



Weekly Booster

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Barb Cunningham,

Craig Harris, Jeff Hiser

Sunday Praise Team

Terry Stafford, Linda Haldane,

Margaret Brady, Deb Finlay,

Jeff Hiser, Pastor David

*Our Vision: **Growing** as
disciples of Jesus while
connecting with others and
serving our community.*



Jesus, the Good Shepherd

In John's Gospel, we find Jesus using concrete images for himself that help us to reflect on who he is and the role he plays in our lives. For example, Jesus calls himself the "bread of life" (6:35), the "light of the world" (8:12), and the "vine" from which his followers grow (15:5). In John 10, Jesus calls himself the "gate" for his sheep (vv 7, 9) and the "good shepherd" (vv 11, 14).

Shepherd imagery in the Bible goes back to the Old Testament. Before leading the Israelites, Moses was a shepherd for forty years in the land of Midian. Before becoming king, David was a shepherd who watched after his father's flocks. Conversely, Israel's bad kings were commonly seen as false or bad shepherds. Numbers 27:17 points to the need of God's people for a good shepherd leader, and Psalms 23 affirms that God is a good shepherd to those who trust in him.

The words God gave to the prophet Ezekiel provide an important backdrop to Jesus' statements in John 10. Reflecting on the poor leaders of his people, God says to Ezekiel:

"Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Woe to you shepherds of Israel who only take care of yourselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock?'" (Ezekiel 34:2).

Continued on page 2

*"Alone we can do so little,
together we can do so much."
Helen Keller*

*"Just one small positive
thought in the morning can
change your whole day."
Dalai Lama*

Reminders

December 14th

Sunday Service 9:00 a.m.
PK-6 S.S. during the message
Jr/Sr High S.S. – 10:30 a.m.
3rd Sunday of Advent

December 16th

Mat Making (Loom Room) 1:00 p.m.

December 17th

Bible Study – 11:00 a.m.
Praise Team - 4:00 p.m.
Bell Choir – 4:30 p.m.
Chancel Choir – 5:30 p.m.

December 18th

T.O.P.S.

Meals-On-Wheels Deliveries
Sign up at the Welcome Counter

** Fellowship Volunteers and treats
needed, sign up in Fellowship Hall

Jesus the Good Shepherd - continued from page 1.

"For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered" (Ezekiel 34:11-12).

In John 10, we find Jesus building on these words. Speaking to the Pharisees, who should have been good leaders, Jesus says that he himself is the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep (11). Notably, John situates this conversation between Jesus and the Pharisees during the Feast of Dedication, also known as Hanukkah. Hanukkah looked back on the Maccabean War, a Jewish revolt against the Greeks. Hanukkah was a season that asked hard questions about failed leadership and false shepherds.

Understanding the Meaning Behind the "Good Shepherd"

What can we learn from reflecting upon Jesus as the "good shepherd"? There are many facets to ponder.

Shepherds Work Hard and Sacrifice Often

For one thing, shepherding is hard work. Shepherds don't have comfortable offices and regular hours. Shepherds work out in elements of nature, caring for their flock. A shepherd cannot abandon the sheep when the weather is bad or when night falls. A good shepherd stays with and protects the sheep in every situation.

Not long ago I took my son to a birthday party for one of his classmates. While the kids were roller-skating, I struck up a conversation with an elderly Navajo woman (the town where I live in New Mexico has a large Navajo population). Talking about her childhood, she remembers watching after the sheep, specifically how her father made her go find any sheep that went missing even if it was after dark. She remembers how scary it was to search for a missing sheep in the darkness. Yes, shepherding is hard and selfless work. As Jesus says, "The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11). Shepherding is self-sacrificial.

Shepherds Build Deep Relationships With Their Flock

Shepherding is also relational. Jesus says, "I know my sheep and my sheep know me" (John 10:14).

Continued on page 6



Volunteers Needed



LAST PERSON LEAVING
PLEASE TURN OUT LIGHTS
AND LOCK DOORS

First United Methodist Church

**Please wear your
name tag on
Sunday mornings**



Church Ad Board Members

Michelle Morelock - Chair
Mary Peterson - Secretary
Margaret Brady - Vice Chair & Trustee
Roger Jones - Trustee
Bob Lynn - SPRC
Barb Lundgren - Finance
Dave Lashier - Treasurer
Craig Harris - Lay Member to Annual Conference
Connie Anderson - Memorials
Linda Haldane - Membership
David Clark - Pastor

Church Office Hours

**** Children & Jr.-Sr. High
Sunday School –
Starting September 7th.
PK-6 during service
Jr/Sr High 10:30 a.m.**

**Wednesday
Praise Team – 4:00 p.m.
Bell Choir – 4:30 p.m.
Chancel Choir – 5:30 p.m.**

The front door to the church
will be locked during office
hours. Please ring the
doorbell to be let into the
church.

Monday

9:00-11:00
12:00-3:00

Tuesday

9:00-11:00
12:00-3:00

Wednesday

Office Closed
Bible Study 11:00

Thursday

9:00-11:00
12:00-3:00

Friday

9:00-11:00
12:00-3:00

Please continue to call in
advance if you need to
enter the church to make
sure someone is in the
office. If you reach the
answering machine,
please leave your name,
number, and a brief
message, and your call
will be returned. Calls
after 2:00 p.m. may be
returned on the next
business day.



How many folds cords
are not quickly broken?

- a) two-fold cord
- b) three-fold cord
- c) seven-fold cord
- d) twelve-fold cord

Who asked Baal-zebul for
healing instead of asking
God?

- a) Jehoshaphat
- b) Ahaziah
- c) Hezekiah
- d) Jezebel

How did Habakkuk describe
how God made mankind
during their distresses?

- a) like the princes
- b) like the fish
- c) like a desolate place
- d) like an heifer

**Check page 4 for answers from
the previous week.**



14th – Mary Frances Jones
15th – Craig Foster, Vicki Woodward,
Eldon & Loraine Manchester
16th – Robin Hensen, Michael Williams
17th – Ron Manrose, Carleen Perry
18th – Bentley Bowers, Evelyn Lorimor,
Charles & Sharon Hall (60th)

****See a wrong birthday or anniversary, or need one added? Please call
the office or send an email to office@shen.church**

**Shenandoah First United
Methodist Church**

200 Church St.
Shenandoah, IA 51601

Phone 712-246-2081

Church E-mail
office@shen.church

Same address – a new look at
<https://shen.church>



<https://shenchurch.onechurchsoftware.com/>



United Methodist Church,
Shenandoah, IA

<https://www.facebook.com/methodist.church.shenandoah>



Services are now on our YouTube
channel only.

<https://www.youtube.com/@shen.church8192/streams>

***Prelude/Postlude/Accompanist: Terry Stafford**

"Peace on the Margins"

Scripture Reading: Luke 2:8-20

Songs

Angels from the Realms of Glory #220
Away in a Manger #217

Last Week's Attendance

In-Person Worship – 76

Online Worship – 9

Our Vision:

"Growing as disciples of Jesus while connecting with others and serving our community."

Answers for Dec. 7th are c) Brook Kishon c) 98 yrs. old b) 130 yrs. old
Quiz hints – Q1) Ecclesiastes Q 2) 2 Kings Q3) Habakkuk



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Two Volunteers Needed each Thursday

to Deliver Meals

**Sign-Up Sheet is on the
Welcome Center Counter**



DECEMBER 2025

Chili Beans, Cake, Brownie and Muffin Mixes, Chicken Noodle and Chunky Style Soups, Green Beans, Corn, Spinach, Sauerkraut, Mandarin Oranges, Cinnamon Applesauce, Canned Tuna or Chicken, Hamburger, Tuna, and Chicken Helpers, Cereal, Instant Oatmeal Packets, Potato Flakes and Boxed Potatoes, Bar Soap.

There are times when people who use the Food Pantry come to the pantry on foot. They are then forced to walk home carrying, pushing, or pulling several pounds of food. Southwest Iowa Transit, for a very reasonable fee of \$5.00, will take individuals home with their food items. If you are interested in helping pay for these fees, simply seal your cash (whatever you would like to give) in a plain envelope and add it to your donated food items.

Thank you to everyone who continues to support the Community Food Pantry. We exist totally on donations; we couldn't assist those in need without your help!

If you or anyone who would be interested in volunteering at the Food Pantry, please have them contact Jeannine K. Liljedahl at 712-215-2488.

Bring Your Change to Make a Change

*Collected each Sunday after
the children's message*



Each of you should GIVE what you have decided in YOUR HEART to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for GOD LOVES a cheerful GIVER." (2 Corinthians 9:7)

The Noisy Offering is one more way to do ministry for those in need and teach your children the importance of giving and serving. Each Sunday, a new opportunity for mission giving will take place after the Children's Message. Sunday School students will walk around the congregation, collecting your loose coins and currency in their colorful metal pails. This would be a good time to clean out the loose change from your pockets or purse. The money donated in November will go to the **Heifer International**.

Jesus the Good Shepherd - continued from page 2.

In talking to elderly people who grew up looking after sheep, I've come to understand the way in which they intimately know their sheep and their various "personalities." Conversely, the sheep come to know and trust their shepherd's voice.

Not long ago when preparing a sermon on John 10 I came across a story in Frederick Dale Bruner's commentary on John's Gospel that captures this well.¹ East of the Jordan River, about a dozen shepherds pitched their tents in a wide circle. All their sheep gathered in the middle of the tents for the night while the shepherds slept. In the morning, each shepherd set off in a different direction, calling their sheep. From the large mass of animals, the sheep separated themselves out, each following the voice of the shepherd they knew. Sheep know the voice of their shepherd. They have a relationship.

Shepherds Don't Just Lead—They Also Pursue the Lost

Shepherds must also, at times, pursue their sheep. We find Jesus describing this in his parable of the lost sheep (Luke 15:3-7). Shepherds do more than lead their sheep; they also pursue them when the sheep wander off or become lost. Seeing Jesus as our good shepherd means that Jesus is willing to pursue us to bring us back into God's loving arms. He will not abandon us. As David says of God, his Shepherd, in Psalm 23, "Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life" (v 6). The Hebrew word translated "follow" (*radaf*) can also mean "chase" or "pursue." A good shepherd pursues the sheep.

When Jesus calls himself the "good shepherd," he shows us what kind of leader he is. He is a servant leader, a loving leader, one who has a close relationship with his followers and even pursues them when they go astray.

How is being led by a good shepherd a helpful metaphor for the Christian life? When we see Christ as our shepherd, that puts us in the role of being sheep. Sheep are not the brightest animals, and they're vulnerable. Sheep need someone to lead them to food and water, and to protect them from danger. Christ does the same thing for his people: He leads us to new life through his Spirit and protects us from anything that could separate us from God's love. Knowing we have a good shepherd reminds us that we are traveling through life alone. Christ is always with us. Praise God for the Good Shepherd!

Adapted from the study material from the *NIV Application Bible* based on the NIV Application Commentary series.

¹ Frederick Dale Bruner, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Eerdmans, 2012).



This coming Sunday, December 14th join us for an afternoon of spreading holiday cheer! If you haven't signed up to carol yet, please call the office, and Jeff will add your name to the list.

After caroling, we will return to the church for a warm soup supper and fellowship. We are looking for a few more volunteers to help with food. Please call Jeff to claim one of the following open spots:

- **Soup:** 4 available spots
- **Dessert:** 3 spots available
- **Meat & Cheese Tray:** 2 spots available
- **Soup Crackers:** 2 spots available
- **Raw Vegetables:** 1 spot available

Prefer to stay indoors? We also need volunteers to stay behind at the church to help set up while the caroling group is out. Come be a part of the fun and help make someone's day bright!





The Hispanic Center is now collecting items for their Christmas Shoe Boxes. There are 16 children, which includes 9 girls ages 8-16 years of age and 5 boys ages 2 ½ -16 years old. **There are still five girls (12-16 yrs) and one boy (13 yrs) on the list.** If you plan to purchase for one of the children, please bring the gift to the church by this Sunday, December 14th. You may also contact Sue Jones with questions.

Hat & Mittens Collection – we are collecting hats, mittens, scarves, and gloves for children in need. The trees are up and in the back of the Welcome Center around the elevator.



Christmas Coffee Schedule

Eiler Senior Living – will be rescheduled
Accura, December 15th at 2:30 p.m. – Cathy Shull & Phyllis Scott



The holidays can be beautiful, but they can also be hard. If you're carrying grief, stress, loneliness, or the weight of a difficult season, you're not alone. You are invited to our Blue Christmas Service, a quiet, contemplative time of worship designed to hold space for all who are hurting or simply moving more slowly this year.

We'll gather with soft music, Scripture, prayer, and the lighting of candles as we remember that God meets us in the dark and tender places of life. Come as you are; bring your sadness, your questions, your memories, and your hope.

Date: Tues, December 16

Location: Shenandoah, First UMC Chapel

Time: 5:30pm

No matter what this season holds for you, there is room for you here.



"After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in the territory of Judea during the reign of King Herod, magi came from the east to Jerusalem. They asked, 'Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We've seen his star in the east, and we've come to honor him.'" (Matthew 2:1-2, Common English Bible)

Just about every year at Christmastime, Nick Strobel can count on getting questions about the star that guided the magi.

Strobel is the planetarium director and a physical science professor at Bakersfield College in central California. As an astronomer and lifelong United Methodist, he has a certain affinity with the Bible's most famous stargazers.

"We both have a love of the night sky," said Strobel, a member of Wesley United Methodist Church in Bakersfield. "And, we search for a place or person where heaven and earth meet, and we both found that in the person of Jesus."

The biblical account of the magi does not quite match the typical church Christmas pageant image of three little boys in scratchy beards and lopsided crowns dropping gifts by the baby Jesus' manger.

The second chapter of Matthew — the only Gospel where the wise men appear — does not specify their number or say they were kings. Matthew also does not mention the no-vacancies inn, the manger or the quaking shepherds — those are all found in the Gospel of Luke.

Instead, in Matthew, the wise men visit the holy family in a house in Bethlehem some point after Jesus' birth. The number three probably derives from the three gifts they brought to the Christ child - gold, frankincense and myrrh.

The magi — called magoi in the original Greek — were likely sages and astrologers. The tradition that they were three kings named Gaspar, Melchior and Balthasar developed centuries later.

On this the Bible and Christmas tradition do agree: The magi found the newborn king by following a star.

The ancients believed God would make destiny manifest in the stars, said Gregory J. Riley, New Testament professor at United Methodist-related Claremont (Calif.) School of Theology. So, it was no surprise that Jesus' birth was accompanied "by the appearance of his star in the very fabric of the heavens."

The exact nature of that heavenly body has been a source of speculation — for Bible scholars, children's book authors, astronomers and, in recent decades, planetarium audiences. Discussion of the star is part of Bakersfield College's annual December planetarium show, "Season of Light," which Strobel hosts.

"And look, the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stood over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were filled with joy." (Matthew 2: 9-10)

Strobel, 46, has his own thoughts about the star, which he has detailed in his blog.

Since the night sky can vary greatly depending on the year and season, Strobel first needed a good estimate for Jesus' birth year to evaluate these possibilities.

The Bible does not give Jesus' exact birth date. However, many biblical scholars and historians now think Jesus most likely was born around 6 to 4 B.C., and Strobel uses those years in his dating. That puts Jesus' birth sometime near the death of Herod the Great (the wicked Herod mentioned at the beginning of Matthew) and Jesus' ministry during the early years of Pontius Pilate (the wicked Roman governor in all four Gospels).

Strobel points to four natural phenomena that some astronomers think might explain the celestial sighting: a nova, a comet, a planetary conjunction and Jupiter's retrograde motion.

Nova

Chinese astronomers, Strobel said, recorded that a new star (or nova) appeared in the constellation Capricorn during March and April of 5 B.C. A nova is actually a white dwarf — that is, a dying star — that has gathered enough material, usually from another nearby star, to build up pressure and explode. A nova quickly peaks in brightness within a few days and then fades to invisible over a few months.

The nova the Chinese spotted would have first appeared in the east (that much fits with the Gospel of Matthew). However, that nova would not have visibly moved much as the magi headed toward Bethlehem, which is why Strobel sees it as an unlikely candidate for Star of Bethlehem status.

Comet

Many ancient cultures, including the Chinese, regarded comets as heralds of important events. Trouble is, there are no comet sightings recorded around 6 to 4 B.C. Strobel said Halley's Comet made a swing by Earth in 12 B.C., too early to portend the Bethlehem birth. That's probably a good a thing. The ancients typically viewed a comet as a bad sign — not a proclamation of joy to the world.

Planetary conjunction

Planetary conjunctions, where two or more planets appear very close together in the night sky, may not make the headlines today the way comets do. Still, Strobel thinks such a conjunction is a much likelier prospect for the nativity's starring role. And, astronomically speaking, 7 to 6 B.C. were good years for conjunctions.

In late May, late September and early December 7 B.C., Jupiter and Saturn moved past each other three times in the constellation Pisces. Such an occurrence happens only once every 900 years. The following February, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn formed a near conjunction in Pisces, which happens once every 800 years.

The combination of Jupiter and Saturn would have seemed especially auspicious to these astrologers in the Near East, Strobel said. Jupiter symbolized royalty, and Saturn represented the Mesopotamian deity who protected Israel. In addition, ancient astrologers associated Pisces with the Jewish people.

"(The wise men) would have been aware of the sky and probably kept records of the sky going back centuries," Strobel said. "They would have known this was a rare occurrence. They'd think, 'Well maybe this is telling us that something really interesting is going to be happening there in Israel.'"

Jupiter's retrograde motion

If the wise men were in need of a further sign in the heavens, they got one in 5 B.C., Strobel said. That year, Jupiter, instead of "wandering" eastward as planets typically appear to do, seemed to stop and then go backward among the stars in what astronomers call a retrograde motion.

Strobel compared the motion to what happens when a car accelerates past another car. It makes the slower vehicle look like it is standing still and then receding. In 5 B.C., Earth passed Jupiter and it appeared to be stationary for about a week - perfect for hovering in place over a momentous birth.

Among the various astronomical possibilities, Strobel thinks that the planetary conjunction and stationary Jupiter theories probably get closest to what the magi might have seen.

"They entered the house and saw the child with Mary his mother. Falling to their knees, they honored him. Then they opened their treasure chests and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh." (Matthew 2: 11)

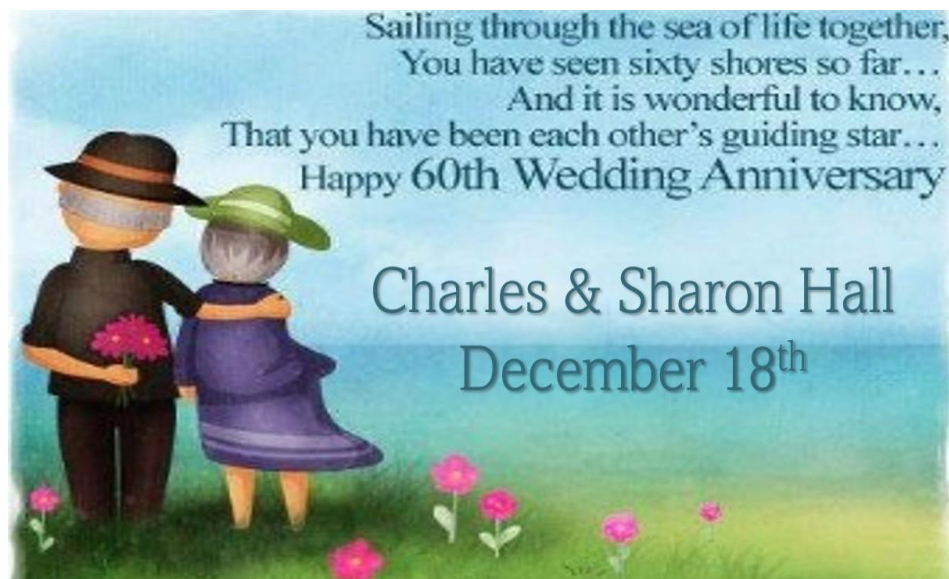
The Rev. Ben Witherington III, a United Methodist elder and New Testament professor at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Ky., agrees that astronomical phenomena could help explain the magi's guide. But, he points out, the magi like most ancients would have seen stars and other celestial objects as living beings — much like "the heavenly host" that visited the shepherds.

While it's fun to speculate, Strobel said, the nature of the star does not matter to his faith. In fact, he would not care if Matthew made up the whole story of the magi.

"He was not writing a science textbook or newspaper account," Strobel said, "but rather a book to persuade people that this person called Jesus was the Son of God, one who should be worshipped, and one who showed us how to live as God wants us to live." The story of the nativity contains a deeper truth than can be found in any star chart, he said.

"God, the infinite power of the universe, is just so willing and wanting to have a relationship with us that he became a powerless infant who had to be cared for," he said. "That's pretty amazing that God would be willing to do that."

*Adapted from the author Laura Buchanan, UNC.org at United Methodist Communications., December 21, 2011. *Hahn is a multimedia news reporter for United Methodist News Service. News media contact: Heather Hahn, Nashville, Tennessee, (615) 742-5470 or newsdesk@umcom.org.*





Dear Church Family,

One of the miracles of Christmas is how it gathers families around tables, living rooms, and shared memories. This season has a way of drawing us back to what matters most: the people we love, the children who bring wonder into our lives, and the sacred ties that hold us together even when life is complicated.

At the center of the Christmas story is a family—Mary, Joseph, and a newborn child lying in a manger. God chose to enter the world not through power, but through the vulnerability of birth and the tenderness of home. Before Jesus preached, healed, or taught, he was cradled, fed, carried, and welcomed. Christmas begins with love made small, warm, and human.

Children help us see this anew. Their excitement, their questions, their laughter, and even their wiggles in worship remind us that joy is not something we earn—it's something we receive. And their presence in our congregation is a blessing. They bring energy and life in a season that can otherwise feel heavy or hurried.

May this Christmas be a time when you notice the gifts God has placed right in front of you:

The conversations around a table.

The music of children playing.

The warmth of shared traditions.

The comfort of simply being together.

Whether your family is big or small, gathered or scattered, joyful or grieving, may you feel the embrace of the Holy Family—the reminder that God meets us in our humanity, that Christ dwells in the ordinary, and that love is the true center of this season.

May the joy of family, children, and Christ's birth fill your heart with peace.

Grace and peace,
Pastor David Clark
308-258-7749 (cell)