

A Pastor's Thoughts December 2019

Dear Skipwith Family & Friends,

The Holy days of Advent and Christmas are upon us! Roberta and I, and our family, give thanks to God for the ways that you have expressed your love to us and we are grateful for the beautiful ways you have allowed us to come to know you and love you in return. We have experienced God's presence in a wide variety of ministry and mission this past year and we are eager to engage in the Kairos moments of these holy days which signal the beginning of a new Christian year.

We have received many gifts from God's bountiful hand this past year. Perhaps one of the most important gifts grew out of the season of prayer last summer: the ability to more keenly see and discern God's movement and God's will in our midst. During those fifty days of intentional and careful prayer, we learned to pray, "Come, Holy Spirit, come! Do in us, with us, for us and through us what you did when you called the church into being after Jesus' resurrection and ascension. We have witnessed physical, relational, and spiritual healings that have astounded us.

We have seen and continue to see a variety of clear answers to prayer. One such prayer was for God to draw to our fellowship two families a week that we could nurture into disciples, and who would partner with us in God's redemptive work in our community and throughout the world. God heard and began answering that prayer in a most unexpected way. Colonial Place Christian Church (Parham Road) discontinued her ministries this past summer at the very time we were engaging in our Fifty Days of Prayer. A number of their members began visiting here at Skipwith and the Holy Spirit bound us together in love. On Sunday, November 17th, eight passionate, gifted, spiritually mature disciples formerly joined our fellowship. (Their names, addresses and a short bio are included later in this edition) What's more, these new members have joined us in praying for others of the Colonial Place family to come find their home with us.

It is clear that God has given us a passion for hunger-relief ministries **and** ministries to/for/with children, teachers and administrators: a generous Cornucopia of food donated to the Lamb's Basket, dozens of Operation Christmas Child shoe boxes, Angel tree gifts, 35 families assisted weekly through our Backpack Food Ministry (now extended through the summer), gifts and support

for the Mary Beth Graff Heart Havens House, support for United Methodist Family Services, weekly readers and tutors at Skipwith Elementary, Appreciation snacks and gifts for teachers and administrators, etc.

Even more in the new year - Winter Carnival providing school supplies, games and food to community families; another "Rise Against Hunger" event to pack 15,000 meals in partnership with Skipwith Elementary School and our Portuguese-speaking friends of the Adventist Church (date to be finalized) ; a mission trip to assist with disaster recovery (place and date to be finalized); etc.

Though we live in tumultuous, anxious and uncertain days, it is an honor to serve a congregation that believes in making the loving presence of God known in such personal and concrete ways. I'm convinced that it is because you believe in the gift of Christmas: ***the incarnation*** – God becoming human in Jesus and Jesus' Spirit living in us (through our baptism) to continue to make God's love, mercy and justice real in this world!

From the Smith and Wright family to yours,
And from our Church family to the families in our Community & World,
May the Peace of Christ abound!

~Pastor Smith