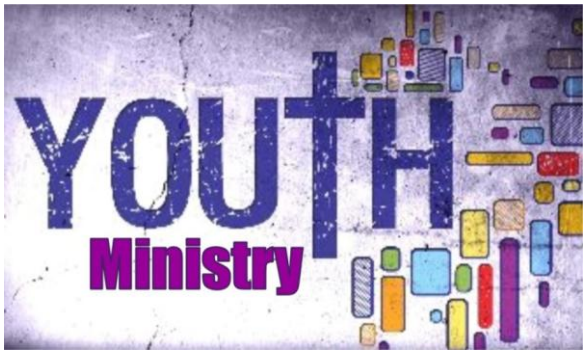
With love,

Carrie Fair

Minister of Children and Administration

Children's Christmas Program

December 14th at 6pm the children and youth will present a hilarious version of the 25 days of Christmas. Come and be entertained!



DECEMBER EVENTS:

Questions/comments, please text Miss Erin 540-535-5283

December 6th (Saturday):
Time: 8am
WATTS cleanup; youth will meet at the Ruritan

December 7th (Sunday):
Time: 6-9 pm
Christmas play practice in the sanctuary; pizza afterwards in the youth cottage!

December 21st (Sunday):
Time: 5-7 pm
Youth Holiday Party at Northside Lanes! We are doing an ugly Christmas sweater theme; shoes/food/drinks provided!

Have you given your email address to Keith Roberts, yet?

Pastor Steve has special notices he needs to send to those who attend Burnt Factory. The notices will include not only prayer concerns but also schedule changes during bad weather.

Keith keeps an email list in his computer for just such purposes. Your email address is protected, and emails are sent, recipients not disclosed, to protect your privacy.

Kindly send your email address to Keith Roberts at john.k.roberts@comcast.net with the message:

“ADD ME TO THE CHURCH EMAIL LIST”

Would you like to receive the Smoke Signal Newsletter by email?

Kindly send an email to Becca Ratliff at beccalea.ratliff@gmail.com with a subject:

“Add me to the Smoke Signal Newsletter email distribution”

Greetings from Outreach

The Outreach Mission Statement

"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ." 1 Peter 4:10-11 (NIV)

"For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon his shoulder. And his name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Isaiah 9:6

As we enter the Advent Season, the Outreach Team is busy working with our ongoing ministries. But this time of year, we also get to serve in ways that are unique to the season. WATTS is the first week of the month, and there are signups in the Fellowship Hall for both Social Services Christmas food baskets, and for Salvation Army bell ringing. The need for food, housing, and warm clothing continues and is critical as winter arrives. Your help is needed to make our efforts a success. We welcome you to join us in serving our community, in Christ's name, during this Christmas Season.

Merry Christmas To You All And May God Bless and Keep You.

Sharon Woodard
Outreach Committee Chair
sfwoodard111@gmail.com

CCAP Corner

CCAP Mission: Guided by our faith in God and love of neighbor**,** CCAP is committed to helping our neighbors meet basic needs with food, clothing and financial resources.

Thank you, Church, for the tremendous collection of food items for the CCAP Thanksgiving meal giveaway:

- We collected food for more than 25 complete Thanksgiving meals, including the turkeys. With our monetary donations, we purchased an **additional** 45 turkeys.
- This past week, we collected 2515 diapers, 8 packs of wipes and 15 warm, soft blankets. Jody Stephenson of the Red Wagon Ministry and her grandson came to help collect the diapers and were overwhelmed with the continued support and generosity of our church.

We now have 4 Neighborhood FREEDGES. With so many more people in need, these Freedges are more important than ever. These are open 24 hours a day for all to enjoy. The Freedges are stocked by your neighbors and community members with fresh produce, items they don't want to go to waste, pre-cooked meals, etc!

329 N Cameron St on the Our Health Campus – you can park on Cameron St and walk across to the Our Health Campus to drop off donations
102 Montague Avenue at the Methodist Church
700 Aylor Road, Stephens City at Abundant Life Church
Wayside Inn in Middletown

<u>Current Donation Needs:</u>

- All Sizes of Men's Jeans, Sweatpants, Sweatshirts, T-Shirts, tennis shoes and boots;
- Women's small size jeans and shirts (sm and med); all sizes of sweatpants and tennis shoes;
- All sizes of baby/child winter clothing; infant sizes thru teen;
- Adult Backpacks and gently used/clean linens (sheets, pillowcases, blankets & towels);
- New underwear – all sizes

Donations may be dropped off Monday-Friday between 9am and 2pm at 112 S. Kent St. Call CCAP at 540-662-4318 from 9 to 4 daily for a scheduled donation drop off if these hours don't work with your schedule.

CCAP is a great place to give your clothing a second life!! **We need the following gently used items:**

As 2025 comes to a close, please know how thankful CCAP, our clients and all of Outreach are for the tremendous support our church has provided with our gifts of time, donations, and service to this Community Lifeline.

Patty Leonard
Outreach CCAP Rep

Faith and Health Corner

Light in the Winter Season

As we enter the month of December, our hearts naturally turn toward themes of hope, gratitude, and renewal. The days grow shorter, the air grows colder, and yet this season reminds us that even the smallest light can shine brightly in the darkness. In our faith community, we see that light is reflected every day – in acts of kindness, generosity, prayer, and connection.

December invites us to slow down from the pace of the year and notice the blessings God has woven into our lives. We celebrate the gift of Christ's presence among us, the warmth of fellowship, and the joy of giving. Whether through worship services, community outreach, music, or moments of quiet reflection, we are reminded that God's love enters our world in both grand and gentle ways.

This month offers an opportunity to extend light to others. A simple phone call, a meal shared, a prayer lifted, or a compassionate gesture can brighten someone's path more than we may ever realize. As we gather with family, friends, and our church community, may we carry Christ's light with us – both in our celebrations and in our service.

Let us step into this holy season with open hearts, ready to receive and ready to give. May peace settle in your home, may joy find you unexpectedly, and may God's love guide you into the new year with renewed hope.

Faith and Health Corner Cont'd

Lord of Life,

As we celebrate the birth of your Son, fill our hearts with peace, our homes with love, and our days with hope.

Bless those who rejoice and those who grieve, those who are well and those who are unwell.

May your light shine in us and through us, today and always.

Amen

Wishing you a blessed and meaningful December.

Theresa

You can reach me at any time by e-mail at tgilbert@afpdocs.com or theresahgilbert@gmail.com or by phone at (540) 247-5612

As your faith community nurse, I am here to serve as a bridge to better health, meeting the wholistic healing mission of the church by partnering with the pastor as a healer of the spirit, mind and body.

HELPING HANDS Cancer Outreach
A non-profit organization dedicated to helping cancer patients financially

December is Cancer-Related Fatigue Awareness Month

December can be a season filled with celebration, family gatherings, and traditions – but for many people living with cancer, it can also be a month when **fatigue feels especially heavy.** Cancer –related fatigue is different from everyday tiredness. It can linger even after rest, affect concentration and mood, and make the simplest tasks feel overwhelming.

As holiday activities increase, expectations – both internal and external – can add pressure. It's easy to feel discouraged when your energy doesn't match the pace of the season. But it's important to remember: **your body is working hard**, whether you can see it or not. Fatigue during cancer treatment or survivorship is not a sign of weakness; it is a very real and common part of the journey.

Here are some gentle reminders for navigating December:

- **Prioritize what matters most.** You don't have to attend every event or keep every tradition. Choose the moments that bring you peace or joy.

The Believers Cont'd

- **Rest without guilt.** Your body needs more recovery time right now, and that's okay.
- **Ask for help early.** Loved ones often want to support you – let them share tasks like shopping, decorating, or cooking.
- **Create quieter celebrations.** Short visits, small gatherings, or peaceful routines can still carry deep meaning.
- **Stay connected with your care team.** Let them know if your fatigue worsens, becomes limiting, or affects your safety.

Most of all, be gentle with yourself. December is not about doing everything – it's about holding onto hope, love, and connection in whatever way your energy allows. Honor the strength is takes to move through each day and allow this season to meet you where you are.

We are leaving our fundraising for the 2nd Annual Motorcycle/Vintage Car event open until December 31st. If you still would like to support our event feel free to either contact me or put your donation in the collection plate with a note for The Believers.

Beginning in January we will start working toward the 3rd Annual Event scheduled for May 16, 2026!!!

100% of all donations to The Believers go directly to help cancer patients in Winchester, Frederick County, Clarke County, Warren County, Fauquier County and Page County through the Helping Hands Cancer Outreach organization.

"Cancer can touch you, but not your soul; neither your thoughts, nor your heart."

Theresa Gilbert
(540) 247-5612
theresahgilbert@gmail.com

“For to us a child is born,

to us a son is given,

and the government will be on his shoulders.

And he will be called

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,

Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

- Isaiah 9:6

Chorus Spotlight

Mary, Did You Know?
Michael English
(1991)

Mary, did you know that your baby boy
Will one day walk on water?
Mary, did you know that your baby boy
Will save our sons and daughters?
Did you know that your baby boy
Has come to make you new
And this child that you delivered
Will soon deliver you?

December 2025 Calendar

Date/Time		Event
Mon 1st	WATTS Week	
Tues 2nd	WATTS Week	
	5:00 PM	Praise Team
	6:30 PM	Choir Practice
Wed 3rd	WATTS Week	
	9:30 AM	Pastor's Office Hours
	10:00 AM	Advent Bible Study
Thurs 4th	WATTS Week	
	6:30 PM	Boy Scouts Troop 63
Fri 5th	WATTS Week	
Sat 6th	WATTS Week	
Sun 7th	8:30 AM	Worship
	11:00 AM	Worship
Tues 9th	12:00 PM	2/4 BLT
	5:00 PM	Praise Team
	6:30 PM	Choir Practice
Wed 10th	9:30 AM	Pastor's Office Hours
	6:00 PM	Advent Bible Study
Thurs 11th	6:30 PM	Boy Scouts Troop 63
Sat 13th	10:00 AM	Sisters in Faith
Sun 14th	8:30 AM	Worship
	11:00 AM	Worship
	6:00 PM	Children and Youth Christmas Program

Date/Time		Event
Tues 16th	12:30 PM	Silver Bells Senior Luncheon
	5:00 PM	Praise Team
	6:30 PM	Choir Practice
Wed 17th	9:30 AM	Pastor's Office Hours
	10:00 AM	Advent Bible Study
Thurs 19th	6:30 PM	Boy Scouts Troop 63
Sun 21st	8:30 AM	Worship
	11:00 AM	Worship
Tues 23rd	12:00 PM	2/4 BLT
Wed 24th	9:30 AM	Pastor's Office Hours
	5:00 PM	Christmas Eve Service #1
	8:00 PM	Christmas Eve Service #2
Sun 28th	8:30 AM	Worship
	11:00 AM	Worship
Wed 31st	9:30 AM	Pastor's Office Hours

For more info, view the calendar on our website:
CalenderNew | Burnt Factory Church