

Volume 49, Issue 11

November 2023

The Grapevine



ST. MATTHEW'S REFORMED CHURCH

4575 Maiden Hwy.

P. O. Box 739

Maiden, NC 28650

"A Faithful and Welcoming Congregation"

Church Phone: 828-428-9651

Church Website: www.stmatthewsmaiden.org/

Reverend William M. Sowers

Phone: 336-687-3815

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Patsy Davis, Pianist + Leigan Hoffman, Choir Director

Cindy Shrum, Office Assistant

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I am a person who loves Christmas, but a few weeks before Halloween, I went into Lowes, and an overwhelming feeling came over me as I noticed the Christmas decorations that were already on display. This might sound very hypocritical from the person who loves to be the first at putting up the Christmas tree, but it seemed like too much, too soon. That, of course, isn't what Christmas is really like to us as Christians, but that is the retail shopping version of it. As we celebrate the season of Christmas, we should not forget the importance of Advent, and how it relates to Christmas.

Advent is one of the most important times in the church year and the second most somber time. It is time of getting ourselves prepared for Christmas and having Christ in our lives. We sometimes forget that it is a time of spiritual renewal and that

we should use it for improving our relationship with God and the church. The four Sundays that we celebrate during Advent represent *Hope, Peace, Love and Joy* as we walk through the blessings that God has given us. The third Sunday, *the Rose Sunday*, breaks the somberness of Advent for a few moments.

What kind of Advent and Christmas will we have this year? What will influence us? We can choose to have the kind of Christmas that the retail industry thinks is best or we can have what God wants of us. Each one of us is being influenced by something every single day, so it is not a question as to whether or not we are being influenced - it is more about *who* is doing the influencing. *Will we allow our faith to mold and shape our Christmas plans, or are we allowing the world to shape them?*

Rejoice in that day,
and leap for joy,
for behold, your reward is great in heaven.
Luke 6:23, ESV



Christmas Card Exchange

The Christmas Card Exchange will be available for those who wish to participate. If you would like to send Christmas greetings to active church family members, prepare your cards, alphabetize them by the last name of the recipient, and bring them to church by Sunday, December 17th. Cards will be sorted and distributed on December 24th.

...we will
never
TURN BACK
from
YOU;
give us LIFE,
and
we will call on
YOUR NAME.
Psalm 80:18, NRSV

**St. Matthew's Reformed Church
Maiden, NC 28659**

**Consistory Meeting Minutes
October 8, 2023**

Consistory Members in attendance:

Charles Bumgarner, ~~Robin Caskey~~, Candace Carpenter, Jean Funderburk, LaDonna Goodson, Sonya Leonard, Jane Lemmond, Lora Rice, Jan Rice, Frank Snider, Burl Shrum, Susan Stewart, Rev William Sowers (ex officio)

Guest in attendance: Faye Painter

Call to Order, Prayer & Devotion:
Jan Rice

October 8, 2023 Agenda: Add to 'New Business' Cemetery request and 'timely info to Congregation'. Motion to accept **amended Agenda** made by Frank Snider, seconded by Jean Funderburk. **Approved.**

Financial Report given by Faye Painter. The Tree Removal cost was placed under 'landscaping' line item. Motion made to approved made by Lora Rice, seconded by Susan Stewart. **Approved.**

Consistory Minutes. 2023 September Consistory Minutes and October 8th Congregational Meeting Minutes (Approval of Emmanuel Watts Bid) motion to approve made by LaDonna Goodson, seconded by Sonya Leonard. **Approved.**

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Pastor's Report. 19 visits, 6 meetings, 1 wedding. **Association Meeting** were held and attended by Rev. Sowers and Libby Herman. **Youth** will be going out for lunch and ice cream. **'Focus Families'** to start next year with Cindy Shrum's help. **Bible Study** materials are in review, dates pending. Would like to do a van trip in November and December to see the **lights at Tanglewood**. Motion made to approve the Van usage made by Candace Carpenter, seconded by Frank Snider. **Approved.**

Pictorial Directory task force being assembled. Motion made to begin Pictorial Directory task force made by Burl Shrum, seconded by Jean Funderburk. **Approved.** Motion to approve Pastor's Report made by Jane Lemmond, seconded by Burl Shrum. **Approved.**

Board of Christian Education.

Discussion held on the members rotation to **include 6 or 8 members.** \$152 from the breakfast sale at the Yard Sale to go to the **Christmas Play Books.** Motion made to approve funds to go to the **Christmas Play Books** made by Candace Carpenter, seconded by Susan Stewart. **Approved.**

Trunk or Treat to be held on October 28. Motion to accept BoCE Minutes made by Sonya Leonard, seconded by Susan Stewart. **Approved.**

Susan Stewart made a motion to accept all Committee Reports, seconded by Sonya Leonard. **Approved.**

OLD BUSINESS

Action Items List. CDs at **People's Bank** discussed, **Interest Rates are very low (less than 1%).** Discussion was held on looking into new CD rates at People's Bank as well as comparing them to other banks. **If a better rate (5.0%+) is available at People's Bank,** Consistory will grant Jan Rice and Frank Snider **the ability to move the money into a new CD upon their visit,** motion made by LaDonna Goodson, seconded by Burl Shrum. **Approved.**

2024 Volunteers List. Counters presented to Consistory. Questions raised, the Finance Committee did not review or approve the 2024 Counters list. LaDonna Goodson stated to approve despite the concerns raised. A straw vote was

held. Usher List was also presented. Motion to approve the **Counters List (with Finance Committee involvement in 2025) and Ushers List** made by Susan Stewart, seconded by Frank Snider. **Approved.**

Roofing. Candace Carpenter obtained a single quote from MBA Roofing for new shingles at \$56k to start conversations on funds needed if a new roof becomes a capital project. Would like the Property Committee to review and make a recommendation back to Consistory.

Motion to approve old business made by Susan Stewart, seconded by Burl Shrum. **Approved.**

NEW BUSINESS

Facility Usage Agreement. Jason Goodson would like to reserve the Fellowship Hall on October 14. Beard Reunion October 15. Lora Rice the Fellowship Hall for November 4-5 for the Sports Banquet (all members invited to attend). Motion made to approve all Facility Usage requests made by Susan Stewart, seconded by Sonya Leonard. **All three approved.**

Church Library Status. A question was raised on who is overseeing the library currently. Judy Hooper to be contacted for discussion.

Cemetery Request. A plot request via the Church website was made for a non-member. Would like to turn over to the Cemetery Committee to review within our Cemetery Policy.

Motion to adjourn made by Lora Rice, seconded by Frank Snider. **Approved.**

Closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Next Consistory Meeting: Monthly Meeting: Sunday November 12, 2023 at 6pm
Minutes respectively submitted by: Candace Carpenter, Secretary



Christmas Dinner



The Senior Citizen's Christmas Dinner will be held in the church fellowship hall on Sunday, December 3, 2023 following the morning worship service.

Everyone is invited and asked to come and please bring your favorite covered dishes for this special occasion to show appreciation to our senior members (age 65+).

Please join us if you are able.

"Wisdom begins with respect for the LORD, and understanding begins with knowing the Holy One."

Proverbs 9:10

Monday, November 27th at 6:00 p.m. church members are invited to come and help decorate the church for the Advent Season. Pizza will be ordered for a fellowship meal following a head-count of workers present.

Stop, watch, and listen to the Mid-Week Meditation led by Pastor William Sowers on YouTube each Wednesday.

Senior Citizen's Christmas Dinner December 3rd following the morning worship service.

December 5th or 6th, a sign-up sheet is available in the hallway if you are interested in going to Tanglewood, Clemons, NC to see the Festival of Lights. Cost: \$5.00/per person plus your meal at Chick Filet.

Thursday, December 15th if enough interest a group will be going to pack shoeboxes at Operation Christmas Child Processing Center, Boone, NC from 5:00 to 10:00 P.M. Please see Susan Goodson if interested.

Participate in the Christmas Card Exchange. Deadline for submitting cards: Dec. 17th for distribution on Christmas Eve.




Christmas Cantata, "The Splendor of Heaven" will be presented on Sunday, Dec. 17th during morning worship. Please see page 4 & 5 for practice times. The children will also have a part before the Cantata.

The Christmas Program, "Christmas Comes to Detroit Louie" will be presented on Sunday night, December 17th at 6:00 p.m. Practices are held on Sunday afternoon at 3:30 P.M.

The Christmas Eve Candlelight & Holy Communion Service will be held on Sunday, December 24th at 7:30 P.M.

No Children's Church on December 24th or 31st, 2023.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY																																										
<div>DECEMBER 2023</div>	VOLUNTEERS for DECEMBER 2023 Acolytes Charlotte Sowers, Annabel Barger, Meredith Lee Children Church Leaders See Designated Sunday Greeter Jan Rice Counters Chris & Candace Carpenter Nursery.....Volunteers listed on designated Sunday Security/Closer Aaron Barnes UshersWalter & Jan Rice, Chris & Candace Carpenter ♦ Birthdays ♥ Wedding Anniversaries																																											
<div>3 FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT</div> <div>9:30 A.M. Sunday School for all ages 10:30 A.M. Morning Worship Service 11:45 A.M. Senior Citizen’s Dinner - Covered Dish 3:30 P.M. Adult Christmas Play Practice 3:30 P.M. Children’s Hand-bell Practice (3:30-4:30 p.m.) 5:00 P.M. Cantata Practice (5:00-6:30 p.m.) Nursery: Autumn Arruza & Pat Barkley Children Church Leaders: Brittany & James Cook ♦ Max Bumgarner, Sr.</div>	4	5 4:00 P.M. Tanglewood, Clemons, NC Trip - Festival of Lights. Sign-up Sheets available in hallway beside office door. Cost: \$5.00/per person plus your meal at Chick Filet.																																										
<div>10 SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT</div> <div>9:30 A.M. Sunday School for all ages 10:30 A.M. Morning Worship Service 3:30 P.M. Adult Christmas Play Practice 3:30 P.M. Children’s Hand-bell Practice (3:30-4:30 P.M.) 5:00 P.M. Cantata Practice (5:00-6:30 P.M.) 6:00 P.M. Consistory Meeting Nursery: Jacquelyn Barger & Susan Stewart Children Church Leaders: Autumn & Adrian Arruza ♦ Lora Rice</div>	11	12																																										
<div>17 THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT</div> <div>9:30 A.M. Sunday School for all ages 10:30 A.M. Morning Worship Service Christmas Cantata, “The Splendor of Heaven” Deadline to submit Christmas Cards Christmas Play cast to gather before presentation 6:00 P.M. Christmas Play, “Christmas Comes to Detroit Louie”. Fruit bags distributed Nursery: Annette Wray & Katie Barnes Children Church Leaders: Kristel & Andrew Shrum</div>	18 ♦ Bruce Wray	19 10:40 A.M. Young at Hearts ♦ Jessica Hawn																																										
<div>24 CHRISTMAS EVE</div> <div>9:30 A.M. Sunday School for all ages 10:30 A.M. Morning Worship Service 7:30 P.M. Christmas Eve Candlelight Service Sacrament of Holy Communion No Nursery or Children’s Church ♥ M/M Matt Painter, M/M Buddy Funderburk</div>	<div>25 CHRISTMAS DAY</div> <div></div>	26																																										
<div>31 NEW YEAR’S EVE</div> <div>9:30 A.M. Sunday School for all ages 10:30 A.M. Morning Worship Service All afternoon activities canceled NURSERY: Brittany Cook & Abby Sowers</div>	<div>JANUARY 1, 2024</div> <div></div>	<div>January 2024</div> <table><tr><th>S</th><th>M</th><th>T</th><th>W</th><th>T</th><th>F</th><th>S</th></tr><tr><td></td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td></tr><tr><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td><td>10</td><td>11</td><td>12</td><td>13</td></tr><tr><td>14</td><td>15</td><td>16</td><td>17</td><td>18</td><td>19</td><td>20</td></tr><tr><td>21</td><td>22</td><td>23</td><td>24</td><td>25</td><td>26</td><td>27</td></tr><tr><td>28</td><td>29</td><td>30</td><td>31</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr></table>	S	M	T	W	T	F	S		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31			
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WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<p>Join Us at Advent Worship</p> 		<p>1</p> <p>♦ Buddy Funderburk, Connor Lee</p>	<p>2</p> <p>♦ J. R. McRee</p>
<p>6</p> <p>1:00 P.M. Women's Fellowship</p> <p>4:00 P.M. Tanglewood, Clemons, NC Trip - Festival of Lights. Sign-up Sheets available in hallway beside office door. Cost: \$5.00/per person plus your meal at Chick Filet.</p> <p>♦ Jim Wilson</p>	<p>7</p> <p>♦ A.D. Shrum, Susan Goodson</p>	<p>8</p> <p>♦ Amanda LaBounty Seller</p>	<p>9</p>
<p>13</p> <p>♦ Brad Ritchie</p>	<p>14</p> <div data-bbox="557 919 1092 989" data-label="Text"> <p>Fellowship Hall Reserved Doug McRee family</p> </div> <p>5:00 - 10:00 P.M. Operation Christmas Child Processing Center, Boone, NC Pack Shoeboxes</p> <p>♦ Terrell Bumgarner</p>	<p>15</p>	<p>16</p> <p>10:00 A.M. Cantata Final Rehearsal</p>
<p>20</p> <p>7:00 - 8:00 P.M. Choir Practice</p> <p>♥ M/M Larry Parker ♦ Sofie Frye</p>	<p>21 WINTER BEGINS</p> <p>♦ Doug McRee Kenneth L. Campbell</p>	<p>22</p>	<p>23</p>
<p>27</p> <p>No Choir Practice</p>	<p>28</p> <p>♥ M/M Sam Goodson</p>	<p>29</p>	<p>30</p> <p>♦ Juneau Isabel Shrum</p>
			

My Story (God, MS, and Me)

Written to Reader's Digest 2014
– Leigan T. Hoffman

As I sat in the choir loft at the church keyboard, the pastor asked for joys and concerns. I raised my hand and said, "Some of you know that I have something wrong with my brain." I could hear many of the choir members gasp and a stillness settle over the congregation, and I started to cry. "The doctors are 90 percent sure it is multiple sclerosis, but I have another test this week to confirm. I don't know what the future holds. Please keep me in your prayers." I had already had an MRI without contrast, and MRI with contrast, and was scheduled to have a lumbar puncture for confirmation. When I returned to the neurologist's office for the results, the physician's assistant looked at me as I entered her office, and calmly said, "You know what I am going to tell you." June, 2009, my official journey with Multiple Sclerosis began.

I had a hundred questions. I had already gotten a copy of the MRI reports from the imaging center. Both of my sisters are in the medical field, but they call me "Dr. Leegee", because I research medical topics on the internet constantly. I read article after article, and learned anything I could about MS and how it might affect my future. After all, I was a project manager for a fabrication company. I still had to visit job sites, and take measurements, go to meetings, computer drafting, check drawings, write correspondence, and do billings. At church, I had to be there every Sunday to play the hymns, and teach Sunday school. I needed my hands, my eyes, and especially my mind. Without those three things, I could not do what I had done for the majority of my

life. I had watched rheumatoid arthritis slowly take away my active mother, and replace her with a woman dealing daily with pain. I did not want that to happen to me as well.

Like the immediate relaxation achieved from sinking into a hot tub of water, I was calm and serene that day when I got the official diagnosis. I was actually relieved, because I had suspected for many years that MS was the instigator behind all the tingling, pins and needles sensations, dizziness, headaches, and multiple bouts of "tendonitis". I had in fact asked two different doctors (one an orthopedist, and the other a neurologist) if MS could be the problem, and both had responded, "No." I will never forget the PA remarking that I was lucky it had been caught, because there would have most likely been a major event, such as losing my sight or ability to walk, the would have eventually led to the diagnosis. We made a plan of action, and started the process to get on a disease modifying drug. There is no cure for MS, but there are drugs that work to alter the immune system to fight the damage from the disease. I soon settled into a routine with daily injections.

I continued to work full time, play keyboard, and teach Sunday school; however, being diagnosed had changed me. I had gone to church all of my life, but I needed to do more. I needed God more. I decided to take the local lay speaker training offered by the Methodist church. I followed it up in 2010, and became a certified lay speaker in the Methodist church (Western NC Conference). My first sermon was about prayer, and I told my story to my home

congregation. I have spoken many times since about many topics, discovering new things about God and myself along the way.

Multiple Sclerosis is an equal opportunity disease, affecting young and old. I was forty-four years old at the time of diagnosis. My neurologist estimated from the 24 lesions and 6 black holes on my last MRI that I most likely have had MS for over fifteen years. I am now on a new disease modifying therapy, and doing well. I still work full time as a project manager; I still play the keyboard and teach Sunday school every Sunday. My church family, who sat in stillness and shock as I asked for prayer that day five years ago, is still there as well, loving and supporting me with open hearts. I now have a new neurologist, but I have the same great physician that has been there since the beginning... God.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING November 19, 2023

Results for Officers

Deacons:

Pat Barkley, Cindy Shrum

Elders:

Wanda Snider, Walter Rice

Board of Christian Education:

Jan Rice, Matthew Hawn

2024 Budget approved!



December 24, 2023 - 7:30 p.m.
Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

January 7, 2024 - 10:30 a.m.
Morning Worship Service

Notes of thanks!

Catawba College ...

A note of thanks for our donation to the Lily Center for \$100.00 was recently received.



Carolina Caring, Catawba County. "We are blessed by your loving and faithful support and your gift of \$250.00.

EveryAge Foundation (formally Abernathy Laurels, Newton, NC.) "Thank for your gift of \$250.00. Seeds were planted through out the past fifty years by generous donors, like you, who believed lives could be changed." Gifts are used to support staff in a time of hardship and benevolent support which allows resident to remain in their home if they have outlived their financial resources.

Nazareth Child & Family Connection. You are helping to make opportunities possible for thousands of children and families this year. Your recent, generous gift of \$500.00 is not only thoughtful and kind, but it is also a significant blessing to our agency. Thank you!

Catawba Valley Health System (formerly Catawba Valley Medical Center), Hickory, NC. "Greetings from Aaron Macmore, spiritual care manager and chaplain at the hospital. Your dedication to our ministry has not gone unnoticed. In discussion with my team, we have decided to utilize your contributions to give our patients gifts (journals, coloring books, pens, and markers) to help them pass the time while being our guests at the hospital. These care seekers, many who have been here for days, and sometimes weeks, have told us how lonely, bored, and overlooked they feel. Also, because of your giving, our chapel will receive a prayer journal for patients, their families, and our staff to have a place to write down their prayers and blessings.

Please know your quarterly contributions help us serve, and for that we are asking our LORD to bless you all a hundred-fold in return. Remember we are here to minister to your medical needs.

LCCADV (Lincoln County Coalition Against Domestic Violence/ Amy's House) appreciates your recent donation of \$125.00 to the work that we do. Because of your support, we are able to assist many in our community to overcome their domestic violence situations and rebuild safe lives for themselves and their families.

VIA Health Partners (formerly Hospice & Palliative Care, Charlotte Region) "We are deeply grateful for your friendship and willingness to share your resources. Because of your support we are able to continue to provide in-patient or at-home hospice care to anyone who needs us, regardless of age, diagnosis, or ability to pay. Thank you for your donation of \$250.00. For more information concerning the services they offer, please contact Walt Windley at 704-335-4332.

Sunday School Record

Date	Att'd. 2023	Offg. 2023	Att'd. 2022	Offg. 2022
10/01	44	66.00	34	41.00
10/08	39	47.00	33	39.00
10/15	47	50.00	34	42.00
10/22	38	54.00	34	48.00
10/29	45	48.00	41	41.00

Linda Hawn, Buff Hawn, Jacquelyn Barger, Susan Stewart, Wells Carpenter, Katie Painter, Cameron Goodson, Elsie Painter, Sonya Leonard, Annabel Barger, Roger Beard, Greg Barkley, Cindy Minter, Jerry Minter, Sam Goodson, Michael Davis, LaDonna Goodson, Ruth Haynes, Terrell Bumgarner, Pam Shrum, Shirley McRee, Vick Lancaster, Chris Barger, Candace Carpenter, Faye Painter, Burl Shrum, Lealta Smith, Pat Barkley, Leigan Hoffman, and Patsy Davis.

They opened their
treasures
and presented
him
with gifts of
gold and of
incense
and of myrrh

MATTHEW 2:11



ALTAR FLOWERS

The altar is available for Flower Sponsors on December 17th, 24th, and 31st.

If you wish to serve, please contact Lealta Smith, 828-428-8327 or Email:

smithlea@charter.net.

If you have a standing date during the year and you wish to reserve again, please confirm the date.

Thank You

Make Ornament Cookies!

Make Christmas ornament cookies to hang on your Christmas tree.



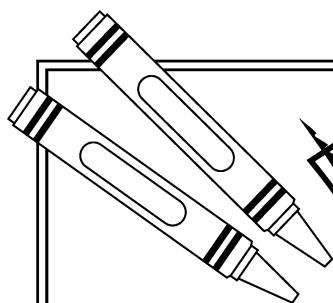
You will need:

- * package of refrigerated cookie dough
- * rolling pin
- * cookie cutters (star, bell, tree, etc.)
- * cookie sheet
- * icing
- * a drinking straw
- * ribbon
- * an adult to help!



How to make them:

1. Roll out the dough and cut shapes with the cookie cutters.
 2. Place on cookie sheet.
 3. Use the straw to make a hole near the top of each cookie.
 4. Bake according to the package directions.
- Important: Have an adult help!**
5. When cool, decorate the cookies with icing and tie a ribbon through each hole.
 6. Hang them on your tree or give them as gifts to friends!



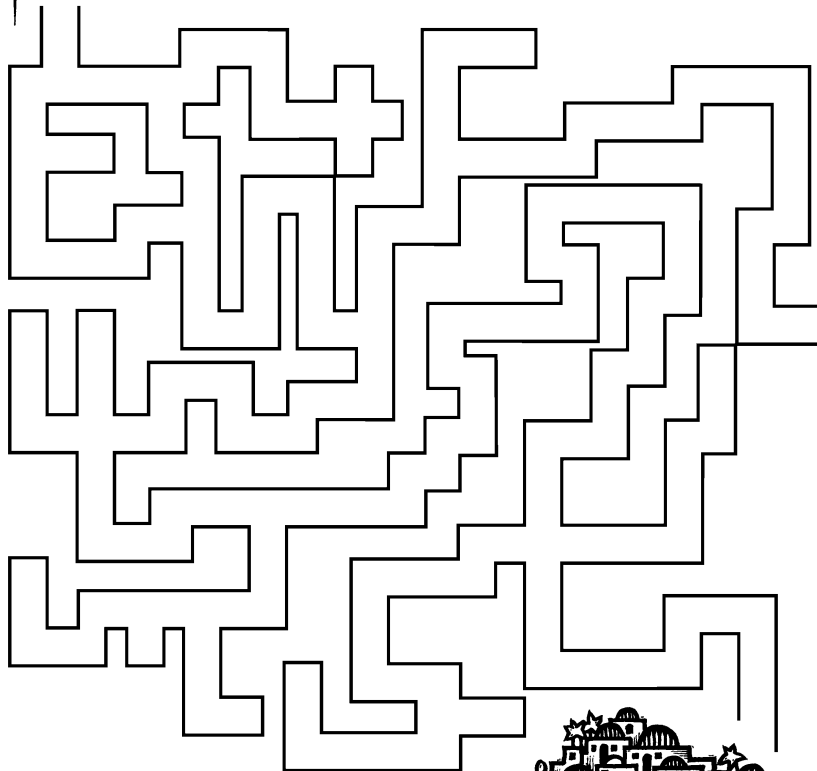
JOURNEY TO BETHLEHEM

In the Christmas story in Luke 2, an angel tells some shepherds to go see baby Jesus in Bethlehem.



START

Directions: Follow the maze to arrive in Bethlehem.



BETHLEHEM



VISION ...

To strengthen our ministry to youth, to provide fellowship opportunities, to grow in membership, to deepen in faith, and to expand the church's outreach to the community.

VALUES ...

Strive to love and serve God, to love one another and keep relationships healthy, and to welcome and befriend new-comers.

MISSION ...

To worship God, to provide training and support for discipleship growth, and to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ through word and deed.