

THE WORD

UNIVERSITY BAPTIST CHURCH

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Simple Celebrations

'Tis the season to... [fill in the blank]. In a typical year, this season would be full of activities. As we've all said many times, this is not a normal year. Still, this is the time when we prepare our hearts for Christmas and remember Jesus' birth. We do this not because we do not know the details of the Christmas story. We celebrate Christmas each year because Jesus is the cornerstone of our faith. His birth marks God incarnate entering the world. We can then look to Jesus' life as a model for our lives. Lent, Holy Week, and Easter fills in the story.

There are other concurrent celebrations around this time of year too. There are Hanukkah, Kwanza, the Chinese New Year, and more. There is the secularization of Christmas (Santa, Frosty, etc.). In other years, we would have office Christmas or Holiday parties. This year, we gather on Zoom. In other years, friends gather for parties and families travel to see loved ones. Even this year, students (and teachers!) get a break from school. Celebrations can take all our attention.

Recently I heard a news story about how to avoid *overspending* during the holiday season. As I listened, I pictured the poor, teenaged, single pregnant girl Mary. Over the centuries, our idea of Mary evolved. Hardly a Dutch or Renaissance master has not painted a gorgeous depiction of Mary. We have come a long way since those humble days in Bethlehem. Sometimes, it seems like we have lost sight of the humble start of Jesus' story.

For Christians, Advent and Christmas are about Jesus as the foundation of our faith. Mary's story can serve to remind us that our faith is not glitz and glitter. This is a good reminder in a year when we cannot gather to celebrate the season. It's not about overspending or indulgence. Thinking about Mary reminds me about the simplicity of our faith. It is about following Christ, making him first in our lives. It is about listening to the Holy Spirit.

WATCH

SERVICE OF HOLY WORSHIP

December 20, 2020
11:00 AM

Sermon:
"Discovering Joy"
Dr. Matthew Tennant

Scripture:
Romans 16:25-27

Anthem:
"See, Amid the Winter's
Snow"
(arr. Forrest)

CALENDAR

WEDNESDAY, December 16
7:00 Sanctuary Choir (*Zoom*)

THURSDAY, December 17
1:00 Lectio Divina (*Zoom link*)
7:00 UniBap Christmas Party
(*Zoom*)

SUNDAY, December 20
8:30 Finance Committee
Meeting (*Zoom*)
9:40 Online Bible Study
(*Zoom link*)
11:00 Morning Worship
(*radio and livestream*)

Advent is the season of preparation and expectation. Think about other years when you planned to travel or host a party. Much attention revolved around getting ready. Does the typical Advent make us miss the humility of Christ coming into this world?

In the Gospels, we find Jesus participating in celebrations. In fact, in John, Jesus' first public miracle was at the wedding at Cana, when he turned the water into wine. Celebrating is not wrong. Jesus modeled this behavior, but as we celebrate in our COVID-bubbles, let us be mindful of the reason.

We can give a greater treasure by caring about another person than by overspending. We can spread God's love by calling someone and hearing what that person says. Jesus calls us to love one another as he loved us.

Feasts and celebrations do not need to be lavish and extravagant. They can be simple. They can be God's people connecting with one another and living out the words of 1 John 4:16b, "God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them."

Peace,
Matt

MONDAY, December 21
8:30 Morning Prayer ([UBC Facebook Page](#))
1:00 Schleiermacher Reading Group ([Zoom](#))

Prayer Concerns
[Nat Howell](#) - UVA
Transitional Care Hospital



UniBap Christmas Party Zoom!

On Thursday, December 17 at 7pm, we are going to gather for an all-church Zoom Christmas party! Join us for an hour of fun and fellowship, spending some time with our UBC community in celebration of surviving 2020, and remembering what it is like to see one another smile without a mask on! We will have a few fun games (ever tried to identify the title of a Christmas song written in emojis?), as well as some time for folks to share what they have been up to recently. Put on your best Christmas sweaters and jammies, make some cocoa, and click the link below to join!

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84792154603?pwd=SzJlNlQ2OWx2eVhkMnU2UUtZFdNUT09>

Meeting ID: 847 9215 4603

Passcode: MrGrinch

Virtual-Only Worship: December 24 and 27

For this year's Christmas Eve service and for our worship on Sunday, December 27, we will not have any live in-person worship in the sanctuary. The services will be recorded ahead of time and then broadcast at the usual times online, so that we can all participate simultaneously. With covid cases increasing in our area and with the potential for family members visiting for the holidays, we do not want to risk an outbreak due to gathering for holiday services. Pre-recording the services also gives our staff and our volunteer audio/video operators a break at the end of this long and trying year. We hope you will worship with us online for these special holiday services.

Kids and Families

If you haven't had a chance to check out the list of [31 Things to do this Advent and Christmas](#), check it out now!

For anyone hoping to take a light tour through Charlottesville, Peter has kindly shared the route he has used for past years' [Holiday Light Tours](#).

And for those with kids hoping to hear a Christmas story time, Erin has put together two options - one for the [youngest listeners/readers](#), and another geared toward [elementary schoolers](#), though both are fun and appropriate for everyone 😊

What is "Lectio Divina"?

On our calendar and in the Word for the past few months, you may have seen a listing for "lectio divina." What is that? Well, I'm glad you asked! Lectio divina, or "sacred reading," is an ancient way of reading Scripture. Rather than analyzing a passage and considering its context as we would in a traditional Bible Study, lectio divina invites us simply to listen to the passage and hear what God may be saying to us through it today. This is not a substitute for our typical study, but a complement to it. There's no prepwork ahead of time, and you don't need to bring anything with you. Simply come with an open mind and a desire to read the Bible together. It's a quick 20-minute session on Zoom. Hope to see you there! - Will

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!!

Join us in wishing some of our church family a Happy Birthday this week!

December 20: Larry Johnson, Bill Jesser

December 23: David Wagoner

December 24: Charlotte Bailey



Having a birthday and do not see your name here? Please help us update our records. Contact Lexi to provide your updated information at (434)-293-5706

Sunday Mornings Online

Even though we are not gathering in person, we are still joining together each Sunday morning for worship and Bible study. We hope you will join us!

Bible Study

At 10:00 am, we begin an interactive Bible Study. To join us, click this [Zoom link](#). Or, watch the Bible Study portion on [YouTube](#). We invite you to join in the conversation by adding comments during the session. To download the handout ahead of time, visit universitybaptist.org/live

Worship

Our Sunday morning worship service will begin, as usual, at 11:00 am. We encourage everyone in the congregation to join us from home. As always, you can listen by radio on WINA (1070 AM and 98.9 FM), or you can join us online for our live broadcast. To view the live video broadcast, visit our [Facebook page](#) or click [this link](#) to watch on YouTube.

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Connect with us

