

december

HOPE

IN

HARD

TIMES

CHRISTMAS EVE  
ONLINE SERVICE

Insider

# HAPPENING IN DECEMBER

**Sunday Morning Prayer** Join others in person or online praying for the needs of our church, community, and world. 7am • 8am • 9:15am

**Car Seat Drive** Support our local immigrant and refugee communities by gifting new car seats. Drop off near the info desk at the North Liberty Campus. Donations accepted throughout December.

**Food Drive** Bless those in need with non-perishable food and household items. Donations accepted at North Liberty campus throughout December. See list of wanted items on page 7.

**Live Nativity** Buckle up and drive through our live nativity on December 20 from 4-8pm featuring live animals. Plus, bring home some family activities for the little ones!

**Christmas Eve Service** Online streaming available starting December 21. In-person service is cancelled due to the rise of COVID cases.

**Office Closed** on December 24 - 26 and December 28 - January 2.





FOR JOHNSON COUNTY

SUPPORT IMMIGRANT/REFUGEE COMMUNITIES



**NEW CAR SEATS ONLY PLEASE.**

**COLLECTING**  
THROUGHOUT  
**DECEMBER**

QUESTIONS? CONTACT WADE AT [WADES@GRACEB3.ORG](mailto:WADES@GRACEB3.ORG)

DROP OFF NEAR INFO DESK



# thrive

Classes begin JAN 10 | Register at [graceb3.org/thrive](https://graceb3.org/thrive)

## Deep Valley. Great Joy.

An Inductive Study on 1 Peter

9:30am

## Preparing FOR Marriage

Premarital Counseling

11am

## NEW BELIEVERS

11am

Questions? Contact Aimee at [aimeem@graceb3.org](mailto:aimeem@graceb3.org)



# WHAT IS WORSHIP?

BY STEVE OLIVER  
CREATIVE ARTS DIRECTOR

Worship is a word that encompasses so much, but we sometimes simply see it as what happens on a Sunday morning before the sermon, which includes music, clapping, and singing. That is such a small part of what worship truly is. As we move into the Advent and Christmas season, we are reminded of the nativity – a symbol of the beginning of our Savior’s life as a helpless baby, as well as several pictures of what worship can be.

The nativity reveals so many things to us in a simple portrait. Mary, the obedient young woman following the directions of an angel to trust in God as she gave birth to the Savior. We see Joseph, a man who wanted to walk away

from the situation of his betrothed wife being pregnant before their marriage, and after being visited by an angel, followed the directions of that angel to trust in God.

In addition to the parents of Jesus, Luke 2 shows us shepherds who were simply minding their own business, doing their job, watching over their sheep, when they were visited by an angel. This angel told them they needed to go to Bethlehem to see what God had done, because the Messiah had arrived in the form of a child in a manger. Having heard about a Savior for years in the Jewish traditions of the Torah and the revered books of the Old Testament, the shepherds decided

to listen to the angel and went to Bethlehem where they found the Savior. The shepherds went to see Jesus and returned home to tell people about their experience with the angel and what they had seen in Bethlehem.

If we were to use this story to define what worship is, we can see that Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds were obedient to the words they heard from the angels, which was truly the word of God. Secondly, by obeying these words from God, they were sacrificing much of themselves.

For Joseph and Mary, they were not only risking ridicule from their community because of a questionable relationship, but also moving forward to declare that their child is the Messiah which would most likely make them outcasts in many people's eyes, both in their literal time period and all the way through history.

In the shepherds' case, they were obeying the directions of the angel to go see the Christ, and they sacrificed the safety of their sheep, which they were "keeping watch over during the night," trusting that if an angel told them to go, God would take care of their sheep.

So what is worship then? Worship can be so many things: actions,

## **“WORSHIP IS HEARING, TRUSTING, OBEYING, AND SACRIFICING.”**

words, deeds, etc., but in this account it looks like hearing, trusting, obeying, and sacrificing. If you don't know what God is saying to you, read the word, pray, and ask Him to speak to you through His Holy Spirit. This is worship. If you know what God is saying, but you're not trusting, step out in faith and trust what He has to say to you by offering your time, talent, and treasure to those in need. This is worship. If you aren't obeying what you know God is saying to you, repent and follow Him in the path He has for you. As you trust Him, He will lead you into places you never knew you could go. This is worship. If you're not sacrificing, remember that Christ became the perfect sacrifice so you can learn to give of yourself. This is worship.

Acknowledging our Savior's birth in our daily lives by walking with Him, adoring His creation, listening for His voice, and walking as close to Him as possible is how we can worship Him in this season, and in every season.

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH NORTH LIBERTY COMMUNITY  
PANTRY AND IOWA CITY COMPASSION

# FOOD DRIVE



**Most Wanted Items:**

- Canned Meat
- Peanut Butter
- Face Masks of all Sizes
- Facial Tissues
- Toilet Paper
- Paper Towels
- Baby Wipes

**DONATIONS ACCEPTED AT NORTH LIBERTY CAMPUS THROUGHOUT DECEMBER**



# SERMON FORECAST: HEBREWS

BY STEVE SCHEPERLE DOWNTOWN CAMPUS PASTOR

The turn of the year is quickly approaching. Soon we will celebrate Christmas, and after the presents are unwrapped and the mass quantities of dessert are consumed, we will begin thinking about goals for the new year. Many of us will likely think about how the hard work and commitment will pay off.

*“If I can stay disciplined in my diet, I can shed some weight and improve my cardiovascular health.”*

*“If I really stay committed, I can improve as a parent.”*

*“If I keep my motivation up, I can really get my life organized.”*



*“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,”*  
Hebrews 12:1

And yet, the author of Hebrews only tells us this after spending 11 chapters highlighting the superior work and person of Jesus! The author of Hebrews does not tell us what kind of future we can make through our own hard work and our intense commitment. Rather, the author of Hebrews encourages us to hard work and commitment based upon the superior work and person of Christ himself.

In all of these scenarios, there is a future pay off...some kind of ideal future we hope to attain that inspires our hard work and motivation in the present.

However, the message of Hebrews is quite different from our common approach to motivation. The book of Hebrews calls us to action and inspires us to be motivated in our commitment to Christ:

As Christians, we are called to lives of faithfulness and fruitfulness. And yet, we can get caught in a nasty cycle of looking at our lack of faith and fruit, trying to improve our motivation and our self-discipline, only to be frustrated at our lack of faithfulness and fruitfulness.

We can spiral downward, constantly beating ourselves

up for not having enough motivation or discipline. Hebrews certainly encourages us to faithfulness and fruitfulness, but it does so by drawing precise focus to what Jesus has already accomplished on our behalf!

As Hebrews 12:1-2 says,  
*“<sup>1</sup>Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, <sup>2</sup>looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”*

Hebrews inspires us to faithfulness and fruitfulness by taking our eyes off ourselves and fixing them on Jesus and seeing what He has already made possible for us.

In December, we begin a new sermon series on the book of Hebrews. Join us in person or online as we look each week at the superior work of Jesus. We will focus on all that He has accomplished, how He was a better Moses, a better priest, and offered a better sacrifice, and how His completed work on the cross can inspire us to faithfulness and fruitfulness.

# MOMENTUM BY THE NUMBERS

# \$5.45M

TOTAL OVERALL GIVING

# \$1.42M

TOTAL SAVED FOR RENOVATIONS



NEW  
STAFF  
HIRES

Global Missions Pastor

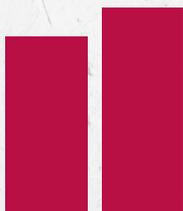
400+ Families

NEW  
GIVERS



GIVING INCREASED

>50%



AVERAGE DONATION  
INCREASED

>15%



FIELD STAFF SUPPORT  
INCREASED

20%



April 1 - Oct 31, 2020

## REVENUE



- **Unrestricted One Fund Reserve**  
\$ 2,573,000
- **Restricted One Fund Reserve**  
\$ 175,567
- **Other Revenue**  
\$ 55,388



- **Unrestricted One Fund Reserve**  
\$ 1,240,437
- **Restricted One Fund Reserve**  
\$ 54,575
- **Other Revenue**  
\$ 8,062

April 1 - Oct 31, 2020

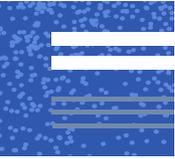
## EXPENSE



- **Payroll**  
\$ 1,458,068
- **Proclamation Department**  
\$ 33,299
- **Community Department**  
\$ 136,278
- **Ministry Department**  
\$ 133,117
- **Operational Development Department**  
\$ 611,193
- **Saving for Future Facility**  
\$ 432,000



- **Payroll**  
\$ 827,795
- **Proclamation Department**  
\$ 4,134
- **Community Department**  
\$ 41,392
- **Ministry Department**  
\$ 31,251
- **Operational Development Department**  
\$ 245,637
- **Saving for Future Facility**  
\$ 152,865



# TREASURE REPORT

BY CALEB STAMP BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION DIRECTOR

If your household is anything like mine, in between putting away all of the plastic pumpkins and crocheted pilgrims, but before hauling out the Christmas tree and nativity set, comes a little bit of year-end housekeeping. That's what I have for you now: some budgetary and financial year-end housekeeping.

## CARES ACT

Back in March, Congress passed the CARES Act. Buried somewhere in that legislation are some changes to the deductibility of charitable donations that we want to make sure you are aware of.

Under the CARES Act, givers who itemize their deductions on their 2020 tax return may continue to deduct charitable cash gifts like usual, but the normal limitation of only deducting 60% of adjusted gross income (AGI) has been increased to allow deducting up to 100% of AGI for 2020.

The CARES Act also allows givers who take the standard deduction on their 2020 tax return to take a \$300 above-the-line deduction for *cash* donations.

## BUDGET SUMMARY

TOTAL REVENUE	\$1,303,074
TOTAL EXPENSE	\$1,303,074
NET INCOME/(LOSS)	-----

## YEAR-END DONATION TIMING

- Year end giving must be postmarked by December 31, 2020 to be included on your 2020 giving statement.
- We cannot guarantee that any online donations at [graceb3.org/give](https://graceb3.org/give) made after 10pm on December 31 will be processed in time to be included for 2020.
- The church office will be closed from December 28 through January 2.





**BY TARRYL BOCKELMAN** NORTH LIBERTY ELDER

I'm not much of a stock market strategist. My few attempts at picking individual stocks didn't end well. Warren Buffet seems to be a bit better. His advice? "Be fearful when others are greedy and greedy when others are fearful." Essentially his encouragement is to buck the trends you see in the culture around you. When it comes to spiritual warfare, similar advice applies. We need to be aware of destructive trends in the culture around us and be praying for the ability to "swim upstream." Over the course of the next three articles on prayer, I would like to focus on:

1) The world's doubt about the sovereignty of God

2) The world moving people to division rather than unity

3) The world pushing for the church to be on the defensive rather than moving forward in faith and our need to confront these trends with truth and action.

## **DOUBTING THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD**

The concept of God's sovereignty is that God is the supreme authority and all things are under His control. The book of Job guides us through several themes including an understanding of the sovereignty of God as it chronicles the testing of a man who was "*blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil.*" (v. 1:1) After some horrendous

trials, Job laments ever being born (Job 3:3). In his longing to present his case before God (Job 23) we see Job beginning to question – in a sense – God’s dealings with Job. As the book progresses, we see some of Job’s doubt reflected in God’s response. In Chapter 40, God calls him to task, asking,

*“Will you even put me in the wrong? Will you condemn me that you may be in the right?”* (v. 8)

This response points to a need to correct Job’s mindset regarding God’s justice. Like Job, when we are in the midst of trials, we start to question God’s standard of justice and righteousness. Then despite the fact that our sense of right and wrong is tainted by sin, we begin to lean toward our own interpretation of justice rather than believing God.

**“LIKE JOB, WHEN WE ARE IN THE MIDST OF TRIALS, WE START TO QUESTION GOD’S STANDARD OF JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS.”**

In Psalm 73, the psalmist finds himself in a similar situation. Seeing how the wicked seemingly go unpunished and profit from their schemes, he wonders if maintaining his purity has been misguided. *“All in vain have I kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence.”* (v. 13)

The psalmist explains how he comes close to a crisis of faith. *“But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps had nearly slipped.”* (v. 2)

In the end the psalmist’s foundation is secured after his spiritual vision is restored. *“Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I discerned their end.”* (v. 16)

I believe that entrance into God’s sanctuary for the psalmist surely involved prayer as he proclaims, *“I am continually with you; you hold my right hand. You guide me with your counsel,”* (v. 23-24) Then later, *“But for me it is good to be near God; I have made the Lord GOD my refuge.”* (v. 28)

In times of personal trial, or amidst corporate trials like we have faced in these past months, we may be tempted by the enemy and our own sinfulness, to doubt the justice

and righteousness of God.

*“Maybe God isn’t fair or just.”*

*“Maybe He is asleep at the switch.”*

*“Or, maybe He isn’t even there.”*

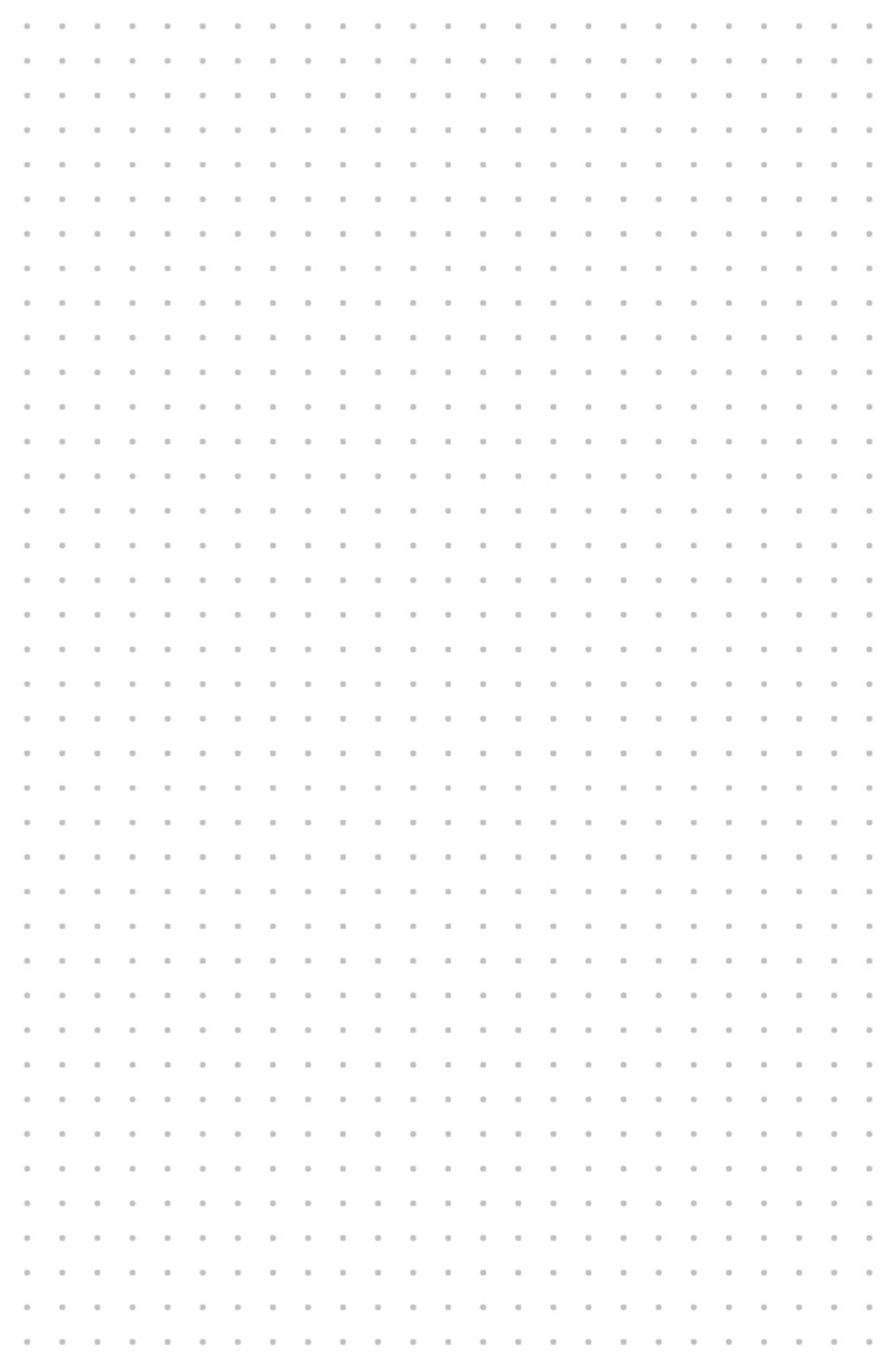
Like Job, we may be tempted to substitute our concept of equity and justice for God’s sovereignty, leaving ourselves in the impossible position of attempting to do His job. From time to time we are all faced with this choice, and often choose to exalt ourselves and our knowledge over a trust in God’s faithfulness, justice and sovereignty.

Knowing this, how do we correct this mindset? The most effective vehicle for reversing this trend is to enter into the sanctuary of God by humbling ourselves in prayer, and reorienting our spiritual compass. This recalibration of our spiritual senses is going to be more and more vital as our culture drifts further away from a Judeo-Christian foundation and we find ourselves swimming upstream on a number of issues. Refocusing our spiritual vision by entering into the sanctuary of God through prayer allows us to claim the

truth of God’s promise that *“all things work together for the good of those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”* (Rom. 8:28)

**“REFOCUSING OUR  
SPIRITUAL VISION BY  
ENTERING INTO THE  
SANCTUARY OF GOD  
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ALLOWS US TO CLAIM  
THE TRUTH OF GOD’S  
PROMISE ”**

# SERMON NOTES





# COMING UP IN JANUARY

## **Thrive**

Spring classes begin on January 10th. Classes offered:

- **Preparing for Marriage;**
- **New Believers;**
- **Deep Valley. Great Joy: An inductive study on 1 Peter.**

Learn more at [graceb3.org/thrive](https://graceb3.org/thrive)

## **Perspectives Online**

Use what's in you to bless the world around you. A 15-week virtual class that explores God's global purpose. Learn more and register at [perspectives.org/virtual](https://perspectives.org/virtual)

# STAY CONNECTED

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