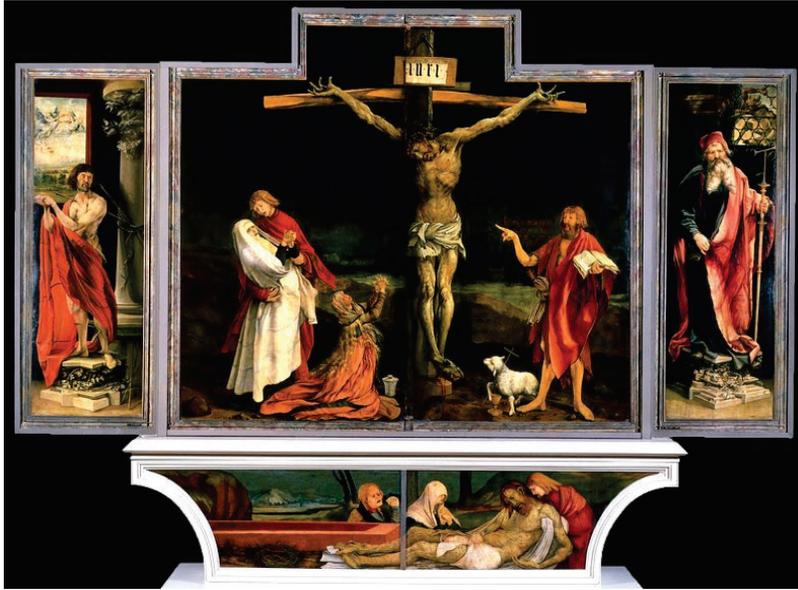


Growing our church from inside out and outside in; creating a Christian family of God.



The Bony Fingers of John

John 1:2-34

John the Baptist ... when I read his story and picture in my mind's eye his appearance and hear with the ears of imagination his prophetic preaching voice, I recall the street corner preachers who occupy the square in downtown Asheville. There in the middle of the business district among all the shops and restaurants is a public gathering space where the homeless gather for company and to seek some monetary sustenance from the passersby, where old and young men share chess and checkerboards to pass the time one is likely to encounter the voice of the evangelist, crying out in the wilderness a word of repentance for a world which they see as lost and slipping further away from righteousness. These preachers always make my skin crawl for their well-meaning actions often picture our God as a mean-spirited overlord instead of a self-giving

gracious parent. These street preachers use the Baptist as their model, but they only reflect the prophetic side of John to the exclusion of the pastoral side offering hope in the midst of brokenness. Matthew Grunewald's depiction of John in the Isenheim altarpiece does little to change the outward perception of John for me ...

In the chapel of the Unterlinden Museum in Colmar, France, is the impressive, if not unsettling, Isenheim altarpiece painted by Matthew Grunewald in 1515. [Above is a photocopy of this painting.] The painting is a triptych with the center panel depicting the crucifixion of the Christ. On the left of the crucifix, as we're facing it, is Mary Magdalene kneeling in a posture of prayer or agony. Just behind her is Mary the mother of Jesus in the embrace of the disciple whom Jesus loved depicting the new relationship formed between them by the words of Jesus. And to our right we see the Baptist ... his bony finger pointing toward the crucifixion; in his left hand the scriptures, at his feet an unblemished lamb with a cross in the crooked foreleg of the lamb, the ancient symbol of Agnus Dei (Son of God), both claiming the identity of the crucified ... the inscription floating in the background ... "He must increase but I must decrease..."

It is an odd text to be reading this close to Christmas ... the baptism of Jesus in Jordan by the Baptist ... and yet there is much to be discerned in this text as we approach the manger and the en-fleshing of God among us.

The story of Jesus' baptism has been and continues to confound many believers and non-believers alike ... Why did the sinless one need to be baptized? That conversation/study is for another time ... at the moment the actions and words of the Baptist are our major Advent focus. Many scholars suggest that John had never met Jesus in the flesh prior to Jesus walking up on the ritual cleansing taking place in the River Jordan ... other scholars believe Jesus to have been a disciple of John ... John himself says he did not know Jesus ... nevertheless, the point of the reading and the accompanying photocopies of the altarpiece is to draw our attention to the gift of God's grace which appropriated in our lives as gift allows us to indeed fulfill the words of John's preaching and Grunewald's cryptically placed inscription of allowing the One who gives himself for others to be the model, the Lord of our lives.

The whole of the mission of the church rests on the call to "point the world to the love of God" which is the Christ. For the believer, we who make up the body of Christ or Church, the gift of the Christ which has been received into our lives is, to borrow a phrase from a favorite film character, Cousin Eddie of Christmas Vacation, "the gift that keeps on giving." For not only as we allow the Christ to ascend in our lives do our lives imitate, model, reflect, witness to the saving grace of God ... our lives become like the Bony Fingers of John as a reference point focusing our neighbors, family, friends to the gift of love given us in the manger and the cross ... As we enter the space of the manger ... the celebration of the birth of the Christ now only weeks away ... may we remember the bony fingers of John as we peer over the edge of the cradle and gaze into the face of the creator of the cosmos who has come among us to gift us with His amazing love and grace ... and may we, like John, come to internalize the position of the Christ in our lives as the One who must be ascending as we descend into the depth of God's heart and great love for us ...



Christmas Blessings through Missions at Fair Grove

What a joy to witness Christ's love through Fair Grove people! Earnestly listening for the needs of children in our own community, you strive to feed and clothe. Seeking to ease hunger for all ages, you filled the altar at Thanksgiving with food and have gleaned all year, providing sustenance to so many.

LET'S Fill the ALTAR again on Sunday, DECEMBER 19th! Please bring non-perishables and canned goods as a gift for those who are less fortunate.

Thank you for your gifts of \$105 last month toward the Big Pink Chair Project to provide mammograms for women who wouldn't be able to afford them otherwise.

Because of you, children in need will have food to eat on the weekends all the school year long. Because of you, many will be blessed with clothing: a coat, socks, and shoes, and even a few toys at Christmas! With a goal of fulfilling the needs of 50 children for the "Nutrition on Backpacks" program and 50 children for "Gifts from the Heart," financial gifts are still needed and ANY amount is SO appreciated.



We are only 4 backpacks away from our goal of providing for 50 targeted children. Please prayerfully consider giving any amount toward the \$230 total yearly cost per child. Make check payable to FairGrove UMC. On the memo line, please write **BACKPACK**.



Monetary donations in any amount toward the \$120 shopping total per child are so appreciated and needed as soon as possible. We are committed at this time, to 28 children toward our goal of 50. Make check payable to Fair Grove UMC. On the memo line, please write **Gifts from the Heart**.



The month December is always so scrambled. There is so much preparation to be done for Christmas. It is filled with buying all the presents, wrapping the presents, sending gifts and cards, shop for all the food, go see the lights. Simply put, December is busy!

I sometimes think about what the days before the birth of the Savior were like for Mary and Joseph. I'm sure they were also busy. Chapter two in the book of Luke says, 1 "In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2 This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 All went to their own towns to be registered. 4 Joseph also went from the town of

Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. 5 He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. 7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Can you imagine? Mary was close to giving birth to her baby and here she is trekking from Nazareth to Bethlehem for the census. I can't know for sure but, my guess is that Mary had no intentions of doing any big travel in the later part of her pregnancy. I think it is also fair to assume that she had not planned to birth him in a stable. And yet, she did.

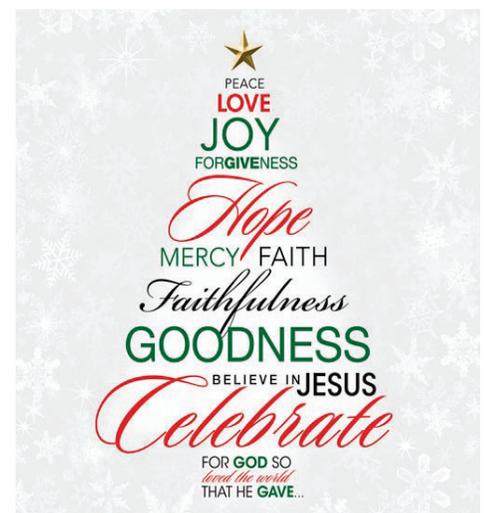
Here was a young woman about to birth a baby to be called the Son of God. Everything she thought she had planned in her young life had dramatically changed in the span of 9 months. That time was a whirlwind all the way up to giving birth. And yet, Mary praised God for the gift of Jesus Christ.

You see, we are not all that different than Mary if we think about it. We, just like her, are in a season of preparation for the same Son of God. As we walk our way through Advent and into Christmas I want to offer a challenge to you. Instead of the hustle and bustles of the holiday, let's focus on what really matters this season.

~~Buy~~ Be present
~~Wrap gifts~~ someone in a hug
~~Send gifts~~ peace
~~Donate Shop for~~ food
~~Be See~~ the lights

Let us be like Mary. Let us praise God for Jesus Christ our Savior.

Grace & Peace,
Christina Gibbs



UMW CHRISTMAS DINNER

Tuesday, December 7 @ 6:00 pm

ALL Women of FGUMC are invited to attend this celebration!

Bring a covered dish and come ready to relax and fellowship with other women as we celebrate the birth of our Savior.

We will be following Covid 19 safety measures.

Our hands on Mission project will be collecting gloves and hats for children, youth and adults. Please bring these to the dinner.



** Thank you to all that supported our soup sale!

It was a great success. **

Prayer List

"This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us."

1 John 5:14



Martha Isenberg
Doris Walsh
Alan Neely
Alan Dorsett
Peggy Harvey
Sonny Russell
Nan Day
Joanne Wilkinson
Jeremy Perry family
Sharon Sink
Paige Wimmer
Dorsett family
Doug Everhart
Celia Phelps UMC Congregation/Pastor
Ellis Carter
Margaret Cline
Jamie Sechrist
Madeline Hodge
David Lambeth

Tom Scott and wife/caregiver Lynette
Carolyn Lane's father-in-law
Our homeless friend and neighbor Jimmy
Susan Jester
Darlene Mercer
Debbie Mayer-Matthews
Anne Jones
Connie Harris
Bobby Swaim
Kevin Dodd
Michael Emerick
Lawrence & Dot Russell
Karen Spaul
Jean Widder
Chad Blevins
Evon Hughes
Nina Leonard

Teresa Rhodes
Fidel Goodnight
Joe Bales III
Leslie Rierson
Kendall Conner
Lucero Prieto
Regan Sink/ SMA patients
Kay Jenkins
Lisa Foster
Evelyn Parks, 1 year old
Riley Honeycutt, 10 year old girl
Scarlett Merand, age 2
3 year old Lynix Nichols family



2 Jodi Perry
3 Joan Everhart
3 Eddie Jones
3 Sydney Jones
4 Margaret Snider
7 Sallie Hepler
8 Kim Johnson
8 Patricia Baker
12 Rie Taylor
13 Matthew Snider
14 David Smith
15 Betty Easley
16 Kelby Lomax
17 Ethan Fry
17 Keith Overcash
19 Natalie Nameth
21 Jo Swaim
21 Amanda Johnson
24 Christopher Craver
24 David Workman
24 Roxanna Worley
26 Phillip Wood
28 Christian Key
28 Kyle Workman

29 Noah Fritts
29 Darren Workman
29 Michael Inscoc, Jr.
30 Craig Gallimore
30 Eric Callicutt
31 Holly Thomas
31 Jeffery Blair



1 Mark & Marian Workman
10 Darrell & Patricia Kennedy
14 Jared & Carolyn Fritts
15 Arnold & Shirley Fuller
27 Richard & Janice Griffin



Fair Grove United Methodist Church

138 Fairgrove Church Road, Thomasville, NC 27360

www.fairgrovechurch.org

Phone: (336) 475-2598 Email: fgumc@northstate.net

Pastor's Office Hours: Mon-Thurs 9:00am—1:00pm

Non Profit
Organization

US Postage Paid
Thomasville, NC

Permit 16

**RETURN SERVICE
REQUESTED**

We Thank God For You



STEWARDSHIP *A Way of Life*

FOR PERIOD JANUARY 1 - NOVEMBER 30, 2021

YTD SS Attendance AVG	11
YTD Worship Attendance AVG	50
YTD Budget Offering	\$ 190,914.80
YTD AVG Weekly Offering	\$ 3,977.39
Needed each week to make budget	\$ 5,692.21

GLEANNING

NOVEMBER: 500 Year-to-date: 915

Non-perishable food items donated to Fairgrove Family Resource Center

If your contact information has changed,
don't forget to let us know!



Have you...

...moved? ...changed your email address?

...changed your phone number?

Or, would you like to be added to our email list to receive the weekly announcement email?

If so, please call us or send us an email with your updated information!

Phone: (336) 475-2598

Office Email: fgumc@northstate.net

Pastor Tom Jolly Email: tjolly@wnccumc.net