



signposts

a spiritually progressive community of faith

5811 Sardis Road / Charlotte, NC 28270 / 704.362.0811

SardisBaptistCharlotte.org

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Sunday @ 9:45 AM
Study Group

Sunday @ 11:00 AM
Morning Worship



Advent, honestly it is my favorite time of the Christian liturgical calendar. Not unlike my waiting as an expectant father at the bedside of my beloved wife as she was in the midst of giving birth to our children, there is an anxious, hope-filled waiting. No doubt, my experience was vastly different from Amanda's on those delightfully messy, intense, and stressful days.

This is not unlike the waiting which those who follow the Abrahamic God along the Christian path experience during this season of Advent. This period of expectant waiting during which we experience pangs brought about by our experiences within this world, is an intentional time of reflection and waiting. We wait and long for something more, something better, than what our experience in this life has afforded us. That is not to dismiss this world completely, it is simply an acknowledgement that this world is not what was intended when it was gifted to humanity by the Divine. We have "gone and messed it up" with our selfishness, our cruelty, our overwhelming need to belong somewhere and with someone so we "other" folks who do not belong according to some made up metric.

That is why the staff of Sardis Baptist Church, in collaboration with the Worship Development Team, have decided to follow the theme of Peace throughout the season of Advent. Not only is this one theme which we will touch on during a single Sunday during Advent, it is the theme which will undergird our celebration of the Season itself. We look around ourselves and see violence in myriad forms. From the violence as literal as humans harming other humans, even to the point of death. We see also the violence of being hungry, being unhoused, being "othered" by the systems which dominate this world. Yet we, here at Sardis, choose to endure all with a hopeful expectation at the coming arrival of the Prince of Peace so named by the prophet Isaiah.

We choose to wait expectantly, though not idly. As I waited in those birthing rooms for the emergence of my children, as we await the emergence of the baby Jesus from his own mother's womb, we do not while away the hours and our lives. We tend to the needs of the world as it languishes in the birth pangs of a new era, attending with a gentle hand, a loving presence, and sometimes a firm and supportive voice for those faint with suffering. Let us work as agents of peace in a world dominated by anything but peace, as we wait expectantly.

~Rev. Dr. Chris Hensley

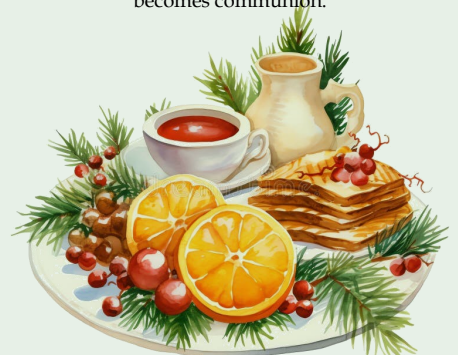
CHRISTMAS COMMUNION BRUNCH

Sunday, December 22nd @ 11 AM

Sardis Baptist Church invites you to gather for a special time of worship and fellowship—a Christmas Communion Brunch. At God's table, everyone is welcome—no exceptions. This open invitation reflects the radical inclusivity of Christ's love. Together, we'll share in food, conversation, and connection, rediscovering the ancient tradition of gathering in community as an act of worship.

In a world often marked by division and unrest, our Advent focus is about fostering peace—within ourselves, in our relationships, and in the broader world. For the first Christians, breaking bread and sharing stories was a sacred practice. It was a way to honor God while supporting and uplifting one another. In the same spirit, we'll create a space for authentic connection, celebration, and belonging as we worship with hope, peace, love, and joy.

We will transform the Sardis sanctuary into a banquet hall. Breakfast casseroles, fresh fruit, sweet breads, juice and coffee will be served. Vegan and gluten-free options will be available. Come as you are, and experience a worship gathering where the table becomes the altar and community becomes communion.



CHRIS' CORNER

COMMUNION: A BROKEN GOD WITH A BROKEN PEOPLE

Communion, Eucharist, the Lord's Supper. The breaking of bread and the sharing of the cup goes by several different names within Christianity and there are several different understandings of this holy event from Transubstantiation, the bread and wine literally becoming the body and blood of Jesus Christ, to a more symbolic understanding of the bread and cup representing the body and blood. By the way, I use the word holy with great intentionality as, for me, Communion is indeed a holy time, a time set apart from the mundane, everyday moments found throughout life. Communion is a rich symbol of, as the name suggests, an exchange of intimate thoughts and feelings.

Regardless of the elements which are used, whether a loaf of bread and a chalice of wine or an Oreo and a glass of milk, Communion is, I believe, intended to be a time of reflection. Reflection on what, though? As a good Baptist, I cannot tell anyone else what they should or should not reflect upon. However, I can certainly fill you in on what it is that I reflect upon as I partake of the elements of this holy meal.

As I reflect upon Communion and what this means within the Christian context, it is only natural to dwell, even momentarily upon Jesus' crucifixion and death as these two things have been so intertwined throughout Christian history and theology. For me, though, there is more – much more – to Communion than the ugliness of betrayal, physical suffering, and ultimately a cruel death. Communion holds within it the idea that God became human, for this is central to my understanding of the person of Jesus Christ, and experienced much of what it means to be human. The trauma of childbirth, the messiness of soiling a first century, Near Eastern version of a diaper. Splinters, stubbed toes, puberty, the itchiness of growing out a beard, belly laughs; perhaps even a love or infatuation? The biblical text is unfortunately silent on the majority of the life of Jesus of Nazareth, though orthodox Christian theology which teaches of the dual nature of Jesus – both fully human and fully Divine – would suggest that, since Jesus did bleed when pricked, he likely would have laughed when tickled.

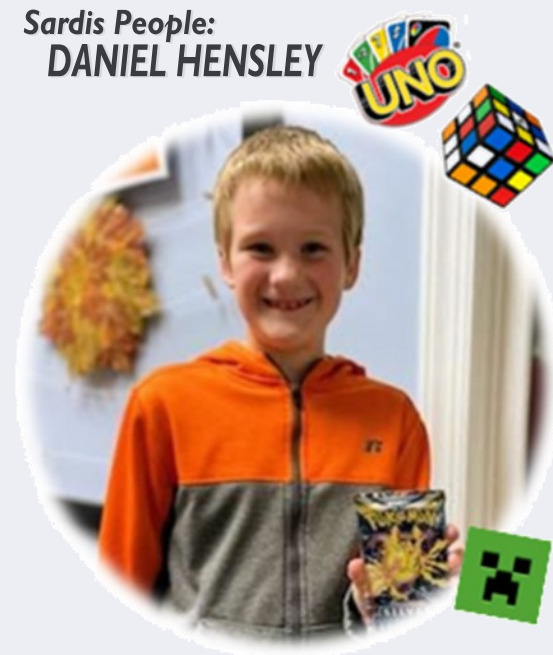
Nancy Eiesland, in her book *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberation Theology of Disability*, suggests a reframing of the Eucharist as a symbol of God being tangible and real according to how human beings experience our reality, through our bodies. The God of Christianity, for Eiesland and for me, is relatable, tangible, experiential in part because the God of Christianity experienced a brokenness through pierced hands and feet. For me, to remember the "body of Christ, broken for you" and the "blood of Christ, shed for you," are not statements of Atonement, neither are they intended to evoke the guilt of a sinful conscience. Further, the language of broken and shed invite disabled persons, according to Eiesland, to experience the God of Christianity as one who is Emmanuel, "God with us," in the truest sense. I consider the humanness of the God who is so madly in love with us, that this God decided the Divine would experience life as a human being and stir up some "good trouble" along the way.



Holy Communion is something which I enjoy sharing with others and I find it a meaningful experience in both communal and individual worship experiences. I hope to bring this into our communal worship experiences on a more regular basis, please do not read weekly. I invite you to continue to reflect on what Communion means for you in your spiritual journey. I also invite you to share with me your reflections and bring your questions to me regarding my own reflections. May we continue to be a people of curiosity as we practice a curious faith.

~ Rev. Dr. Chris Hensley

Sardis People: DANIEL HENSLEY



Daniel Hensley found friends, Roz and Brightbill, in reading Peter Brown's book, *Wild Robot*. Then he watched the movie based on the book, the theme of which is "kindness can be a survival skill," according to its author. Other friends Daniel has found through reading are in the chapter books *Judy Moody and Stink* and in the graphic novel series *Dog Man*.

There are many real-life friends as well. Daniel plays on a Belmont youth basketball team and attends North Belmont Elementary School where he is in third grade. His favorite school activity is math in which his class is learning division and reviewing multiplication. Other areas he especially likes are art and physical education. PE gives him a variety of choices: he can play basketball or soccer or dodge ball or ga-ga ball, spin a hula hoop, jump rope, or stack cups.

Family friendships are equally as important. Daniel will be eating Thanksgiving dinner with Poppy and Nana (maternal grandparents) in Kings Mountain with plenty of cousins. Christmas will find him in Oxford spending time with Saba (Hebrew) and Gia Gia (Greek pronounced YaYa). His paternal granddad is a pastor.

Daniel has multiple other interests to fill his time. He enjoys video games, particularly Minecraft; board games; card games like Skip-Bo, Phase 10, and Uno; figuring out the Rubik's Cube; Lego blocks; Hot Wheels vehicles; Pokemon; and army figures. His favorite foods are cheeseburgers, hot dogs, and tacos.

His family is counting down to Christmas by lighting Advent candles, one each week. Daniel's family are his parents, Chris and Amanda, and his sister Eve.

~ Rev. Tillie Duncan

Festive Favorites - Christmas Top Ten

In order to celebrate the Advent Season, we will be taking a break from our book study to explore something a little more festive. I sat down to write this with a simple question in mind: what is the most popular Christmas carol? Everyone has their favorites, but are those reflective of the songs played on the radio or in movies, or is it something more personal? To find out, I asked a few people what their favorite carols were, poured over top 10 lists, radio schedules, and lists of the most popular Christmas albums and these are my findings. Find out how your favorites stack up, and maybe get some recommendations for new favorites while you're at it!

I started by searching lists of favorite carols in the US and the UK and I learned that, in general, the UK has a more obvious love for carols where the US tends to prefer more secular Christmas songs. On the UK lists were the usual hymns, like "O Come All Ye Faithful" and "The First Nowell," both of which have their origins in England, but the UK also has a long history of carols that we have either forgotten about or never made it over the pond in a big way. "Coventry Carol" is a good example of this, written in England in the 16th century, it tells the story of the Massacre of the Innocents and features a chorus reminiscent of a traditional lullaby, "Lully, lullah, thou little tiny child, bye bye lully, lullay." It's a gorgeous tune, but a lot heavier than what we're used to.

In the US, as you might imagine, all of the lists are overloaded with songs like "Jingle Bells" and "Sleigh Ride", both of which are fun classics, but what are our favorite hymns? I found the top selling Christmas albums in the US, with performers from Elvis Presley and Bing Crosby to the ubiquitous Mariah Carey, and here's what they chose to perform. At number 10 is "Away in a Manger", written in the US in 1882, performed by Kenny G. and Nat King Cole.

Number 9 is "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" composed in 1739 in England. Popular recordings include Mariah Carey, Nat King Cole and Mannheim Steamroller. Number 8 is "Do You Hear What I Hear?" written in the US in 1962 as a plea for peace during the Cuban Missile Crisis. The song was made popular in 1963 by Bing Crosby, but today you're more likely to hear Whitney Houston's cover from 1987. At number 7 on the list is "God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen", a carol written in England in the 1650's. The song features on the Christmas albums of Mariah Carey, Nat King Cole, Mannheim Steamroller, and more recently Pentatonix.

Number 6 is "What Child Is This?", whose tune, "Greensleeves", was written in the 16th century, but whose lyrics were added in 1871, both in England. Kenny G., Mannheim Steamroller, Josh Groban, Johnny Mathis, and the Charlie Brown Christmas soundtrack all feature this carol on their albums. Number 5 is "The First Noel" – it is unknown exactly when this carol was composed, but it was sometime between 1500 and 1800 in Cornwall. Nat King Cole, Josh Groban and Johnny Mathis all have popular recordings of this carol.

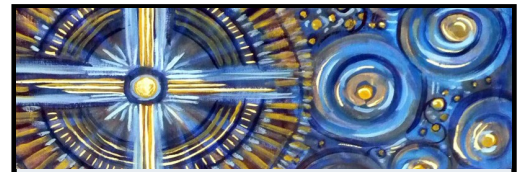
At Number 4 is "The Little Drummer Boy", another more recent tune from the US composed in 1941 that was first recorded in 1951 by the Trapp Family Singers of "Sound of Music" fame. Kenny G., Mannheim Steamroller, Josh Groban, Charlie Brown Christmas soundtrack, and Justin Bieber all boast popular recordings. Number 3 is "O Come All Ye Faithful", also known as "Adeste Fideles" in Latin, has a vague origin, but the first published version appears in 1751 and is currently housed in Lancashire, UK. It is most often saved for Lessons and Carols services, but Nat King Cole, Mannheim Steamroller and Celine Dion all have recordings.

Number 2 is probably a lot of people's favorite, and it's certainly one of mine. "O Holy Night", originally "Cantique de Noël" composed in France in 1852. Mariah Carey, Mannheim Steamroller, Josh Groban, Celine Dion, Johnny Mathis, Martina McBride, Lauren Daigle, and countless others have a version of this carol.

And Number 1, if not the most popular then certainly the most common Christmas carol is "Silent Night", originally "Stille Nacht", composed in 1818 by Franz Gruber – this song has had such an impact that in 2011 UNESCO declared it an "intangible cultural heritage." Almost every performer includes this hymn on their Christmas albums, including Elvis Presley, Mariah Carey, Kenny G., Nat King Cole, Mannheim Steamroller, Josh Groban, Barbara Streisand, Johnny Mathis, Sinéad O'Connor, Enya, and the Temptations.

I hope you have a hopeful, peaceful, joyful, and loving Advent and Christmas season, and enjoy some Christmas carols while you're at it.

~ Rev. Hilary McIntyre



DECEMBER PRAYER LIST

CONDOLENCES

Our condolences are with Sardis friends who have recently lost loved ones:

- Maddie Fletcher, niece of Traci Fletcher
- Mala Reynolds, member of Sardis Baptist
- Mark Kearns, uncle of Hilary McIntyre
- Millie McClure, friend of Hilary McIntyre
- Merv Parker, father of Kristin

TRAVELING MERCIES

- Askins Family (Rebecca, Jourdan, Joey, Brady, Samuel, Reece, Keely) • Leon Fisher
- Karen, friend of Amanda Lewis

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

- Dale and Rita Akers, friends of the Phillips
- Clemmer Allison, friend of Alcie Kreutzer
- Melissa Bowlin • Richard & Betty Bowlin, uncle & aunt of Melissa • Maria Byrd
- Dee Christman, sister of Shannon Duncan
- Murphy Clark, relative of Robin Rowland
- Tyler Criss • Tracey Danley, friend of Sarah Criss • Nela Demme, Ron's dog • Betsy Cadle DePaul • Rachael Duvall, friend of Susan & Tillie
- Amelia Eidson, Jonathan's mother • Larry Gragg, cousin of Tillie Duncan • Mildred Gragg, mother of Billie Hutchison • Bill Guerrant, uncle of Kathryn Kreutzer • Mary Moon Guerrant, mother of Kathryn Kreutzer • Jenna Hardister, friend of Hilary McIntyre • Andy Kirk, friend of Ed Gash • Robert Marshall, grandson of Janette Grassi • Pete McSwain, brother-in-law of Tillie Duncan • Barbara Newman, mother of Kris Hawkins • Vadim Pateshkin and family, relative of Billie Hutchison • Rachel, Kendarius, and Mekhi Phipps, friends of Betty Gunz • Pam Poston • Bob Rowland, Robin's father • Pamela Schwartz, former staff of St. Stephen UMC • Lindsay Stewart, daughter of Kristin Jackson • Amy Stirens, friend of Hilary McIntyre • Wanda Stitt, friend of Sardis from Hope Chapel • Charlene Washburn, cousin of Tillie Duncan • Vanessa Wieland, cousin of Jonathan Eidson • Katie Wiebke, daughter of Mark & Amy • Kelly Wise, friend of Melissa Bowlin



Sardis Baptist has been collecting funds for the London family, whose home was destroyed by Hurricane Helene. Mr. London is a carpenter, and what tools weren't washed away or damaged by flooding were later stolen by looters. Sardis members, Jim Owen and Danny Phillips, were able to contribute valuable tools and equipment that they no longer needed to Mr. London's recovery efforts. Last month, he came to Charlotte to meet with Jim and Danny, and they were able to present him with a check from the congregation of Sardis Baptist Church.

ROOF ABOVE

Working together to end homelessness

An Advent tradition at Sardis Baptist is to select a ministry that supports the mission of Sardis Baptist Church, and collect a special offering in honor or memory of people special to us. Names of our loved ones are shared during worship on Christmas Eve and printed in our worship guides through the season of Christmas.

The recipient for this year's donations will be Roof Above, an interfaith non-profit organization that works to ensure everyone has a safe and affordable roof above their head. As a result of Hurricane Helene, Charlotte has seen an influx of unhoused people. Thousands of homes were destroyed and tens of thousands more were damaged in Western North Carolina. Many displaced people have come to Charlotte seeking shelter and services. The collection from our Advent mission offering will support the efforts of Roof Above. Learn more at their website: www.roofabove.org.

If you would like to support Roof Above's efforts, please consider honoring or memorializing a loved one this Christmas. Forms are available in the vestibule of Sardis Baptist Church, and will be accepted until December 18th. You may also submit the following information in an email to info@SardisBaptistCharlotte.org and send payment via our PayPal portal (www.paypal.com/paypalme/SardisBaptistChurch):

- (1) Your Name;
- (2) Is this in honor or memory of your loved one?
- (3) List the name/s of the person/s to be recognized;
- (4) Amount of donation (minimum of \$15 per name).



DECEMBER TO REMEMBER

December 1st – First Sunday of Advent
9:45 AM Hanging of the Greens, 11:00 AM Sunday of Hope

December 4th
6:30 PM Tai Chi with Chai Tea

December 8th – Second Sunday of Advent
9:45 AM Sunday Small Groups, 11:00 AM Sunday of Peace

December 15th – Third Sunday of Advent
9:45 AM Sunday Small Groups, 11:00 AM Sunday of Joy

December 18th – Sardis Baptist's 36th Anniversary
The first service of Sardis Baptist Church was Sunday, December 18th, 1988.
Thanks be to God!

December 22nd – Fourth Sunday of Advent
9:45 AM Sunday Small Groups,
11:00 AM Sunday of Love, Communion Brunch

December 24th – Christmas Eve
4:30 PM Cookies and Tea Around the Christmas Tree
5:00 PM Candlelight Worship

December 25th – Merry Christmas!
Glory to God! Peace on Earth, Goodwill Toward All!

December 29th – First Sunday After Christmas
9:45 AM Sunday Small Groups,
11:00 AM – Worship, Songs of the Season