

December 2019

Jesus Is The Reason for the Season

David Sproule

At this time of year, we hear the saying often, “Jesus is the reason for the season.” It’s catchy. It’s heart-warming. It’s reassuring. However, the hyped “season” of Christmas, which man has designated as the birth-time of Jesus, has no Scriptural basis—neither in historical record or in authoritative command from God. As some have more aptly stated, “Jesus is the reason for every reason.”

Now, with that understanding, think about that saying in relationship to the “season” for which Christians do have authoritative command from God.

Jesus is the reason for the season of my behavior! In the great Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be **seasoned**? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men” (Matt. 5:13). Salt was used as a preservative

(and still is) to keep food from becoming putrefied or corrupted. Jesus was emphasizing in this passage that the only hope that the earth (i.e., the inhabitants and civilizations of the earth) has for preservation is the seasoning of righteousness and godly living from God’s people (see also Proverbs 14:34). When it comes to my behavior, it needs to be seasoned by Jesus.

Jesus is the reason for the season of my speech! As Paul concluded one of the most practical sections in all of Scripture, he instructed Christians, “Let your speech always be gracious, **seasoned** with salt...” (Col. 4:6). As salt provides taste and flavor to our food, the words that we use will all have a certain taste or flavor to them—either a “corrupt word” or “what is good for necessary edification” (Col. 4:6). Another interesting characteristic of salt is that it heals, even though it may hurt or sting initially and in the process. Wisdom says, “Faithful are the wounds of a friend” (Prov. 27:6). When it comes to my speech, it needs to be seasoned by Jesus.

Jesus is the reason for the season of my preaching! The instructions given to God’s servant Timothy are insightful: “Preach the word!” (2 Tim. 4:2). But when? On Sundays? Wednesdays? Special occasions? The inspired penman continued, “Be ready **in season** and **out of season**.” As there is a “hunting season” and a “snowbird season,” is there a “preaching season”? No! God says to preach...whether it is convenient or not...favorable or not...popular or not. When it comes to my preaching of God’s Word, it needs to be seasoned by Jesus.

Are you seasoned by Jesus, seasoned with Jesus and seasoned for Jesus? He is the reason for every season!



Lectionary Readings for December

December 1

Isaiah 2:1-5
Psalm 122 (UMH 845)
Romans 13:11-14
Matthew 24:36-44

December 15

Isaiah 35:1-10
Luke 1:46b-55
James 5:7-10
Matthew 11:2-11

December 24

Isaiah 9:2-7
Psalm 96 (UMH 815)
Titus 2:11-14
Luke 2:1-20

December 8

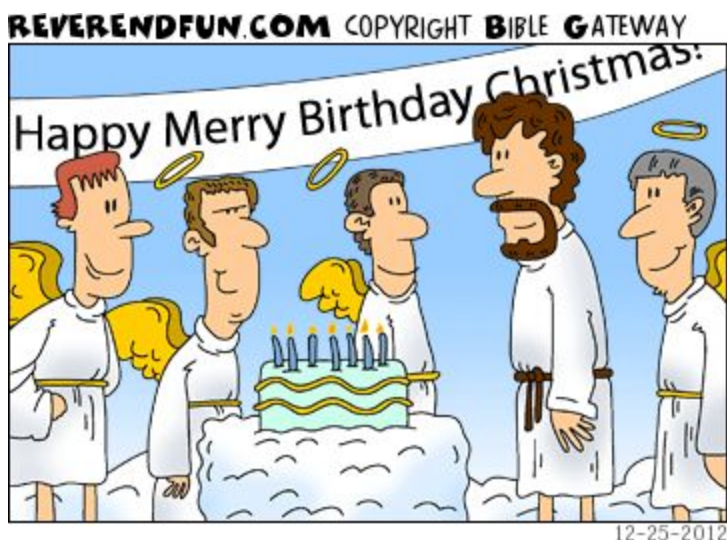
Isaiah 11:1-10
Psalm 72
Romans 15:4-13
Matthew 3:1-12

December 22

Isaiah 7:10-16
Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19
Romans 1:1-7
Matthew 1:18-25

December 29

Isaiah 63:7-9
Psalm 148 (UMH 861)
Hebrews 2:10-18
Matthew 2:13-23



The Gift

Thanks for the electric guitar you gave me for Christmas," little Chris Cody said to his uncle the first time he saw him after the holidays.

"It's the best present I ever got."

"That's great," said his uncle.

"Do you know how to play it?"

"Oh, I don't play it," the little fellow said.

"My mom gives me a dollar a day not to play it during the day and my dad gives me five dollars a week not to play it at night.



NewHopeUMC.online

**STAY IN
THE KNOW**

The following are the minutes from the **OCTOBER** meeting of the Church Council. *(There was no meeting in the month of November.)* The minutes are available for you to help the entire church family Stay In The Know about how this group is caring for New Hope UMC!

October 24, 2019 - Church Council Meeting

Present: Pastor Mike, Kevin Armstrong, Cindy Deavers, Sam Arnold, Debbie Arnold, Cindy Sheets, Wanda Harding, Alicia Copeland, Karen Whitmer, Robin Craun and Bruce Rogers

The meeting was called to order by Sam Arnold, Chairperson. Devotions were shared, followed by an opening prayer. The minutes from the September 2019 meeting were accepted as distributed.

Finance Committee: *(Kevin Armstrong reported)*

- ~ 73% of the budget has been received.
- ~ We still owe \$29,380 on our line of credit for the new Heating and A/C System.
- ~ The Finance Committee wants to apply for a low-interest line of credit from the United Methodist Foundation. Kevin Armstrong made a motion and Karen Whitmer seconded it. It was passed and approved to have them apply for a loan from the UM Foundation at a 3.5% interest rate with no balloon payment for \$527 per month for 60 months.

Treasurer: *(Cindy Deavers reported)*

- ~ There is \$1,892.95 in the Wednesday Night Dinner fund.
- ~ From the 2018 and 2019 - 50's Drive-In Fundraisers, there is a total of \$2,782.98 in this fund.
- ~ There is \$2,366.37 in the Non-Designated fund.
- ~ There is \$2,170.56 in the Gift & Memorial fund.
- ~ Robin Craun made a motion to put the \$2,366.37 from the Non-Designated Fund and the \$2,170.56 from the Gift & Memorial Fund and add both of them, for a total of \$4,536.93 to the Building Fund to pay down some of our line of credit (which is at \$29,380). Much discussion was had and Kevin Armstrong seconded it, and it was agreed to and passed by all.

Evangelism Ministry: *(Vacant - Please see Pastor Mike if you are interested in taking on this ministry.)*

United Methodist Women: *(Wanda Harding reported)*

~ On October 21st, 13 members met. Guest speakers Joy Utberg and Gayle Meeks shared information on mission monies UMW provide each year. Listings of college students and shut-ins were distributed and divided between the circles. These listings are available in the Narthex.

~ UMW Planning Meeting is on October 28th at 1:00pm to discuss meetings and activities for 2020. All who are interested are invited to attend.

~ Fall Bazaar is November 9th in conjunction with HOTS. The ladies will set up on Thursday, November 7th at 6:00pm in Thee Seekers classroom. Please bring crafts and canned items but then, but wait to bring baked items on Saturday morning. Please put prices on your items. All are encouraged to participate in this, as it is the UMW's biggest fundraiser for missions throughout the year.

~ Circle of Hope will provide a meal for the UMM on November 19th at 6:30pm.

~ Church-wide covered-dish Christmas dinner is December 14th at 5:00pm

United Methodist Men: *(Sam Arnold reported)*

~ The UMM had a representative from the Valley Mission come and talk to them about their mission in the community, and they had a nice meal.

~ H.O.T.S. in November 9th and everything is on track

~ Last meeting of the UMM for 2019 will be November 19th with a representative from the Salvation Army and a meal provided by the Circle of Hope

Membership: *(Karen Whitmer reported)*

~ Karen reported that there have been no deaths of any church members

Communications: *(Cindy Sheets reported)*

~ We met again with John Riley from John's Computer Service on September 25, 2019, to finalize an estimate about our upcoming IT and internet upgrades. We received an estimate from him for \$1,671.98. Bruce Rogers and several others have agreed to pull the wires/cables that will save us approximately \$140 per hour (we look for this work to take approximately 10-15 hours to complete). Once this work is complete we will contact John again to schedule an appointment to have him and his crew come to our church to complete the IT upgrades.

Pastor's Report: *(Pastor Mike reported)*

~ Still working on getting new officers for 2020 - Still need a: Lay Leader, Worship Chair, and a Church Council Chairperson

~ On or around November 19th, Pastor Mike will have an after worship get-together for all those interested in becoming new members of the church.

~ Pastor Mike will look into seeing if there is a need currently for a confirmation class for those in grades 6th and above.

~ Our Christmas Eve Service will be on Tuesday, December 24th at 9:00pm - Where will we have lessons and sing carols, and donations to Mission Central will be accepted at this time.

~ Charge Conference will be on Saturday, November 2nd from 12pm-3pm, with a covered-dish lunch

Old Business:

~ Alicia reported that she went to meet with principals from Clymore and Stuart Elementary schools about interest in a possible new after school program at our church on Wednesdays. She said that the parents' would have to go to the school and sign a permission slip in order for the kids to be let off at our church.

The tentative schedule would be:

@ 3:45pm - the kids would be dropped off at our church and they would get a snack or have playtime.

@ 4:30pm - the Handbell choir would practice

@ 5:15pm the Children's Choir would practice

The hope is that they will be able to begin this program soon, possibly in mid-November or before Christmas

New Business:

~ The Dunns will be returning for a third time to perform at our church on Sunday, November 8th, 2020

~ December 8th @ 4:00pm - Austine Belsky will be performing Christmas songs and singing carols.

The meeting was closed with prayer by Pastor Mike.

Respectfully submitted,
Cynthia Sheets

The next Church Council Meeting will be on January 23, 2020.



**On Saturday,
December 7th
from 12pm-4pm,
we will have our
annual Parents'
Shopping Day Out -
where parents can
go shopping while
the children enjoy
a fun time at the
church!**

H.O.T.S. - November 9, 2019





BIRTHDAYS and ANNIVERSARIES

1 - Steve Broyles
- Robert Corbin
- Diane Miller

2 - Robin Craun
- Leslie Shaver

4 - Matt Carr

5 - Susan Baldwin
- Charles Darrah
- Michele Taylor


6 - Clarissa Booth
- Karen Whitmer

7 - Betty Gruber
- Beth Rosen

8 - Peggy Corbin


9 - Josh Dively

10 - Bernie Powers

13 - Jennifer Bottenmiller
-  Jake & Julie Botkin

14 - Brenda Price
- Dawn White

16 - B.F. Caricofe III
- Dwight Craig
- Shelvie Critzer
- Wyatt Markow
- Carrie Reed
- Paul Whitmer

17 - Kim Maugans
-  Tim & Suzanne Lank

20 - Amye Bergman

21 - Emily Howdysshell

22 - Keith Chittum


23 - Julia Botkin
- Cheryl Howell

25 - B.F. Caricofe, Jr
- Wally Smith

26 - Carl Caricofe, Sr
- Jesse Hartman

-  Larry & Nadine Hinebaugh

27 - Jeffrey Shipe

28 - Logan Kraisser
-  Mathew & Tanya Keys

29 - Christopher Dively

30 -  Kim & Karen Maugans

31 -  Andy & Dana Breeding
-  Gary & Kathy Lewis

Upcoming Activities, Events and Meetings at New Hope UMC

December 2019

Sunday, Dec. 1 ~ First Day of Advent & Holy Communion @ 10:30am

Monday, Dec. 2 ~ Circle of Love Christmas Dinner (*at church*) @ 6pm

Tuesday, December 3 ~ Church Council Meeting @ 6:30pm

Wednesday, December 4 ~ HandBell Practice @ 4:30pm

~ 'Sent' Bible Study by: Reverend J. Acevedo @ 5:00pm

~ Children's Choir Practice @ 5:15pm

~ Wednesday Night Dinner (*last dinner for 2019*) @ 6:00pm

~ Sanctuary Choir Practice @ 6:45pm

Friday, December 6 ~ Circle of Hope Christmas Party at the home of Susan Coffman starting @ 6:00pm

Saturday, December 7 ~ Sweet Hour of Prayer @ 8:00am

~ Parents' Shopping Day from 12:00pm-4:00pm

~ New Hope Christmas Parade starts @ 4:30pm

Sunday, December 8 ~ Sunday School @ 9:30am

~ Sunday Morning Worship @ 10:30am

~ Christmas Concert with Austine Belsky @ 4:00pm

~ Church-wide Christmas Dinner (*covered-dish*) @ 5:30pm

Wednesday, December 11 ~ HandBell Practice @ 4:30pm

~ Children's Choir Practice @ 5:15pm

~ 'Sent' Bible Study by: Reverend J. Acevedo @ 6:00pm

~ Sanctuary Choir Practice @ 6:45pm

Thursday, December 12 ~ Hi-Noon Christmas Dinner at the home of Mr. & Mrs. Wymer @ 12:00pm

Saturday, December 14 ~ Sweet Hour of Prayer @ 8:00am

~ Local Expressions Crafting Ministry meets from 10am-12pm

Sunday, December 15 ~ Sunday School @ 9:30am

~ Sunday Morning Worship @ 10:30am

Wednesday, December 18 ~ HandBell Practice @ 4:30pm

~ Children's Choir Practice @ 5:15pm

~ 'Sent' Bible Study by: Reverend J. Acevedo @ 6:00pm

~ Sanctuary Choir Practice @ 6:45pm

Thursday, December 19 ~ Singles With A Testimony (SWAT) Lunch at Ciro's Pizza in Verona @ 12:00pm

Saturday, December 21 ~ Sweet Hour of Prayer @ 8:00am

Sunday, December 22 ~ Christmas Cantata **starts @ 10:00am**
(NO SUNDAY SCHOOL TODAY)

Tuesday, December 24 ~ Christmas Eve Service @ 9:00pm

Wednesday, December 25 ~ **Christmas Day - Merry Christmas!**

Saturday, December 28 ~ Sweet Hour of Prayer @ 8:00am

Sunday, December 29 ~ Sunday School @ 9:30am

~ Sunday Morning Worship @ 10:30am

Kids' Corner - The Story of Baby Jesus

by Sharla Guenther



A long time ago, in the town of Nazareth, lived a young woman named Mary. Mary did her chores, was kind to others, and loved God very much. She was engaged to be married to Joseph, who was a carpenter.

One day, while Mary was at home cleaning her room, an angel suddenly appeared. Before Mary could say anything the angel told Mary that she was favored by God, and that God was with her.

Mary was surprised. She was trying not to be afraid, but she had never seen an angel before. After all, Mary was just a regular lady like you or I. Why was this angel visiting her? What did the angel want?

The angel quickly tried to reassure Mary. "Do not be afraid!" the angel said. "God has found favor with you. You will have a baby boy, and are to give him the name Jesus."

Mary was confused; she was not yet married to Joseph, so how could she have a baby? The angel thought that this might concern Mary so he said, "The Holy Spirit will perform a miracle, and because of this your baby

will be called the Son of God."

To Mary's surprise, the angel had more exciting news: "Even your cousin Elizabeth is going to have a son in her old age. Many thought that she couldn't have children, but she is already pregnant. Nothing is impossible with God."

Mary couldn't believe what she was hearing; she didn't know what to say. She realized that she was trembling, and knelt down. When she was finally able to speak she said, "I am the Lord's servant, and I hope everything you have said will come true."

Then the angel disappeared, and Mary was left alone.

Soon after, Joseph found out that Mary was going to have a baby. Joseph was confused and upset by this, but an angel came to him in a dream and said, "Joseph do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. The child Mary is going to have is God's son, and you are to give him the name Jesus."

When Joseph woke up he remembered what the angel had said. He knew that everything was okay, and he wasn't upset anymore.

In those days, the government decided that they should count everyone that lived in that area of the world. So Joseph had to take Mary to his town of Bethlehem to register.

It took Mary and Joseph a long time to get to Bethlehem. They didn't have cars back then, so it probably took them a lot longer to get there. This was very tiring for Mary because she was soon going to have a baby.

When they reached the town, all the hotels were full and there was nowhere that they could stay. Finally, someone felt bad for them and offered them a place to stay.

The Bible doesn't say for sure where they stayed but most people think that they stayed in a small barn where animals were kept. In any case, doesn't it seem strange that Jesus, the King of the Jews wasn't born in a fancy palace or even a hospital?

Mary and Joseph were thankful that they at least had a place to lie down. It was warm, and there was plenty of straw to lay on.

That night an exciting, wonderful thing happened: Mary and Joseph had a baby! But this wasn't just any baby, he was Baby Jesus! The creator of the whole world, the King of Kings, and the one who would save the world.

The little baby boy fell asleep in Mary's arms. She wrapped him in cloths and laid him in a manger on some clean straw.

Mary and Joseph soon fell asleep; they were so glad to have this special baby join their family.



**WELCOME TO OUR
NEW MEMBERS!**

**Nathan Kutz
Linda McKibbin &
Blake McKibbin**

CONFERENCES

in the Church Life in 2019

New Hope Charge Conference

Pastor Mike, Alicia Copeland, Cindy Deavers and Wanda Harding attended the New Hope Charge Conference held at Verona UMC on November 2nd with covered dish lunch, followed by worship service and communion. Next a business meeting with approval of lay servants Kim Maugans, Helen Morse, Dale Rankin, LeVerne Herring and approval of lay speaker, Jennifer Strother. Also approved pastor salary, accountable reimbursement and housing exclusion. Approved nominations report as presented with instructions for church council to approve those currently unfilled positions to be filled by the end of year. Those attending then participated in mission practicum of filling school kits followed by leadership practicum.

District Charge Conference

Pastor Mike, Kim Maugans, Jennifer Strother and Wanda Harding attended the District Conference on November 17th at Otterbein UMC in Harrisonburg. A worship was held as well as business meeting for elections and approval of budgets. Message was given by Becky Downey, Bridgewater and Praise band from Aisle 7 provided music. Pastor Mike shared clergy moment and Kim Maugans was recognized with a group of lay servants. Pastor Mike delivered the donations for Mission House in Elkton to the church at Otterbein UMC for District Charge Conference mission project. Thanks for the generous support.

(On the following page you will find two of the reports written for our annual charge conference that gives a summary of what we have done as a church family in the past year. Next month we will have several more reports for you to read written by some of the leaders in our church.)

Nurture Report 2019

Sweet Hour of Prayer (SHOP) continued year-round at 8:00 am on Saturday mornings. Always open to all, attendance is usually 5-7 persons. Joys, concerns, upcoming events are shared, followed by prayer. Our former pastor and new pastor have different formats but both have included scripture and a short devotion, as well as prayer, volunteer or pastor led.

We also continued our Wednesday Night dinners during the school year, with time taken off during the cold winter months and summer. The congregation, as well as the community, is invited. The meal is free but donations are accepted. Approximately 50 people attend, sometimes more, sometimes less and good fellowship is the result. The meal is prepared and served by a small group of faithful members. Our two Faith Community Nurses have occasionally provided information and blood pressure checks during this time.

An hour prior to the meal and during the summer, a Bible or book study is open to all, led by layman George Taylor. This summer we read and discussed the book Whisper by Mark Batterson. We are now studying Jonah, to be followed by Job and an Advent study.

The fifth Sunday in January was "Bring A Friend" Sunday followed by a covered-dish meal after worship. In June a farewell lunch was held in honor of Pastor Shin, followed the next Sunday by a welcome lunch for Pastor Mike. The fifth Sunday of September we celebrated Rural Life Sunday and had our annual church picnic.

A new Sunday School class, aimed particularly at those who had not been attending a class, has been started by member Jennifer Strother. Interest and participation has been good.

There have been opportunities for children to experience the love of God and their church family through activities designed for them such as trips to the Jump Park, Water Part, Vacation Bible School, and Children's Music Retreat. They participated in Children's Sabbath in a variety of ways, including readings, singing, playing the handbells and taking the offering.

Nurture provides ways to maintain a close church family and strengthens our love for God and each other through fellowship and sharing.

JoEtta Walker - Chairperson for Nurture and Outreach

New Hope United Methodist Men's Group Report

This is a report of the activities of the NHUMM for the period of September 2018 through August 2019.

Regular monthly meetings were held in September 2018, October 2018, November 2018, January 2019, February 2019, March 2019, and April 2019. We delivered five meals at each of these meetings, three to shut-in members and two to the New Hope Fire Dept. for the firefighters on duty.

In December 2018 we celebrated with UMW for our Christmas dinner. The UMM provided two western hams for part of the meal.

We held our annual Ham Oyster supper on November 10, 2018. This is a big fundraiser for the UMM, that the entire church helps us pull off.

We hosted and provided the food the Shrove "Fat" Tuesday pancake dinner. We hosted the breakfast after the Easter Sunrise Service. UMM provide the food and prepared it.

On May 12, 2019, the UMM held the Sunday Service for the church. Dale Rankin provided the sermon. Various other members read scripture and ushered. The UMM chorus sang the anthem for the service. We then presented all ladies in attendance with a flower to commemorate Mother's Day.

On May 21, 2019, we hosted a Ladies Night Out Dinner at the Wood Grill in Harrisonburg. Faithful Praise provided musical entertainment. Door prizes were awarded and all the ladies who attended were given gift bags.

June, July, and August 2019 were our UMM work nights. We performed several beautification projects around the church such as painting the parsonage porch, mulching around the church and parsonage, cleaning the garage at the parsonage, removing unwanted articles from around the church, trimming shrubs and trees and cleaning out the gutters. We also trimmed the trees around the edge of the cemetery as well as straightening a few of the tombstones and markers.

Several members of the UMM helped build props and setup for Vacation Bible School. On Friday, June 28, 2019, the UMM provided a cookout for the closing of Vacation Bible School.

We look forward to serving our Church and congregation in the coming year.

Respectfully submitted - Dallas VanLear, President NHUMM

From Pastor Mike's Desk

December 2019



Every year at this time we hear the same lament over and over: “Christmas has become so commercial.” We hear it so often that after a while it means nothing. It’s like complaining about the weather. It doesn’t change anything. We may lament the influence of Madison Avenue on the season but most of us love to give gifts. When we give to others, we have the potential to be at our best. We can also be at our worst when our giving is too influenced by this season of overspending and overindulging.

Parents feel the economic pressures of trying to decide what is appropriate giving. Friends and family members fall into the trap

of looking for that “perfect” gift. Some are guilty of comparing their giving to others. Spouses often try to find the approval of their partners through their gifts.

None of us are immune to these tensions unless we withdraw from the world. And I don’t think that is what God had in mind when the baby Jesus was given to us on the first Christmas. We have the most perfect example of giving in the birth of the Christ child. I hope our giving seeks to be of the same attitude.

Recently, I came across a list that might help us rethink our attitudes toward giving. I would like to share it with you.

Eight Gifts that Do No Cost a Cent

- 1.) **Listening:** But you must REALLY listen. No interrupting, no daydreaming, no planning your response. *Just listen.*
- 2.) **Affection:** Be generous with appropriate hugs, kisses, pats on the back and handholds. Let these small actions demonstrate the love you have for family and friends.
- 3.) **Laughter:** Clip cartoons. Share articles and funny stories.
- 4.) **A Written Note:** It can be a simple “*Thanks for the help!*” note or a full sonnet. A handwritten note may be remembered for a lifetime and may even change a life.
- 5.) **A Compliment:** A simple and sincere, “*You look great in red.*”, “*You did a super job!*”, or “*That was a wonderful meal.*” can make someone’s day.
- 6.) **A Favor:** Every day, go out of your way to do something kind.
- 7.) **Solitude:** There are times when we want nothing better than to be left alone. Be sensitive to those times and give the gift of solitude to others.
- 8.) **A Cheerful Disposition:** The easiest way to feel good is to extend a kind word to someone. Really, it’s not that hard to say “*Hello.*” or “*Thank you.*”

We all enjoy finding a gift under the Christmas tree. It’s fun to unwrap a package. However, many of the gifts we remember most cost nothing. While there is a place for presents wrapped in pretty paper as we celebrate the birth of Christ, the best gifts we can give are our selves. That’s the example we have in Christ.

Yours in Christ, *Pastor Mike*

SANTA v. JESUS

Santa lives at the North Pole.
JESUS is everywhere.

Santa rides in a sleigh.
JESUS rides on the wind and walks on the water.

Santa comes but once a year.
JESUS is ever present.

Santa fills your stockings with goodies.
JESUS supplies all your needs.

Santa comes down your chimney uninvited.
JESUS stands at your door and knocks.. and then enters your heart.

You have to stand in line to see Santa.
JESUS is as close as the mention of His name.

Santa lets you sit on his lap.
JESUS lets you rest in His arms.

Santa doesn't know your name, all he can say is *"Hi little boy or girl, What's your name?"*
JESUS knew our name before we did.

Santa has a belly like a bowl full of jelly.
JESUS has a heart full of love.

Santa offers material presents.
JESUS offers help and hope.

Santa says *"You better not cry."*
JESUS says: 'Cast all your cares on me for I care for you.'

Santa's elves make toys.
JESUS makes new life, mends wounded hearts and repairs broken lives.

Santa may make you chuckle, but
JESUS gives you joy that is your strength.

While Santa puts gifts under your tree,
JESUS became our gift and died on a tree.

If you would like to add an article or announcement to the Hilltopper, please contact us!

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 86 New Hope, VA 24469

(540) 363-5940 or NewHopeUMC.Virginia@gmail.com

Pastor Michael Reaves: michaelreaves@vaumc.org Call/Text: (757) 653-8537