

# December

## GOOD TIDINGS NEWSLETTER OAKLAND CHRISTIAN UCC



Hello Church!

As we enter the season of Advent, we embrace a time of expectant waiting—anticipating the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Advent is a season of reflection, of preparing our hearts for the coming of the Christ child, and of deepening our awareness of God’s love breaking into our world. I believe it is a season that is vital to our communal and individual spiritual growth.

Often, it is overlooked and rushed through. I hope you

let yourself be immersed in the “expectant waiting” this year and allow yourself to experience Advent fully before the celebration of the liturgical Christmas season.

This Advent, we invite you to join us in celebrating the many ways we can serve and support one another as we wait with hope. Our annual **Christmas Party** for the congregation will be on **Dec. 8**, a joyful time of fellowship and celebration as we gather to share in the spirit of the season. Don’t forget those Christmas sweaters and joyful spirits. Fun will be enforced!

We also have two wonderful opportunities to bless others: We are supporting **Prison Fellowship's Angel Tree** and the **Salvation Army Angel Tree**, providing Christmas gifts for those often left in the shadows. Additionally, you can serve as a **Salvation Army Bell Ringer** on **Dec. 7**, helping those in need in our community. Don’t forget to sign up for that!

Our choir will present its beautiful **Christmas Cantata** on **Dec. 15**, and we hope you'll join us for this special music, celebrating the birth of Christ through song. Be sure to invite some friends. Finally, don’t miss our **Christmas Eve Worship Service** at **9 p.m. on Dec. 24**. This sacred, solemn, and engaging service will feature a harpist, traditional hymns, the telling of the ancient Nativity story, and a moving candlelight moment as we celebrate the miracle of Christ’s birth.

Let us begin this journey! As we walk with each other, let us commit to being present with each other, our spirits, and our Lord in the coming days.

Peace be with you, and throughout earth!

—Pastor Stump



From the Music Corner:

### **Hope is Born**

*Hope is born, Alleluia, hear His mother sing.  
Just a baby in a manger, yet, born to be a King!  
Hope is born, Alleluia; sweet angelic voices;  
Hope is born this holy night, and all the earth rejoices.*

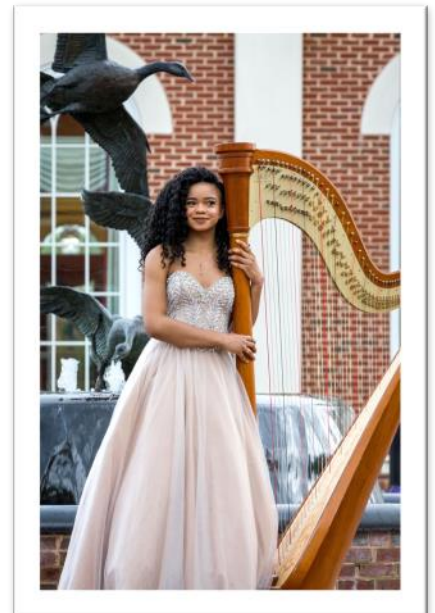
—Words and music by Mark Hayes

These thought-provoking words and music by Mark Hayes are put together in one of the songs from this year's Christmas Cantata, "Child of Hope." Being able to read these words and then experience them with the music gives us a deeper understanding. Feel your heart lighten, knowing the hope we have in Jesus Christ being born at Christmas gives us Hope, Peace, Joy and Love.

Please plan to be in church on Dec. 15 for the Christmas Cantata! This one is truly special, and you are not going to want to miss it! The choir has been working really hard to prepare this for you. This is a great opportunity to invite friends and family to experience the joy of the Christmas season at Oakland!

On Sunday, Dec. 22, the amazing Handbell Choir will be playing arrangements of "Do You Hear What I Hear" & "The First Noel." Also on that Sunday, the chancel choir will be singing the John Rutter classic, "The Angels' Carol."

Christmas Eve worship will be extra special with our returning harpist, Danielle Caldwell! Danielle has been working on her master's degree in harp performance at Shenandoah Conservatory. It's one of my favorite services of the year, and you won't be disappointed by bringing your family to Oakland.



**Danielle Caldwell**

We have so much wonderful worship and music during the Advent and Christmas season. May the light of Christ radiate in your hearts this season. And remember, Hope is born in the form of a baby on Dec. 25!

In Christ's Love,  
—Paul Putnam, Minister of Music

# CHURCH HAPPENINGS

- Dec. 3 Loaves & Fishes—Sanctuary Hall (10 a.m.)
- Dec. 3 Staff Luncheon (Office closed from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.)
- Dec. 3 Jewels—Reservations closed—Holland’s Restaurant, 100 N. Commerce St. (6 p.m.)
- Dec. 3 Men’s Fellowship—George’s Steakhouse (6 p.m.)
- Dec. 8 Church Christmas Party—CLC (Immediately following church)
- Dec. 12 Prison Angel Tree Meeting for All Volunteers—CLC (6 p.m.)
- Dec. 13 Making Fresh Wreaths—Ronnie Kelly’s Nursery (6 p.m.)
- Dec. 14 Hanging Wreaths—Outside at Church (9 a.m.)
- Dec. 15 Cantata during Sunday Worship (11 a.m.)
- Dec. 18 Ice Skating—Downtown Suffolk (6:45 p.m. to 7:45 p.m.) *Details to come*
- Dec. 19 Loaves and Fishes Food Distribution—CLC Drive-Through (11 a.m.)
- Dec. 24 Christmas Eve Candlelight Service (9 p.m.)
- Dec. 25 Deadline for Newsletter Submissions
- Dec. 25 Office Closed

*Choir & Bell rehearsals take place Thursdays at 6:30*

*p.m. and 7:30 p.m., respectively.*

*Minister of Music will communicate exceptions to practice.*



Ed Carter	1
Helena Burgess	2
Rob Rhodes	3
Jason Stump	3
Sam Howell	6
Jean Jordan	6
Kendall Burgess	7
Barbara Nelms	10
Anne Hodgson	11
Mary Anne Riddick	13
Jack Brennecke	14
John Gayle	15
Peggy Shackelford	16
Laurel Johnson	20
Sharon Ingold	21
Kyle Arcand	30



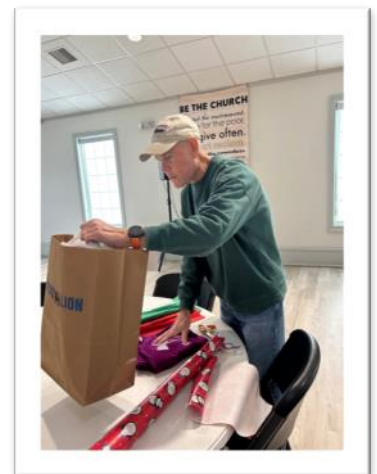
**We will celebrate with festive fellowship, Christmas cheer, an Advent activity for the family, and, of course, there will be pizza for all! Come dressed to impress—from festive flair to tacky sweaters, we hope to see your Christmas best. You could win a prize!**



# Prison Angel Tree

Oakland Christian UCC bought gifts for 21 children who have a parent in prison through our Prison Angel Tree program. The gifts were bought and wrapped by members of our

church and will be delivered to the children along with a card and message from their loved one, lovingly designed by Lorraine Gayle.





# JEWELS and Men's Fellowship

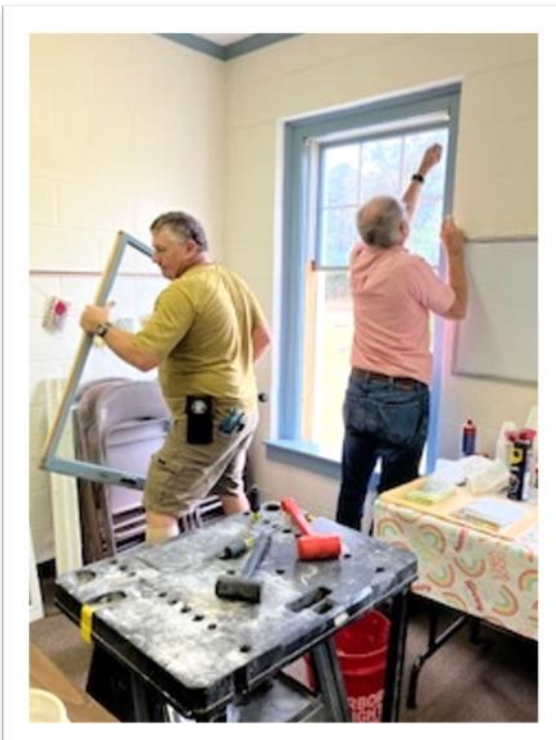


A group of 19 men gathered at the home of Paul Saunders for the November Men's Fellowship.

The November JEWELS included a "sweet potato sweep" relay!







**Buildings and Grounds Committee work by Paul Saunders and Rusty Schneider consisted of replacing windows in the second floor of the Godwin Building.**



**Pastor Jason and Financial Secretary Deandra Parks had the opportunity to complete strategic planning training through the Coalition Against Poverty in Suffolk, where Pastor Jason is on the board and Deandra is also a staff member. The training was held by Tidewater Community College.**

# Imagine Together With Stewardship

WOW! We thank each of you for another very successful Stewardship campaign!

We hope that you will fill the pages of our IMAGINE TOGETHER book as Ginny outlined on Nov. 3, and that you understand how far your money goes after seeing all those signs on Nov. 10.

On Commitment Sunday, Nov. 17, Paul played wonderful upbeat music as we came forward to place our pledges in the Commitment Box at the altar. This was a very meaningful experience, and the mood throughout the sanctuary was joyous!

If you have not yet returned your pledge card, the

Commitment Box will be in the Fellowship Hall through December 15, or you may return it to the office.

And let's not forget the Time and Talent aspects of Stewardship. We ask that you peruse the clipboards in the Sanctuary Hall and sign up for any positions that interest you. If you are currently serving on a committee, we ask that you sign up again, so that we have a complete roster for each committee.

Even as we await the final tally from our Stewardship campaign, let's...

## ***IMAGINE TOGETHER***

...what we might achieve in our



church, our community, and our world in 2025!

Thank you for sharing your Time, your Talents, and your Treasures with Oakland and so far beyond!

—***Your Stewardship Committee***

## **Help Record Our Sunday Morning Services**

Would you like to help people stay connected to our Church, or learn more about us? Does the thought of having over 100 people each week be reached by our church without walking in our doors sound interesting to you?

If so, you can be a part of a very valuable ministry here at Oakland without giving up any

money or time beyond worship on a Sunday.

We are in need of a few more folks to help record our worship on a Sunday morning for our YouTube channel. If you can make a pot of coffee, use a smartphone, or handle the settings on your washer and dryer, you have the ability to learn to do this.

Please reach out to Dr. Ralph Howell, Rob Rhodes, or the



church office if you'd like to participate in this highly effective and relevant ministry.



# Women's Bible Study Invitation



A seven-session study of six prayers in the Bible will take place from Jan. 15 through Feb. 26 from 9:45 a.m. to noon every Wednesday.

Sign up by Jan. 5.

Contact Julie Hase at 757-373-4255 or MaryAnne Riddick at 757-377-8353.



## Loaves & Fishes serves Election Day meals to neighbors and friends





# Asheville area hurricane relief



# Hurricane recovery in North Carolina

By Rob Rhodes and Pastor Stump

There are several updates to offer on recovery efforts from the devastating and deadly damage to Western North Carolina caused by Hurricane Helene.

Recently, Pastor Stump received a brief update from our conference minister on the UCC efforts in the area. Our work continues through UCC Disaster Ministries and will typically continue long after many agencies have moved on. One of our primary areas of work is providing spiritual care. Of course, this is in addition to working with our partners in NVOAD (National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster) in coordinating assistance, seeking resources, and meeting people where they are with what they need.

Johns River Valley Camp also continues its recovery efforts. My belief is that we will soon have approval to move forward with the installation of a replacement bridge so we can begin the work of bringing in contractors and materials to repair and replace buildings. It will be difficult, but there is hope that we will have a summer season in 2025.

Recently, Betty and Rob Rhodes traveled to the area. You can see some of the photographs of the devastation they witnessed on page 9. Here are some of their thoughts on the recovery efforts they witnessed:

Betty and I recently returned from a planned visit to Asheville.

We were pleasantly surprised by the number of businesses that have been able to reopen in some capacity. As we spoke to residents, we learned that most of the city had power restored in about a week. Water, however, has been a different situation. Citizens had been relying on bottled water since Sept. 27.

We were also heartbroken on the devastation that still exists.

Many trees are still down, especially in areas outside the

city. Roads remain impassable, even the major artery Interstate 40 between Asheville and the Tennessee border. Areas that border the French Broad and Swannanoa rivers such as Biltmore Village and the River Arts District were demolished or seriously damaged and remain closed.

We were not able to visit the outlying towns of Chimney Rock and Bat Cave because of road closures. NCDOT has no estimate of when primary roads into the towns would be repaired, forcing residents to take multi-hour detours in travel.

What stood out most to us was the resilience and attitude of everyone we encountered. They were truly grateful that people were visiting.

We asked what the best way would be to support the ongoing recovery effort, especially for the outlying towns. One of the hotel employees recommended Valley Strong Disaster Relief, and it's operating out of a business in nearby Black Mountain. The folks are "on the ground" and working to rebuild in the hardest-hit towns. I've also looked at several other relief organizations in the area that are playing a vital role in the ongoing recovery of the area. Here is a list:

- Valley Strong Disaster Relief—[valleystrongdisasterrelief.org](http://valleystrongdisasterrelief.org)
- Asheville Buncombe Community Christian Ministry—[abccm.org](http://abccm.org)
- Asheville Area Habitat for Humanity—[ashevillehabitat.org](http://ashevillehabitat.org)

To date, we estimate that Oakland Christian UCC has contributed approximately \$35,000 in financial and material assistance to hurricane recovery. We encourage you to continue to seek ways to help in recovery. Through UCC Disaster Ministries, one of the groups the Rhodeses recommend, or any you choose. Every little bit helps.

May God be with those recovering and those assisting.



**JOIN US ON LIFE'S  
JOURNEY**

**OUR ROOTS ARE  
PLANTED FIRMLY ON  
FAITH, HOPE, AND  
LOVE**

**If you believe that God is calling you to be a member of this congregation, please let us know with a call to our church office. We can help you join by baptism or profession of faith, as a transfer, or by reinstatement.**

***It would be wonderful to have you in our Church Family!***

**STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

***To share*** God's love with all people,  
***To serve*** the Lord with humility and kindness,  
***To grow*** with the Lord in wisdom and strength.

**Oakland Christian United Church of Christ  
P. O. Box 2008  
Suffolk, VA 23432**

**DECEMBER 2024**

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

**Pastor:** Rev. Jason Stump  
**Minister of Music:** Paul E. Putnam  
**Secretary:** Connie Edwards  
**Financial Secretary:** Deandra Parks  
**Nursery Attendant:** Rhonda Culpepper  
**Communications Assistant:** Tracy Cooper

**Telephone:** (757) 255-4353  
**Office Hours:** 10 AM to 3 PM Monday - Thursday

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**Website:** [www.OaklandUCC.org](http://www.OaklandUCC.org)

