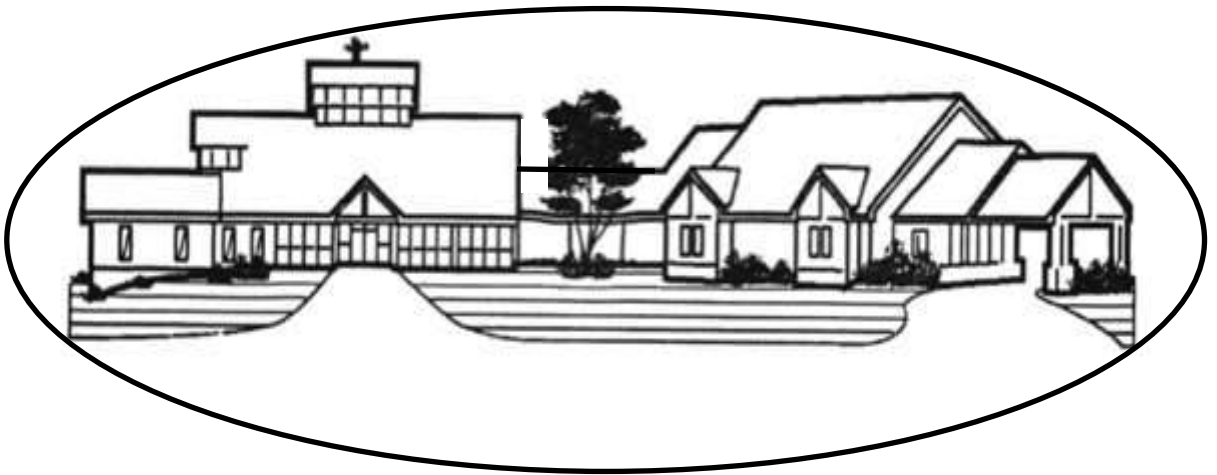

Agapegram

January 2025



ETERNAL SHEPHERD LUTHERAN CHURCH

220 Carson Road

Seneca, South Carolina 29678

www.eternalshepherd.org

office@eternalshepherd.org

Office: 864-882-3209 or 864-882-5512

Little Lambs Preschool: 864-882-3202

A Tolkien Christmas



...deep darkness covers the peoples, but the Lord will dawn upon you... Isaiah 60:2 EHV

Columnist Walker Larson recently shared [an article](#) about an unknown-to-me Christmas poem by J.R.R. Tolkien, presented here for your own Christmas reflection as January marks the back half of the 12 Days of Christmas:

Noel
by J.R.R. Tolkien

Grim was the world and grey last night:
The moon and stars were fled,
The hall was dark without song or light,
The fires were fallen dead.
The wind in the trees was like to the sea,
And over the mountains' teeth
It whistled bitter-cold and free,
As a sword leapt from its sheath.

The lord of snows upreared his head;
His mantle long and pale
Upon the bitter blast was spread
And hung o'er hill and dale.
The world was blind,
the boughs were bent,
All ways and paths were wild:
Then the veil of cloud apart was rent,
And here was born a Child.

The ancient dome of heaven sheer
Was pricked with distant light;
A star came shining white and clear
Alone above the night.
In the dale of dark in that hour of birth
One voice on a sudden sang:
Then all the bells in Heaven and Earth
Together at midnight rang.

Mary sang in this world below:
They heard her song arise
O'er mist and over mountain snow
To the walls of Paradise,
And the tongue of many bells was stirred
in Heaven's towers to ring

continued next page...

When the voice of mortal maid was heard,
That was mother of Heaven's King.

Glad is the world and fair this night
With stars about its head,
And the hall is filled with laughter and light,
And fires are burning red.
The bells of Paradise now ring
With bells of Christendom,
And Gloria, Gloria we will sing
That God on earth is come.

Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord is dawning upon you. Isaiah 60:1 EHV

Pastor David

As provided last year, here are some reading plans for those who desiring to read through the Bible in 2025. [navigators-bible-reading-plan.pdf](#) or [Bible Reading Plan \(ligonier.org\)](#)

Some might prefer a daily reading emailed to you or using an app on your phone. Plans can be found at [Bible Gateway - Reading Plans](#) or on the popular YouVersion app.

Finally, if the whole bible seems too challenging and you've failed to succeed in the past, see the "[2025 Cliff Notes](#)". (Please see next page). Ask the office for a hard copy if desired.

May God richly bless your time in His Word as we grow in our knowledge and trust of Jesus!



Highlights through the Bible - 2025

This reading schedule, while not covering the entire Scriptures, covers the broad sweeping narrative of the Word. It lists only a few chapters per week and builds in “catch up” weeks to recover from falling behind. By following this schedule, at the end of the year you will have read 10 complete books of the bible including all four Gospels and acquired a “CliffsNotes” summary of God’s inspired Word.

Jan 1 – Jan 4	Genesis 1-2	Jul 6 – Jul 12	Matthew 13-18
Jan 5 – Jan 11	Genesis 3-5	Jul 13 – Jul 19	Matthew 19-25
Jan 12 – Jan 18	Genesis 6-11	Jul 20 – Jul 26	Matthew 26-28
Jan 19 – Jan 25	Genesis 12, 15, 17, 22	Jul 27 – Aug 2	Mark 1-8
Jan 26 – Feb 1	Genesis 37, 39-45	Aug 3 – Aug 9	Mark 9-16
Feb 2 – Feb 8	Exodus 1-10	Aug 10 – Aug 16	<i>Catch Up Week</i>
Feb 9 – Feb 15	Exodus 11-15	Aug 17 – Aug 23	Luke 1-4
Feb 16 – Feb 22	Ex. 19-20:21; Num. 11-14	Aug 24 – Aug 30	Luke 5-9
Feb 23 – Mar 1	Deuteronomy 4-7, 34	Aug 31 – Sep 6	Luke 10-17
Mar 2 – Mar 8	<i>Catch Up Week</i>	Sep 7 – Sep 13	Luke 18-21
Mar 9 – Mar 15	Joshua 1-6, 24	Sep 14 – Sep 20	Luke 22-24
Mar 16 – Mar 22	Judges 6-8	Sep 21 – Sep 27	John 1-7
Mar 23 – Mar 29	Ruth	Sep 28 – Oct 4	John 8-12
Mar 30 – Apr 5	1 Samuel 1-8, 15-17	Oct 5 – Oct 11	John 13-17
Apr 6 – Apr 12	2 Samuel 7, 11-12, 24	Oct 12 – Oct 18	John 18-21
Apr 13 – Apr 19	1 Kings 3, 6-8, 11	Oct 19 – Oct 25	<i>Catch Up Week</i>
Apr 20 – Apr 26	1 Kings 12-14, 17-19	Oct 26 – Nov 1	Acts 1-4, 8-9
Apr 27 – May 3	2 Kings 18-20, 22-25	Nov 2 – Nov 8	Romans 1-5
May 4 – May 10	Lamentations	Nov 9 – Nov 15	Romans 6-11
May 11 – May 17	<i>Catch Up Week</i>	Nov 16 – Nov 22	Romans 12-16
May 18 – May 24	Daniel 1-3, Esther	Nov 23 – Nov 29	Hebrews 1-4
May 25 – May 31	Ezra 1, 3; Nehemiah 1-4, 8	Nov 30 – Dec 6	Hebrews 5-8
Jun 1 – Jun 7	Habakkuk	Dec 7 – Dec 15	Hebrews 9-13
Jun 8 – Jun 14	Psalms 120-134	Dec 14 – Dec 20	1 Peter
Jun 15 – Jun 21	<i>Catch Up Week</i>	Dec 21 – Dec 27	Revelation 1, 4, 7, 21-22
Jun 22 – Jun 28	Matthew 1-7		
Jun 29 – Jul 5	Matthew 8-12		



*A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO OUR OUT GOING
COUNCIL MEMBERS AND ELDERS*

*Altar Guild—Tracy Cochell
Board of Elders—Scott Krueger
Board of Stewardship—Sue Blount
Elders—Stephen Beitz, Scott Krueger & Bob Massa*

*We thank you for your faithful and dedicated service to our Lord,
our church family, and the community.*

*WELCOME TO OUR NEW 2025 INCOMING
COUNCIL MEMBERS AND ELDERS*

*Altar Guild—Tracy Keefer
Board of Elders —Jim Bluhm
Board of Stewardship—Sue Hauser
Elders—Tony Alford, Norman Dukes & Fred Massa*

*Welcome! We look forward to our time of service
together. Thank you for answering the call.*

Will Someone Give Gracie A Home?

Gracie is a beautiful girl. She is loving, affectionate, no health issues, up to date on her shots, and lonely.

Since the passing of her friend Nick, she lives in a big house all by herself.

Oh! by the way, did I mention Gracie is a cat.

Gracie's human Captain Bert Wise is in a memory care facility in Anderson, SC and can not care for her.

Please consider giving this precious animal a loving home. Any questions, call Don Seigler at (864) 903-4558

Thank you



New Year Resolutions

(Elder's Thoughts)

Have you ever kept a New Year's Resolution?

If I had kept all of my New Year Resolutions, I would...

- ... weigh 100 pounds. (10 years @ 10 pounds / year)
- ... lost sweet tooth (10 years of giving up sweets for Lent)
- ... be on budget (All Costco trips less than \$50)
- ... read a book (does YouTube or TikTok count?)

So, most of the time our good intentions miss the mark.

How can we make 2025 resolutions stick?

Proverbs 16:3 says "Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed".

My New Years Resolution: **Trust In The Lord**

And, every day at breakfast, I will commit my resolution to the Lord.
"Lord help me trust you today."

- Will there be tough days? You bet.
- Will there be wonderful days? You bet.
- Will there be sad days? You bet.
- Will there be challenging days? You bet.

What ever the day, I will trust in the Lord and don't doubt that His plan for my day is always better than my plan for my day.



Is There Such a Thing as Holy Envy?

by Kerry Blount

“In fact, where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and every bad practice.” (James 3:16)

The consistent teaching of the Old and New Testaments concerning the human attitude of envy—as noted by James—is that it leads to a variety of evils and we should avoid it. But I must admit that I have been “envious” throughout this Advent, Christmas, and new year’s season. Not in a way that seeks to deprive the rightful owner of something so I can possess it, but in the sense that I deeply long to have experiences similar to the extraordinary ones they have had. Here are perhaps the six best examples of my envy conundrum:

I envy the joy of Elizabeth when the child she was carrying (John) acknowledged Jesus with a leap of joy even before either of them were born. *Luke 1:41-45*

I envy the lips of Mary as she gently kissed the face of God’s only-begotten Son for the very first time. *Luke 2:7*

I envy the courage of Joseph in accepting the miracle of Jesus’ birth and his obedience in protecting the Child from Herod. *Matthew 1:18-24 and 2:13-14*

I envy the astonishment of the shepherds in witnessing the worshipping angels and then seeing the Child of whom those angels sang. *Luke 2:8-17*

I envy the eyes of Simeon at the temple when he held the Child and recognized Him as the Messiah promised by Isaiah and the fulfillment of the Holy Spirit’s promise to him. *Luke 2:25-35*

I envy the steadfast determination of the Magi in seeking to find and pay homage to the newborn King, and their wisdom in disregarding Herod’s instructions. *Matthew 2:1-12*

The entire improbable but true story of the events surrounding the coming of the long-awaited Savior fills me with what I can only call “holy envy.” I long to kiss His cheek, to rejoice with Elizabeth, to walk beside Joseph as he protects Him, to feel Simeon’s heart race with amazement as he holds Him, to kneel with the wise men from the East who sought so diligently to worship Him. To see Him face to face. Yes, face to face. May it be so, and soon, Lord. Soon.

Most Holy Father, we praise and thank You for the Word Made Flesh, who dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. We thank You for preserving in the written Word the story of His coming down to us, of His life among us, and of His sacrifice for us. We thank you for the faithful men who recorded it under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and for the loving details You provided that help us grasp its truth and accuracy. May our longing to be with You continue to grow until You make it so in Your good time. Amen

Comfort Dog News

Thank you to all who supported our 7th Annual “Howl-Le-Lu-Ya” Dog Biscuit Sale this year! We raised \$1108 and will be donating \$120 of these funds to *Clemson Paws Partners*. This organization helps save the lives of animals by offering spay and neuter services and other medical care treatments to homeless animals and those in low-income households at low-to-no cost.



We also want to thank Thrivent Financial for granting us a \$250 action team gift card which helped purchase the ingredients for the dog biscuits. The leftover funds will buy 4 large bags of dog food which will be donated to the Oconee Humane Society. The dog biscuit endeavor was made possible by faithful members of the Comfort Dog Team who mixed, rolled, cut out and baked the dog biscuits. A second crew of team members packaged the dog biscuits into dog paw stamped bags tied with ribbon. We made 206 bags of dog biscuits this year and we hope all the dogs in your family and neighborhood enjoyed these special healthy treats which were made with lots of love!

Please pray for Seth and the Comfort Dog Team in 2025. We want to go where God wants us to go and be available when He calls. God is opening doors for us in various ways with ongoing visits to Seneca High School and Clemson University which is an answer to prayer! I think today's youth need much comfort, unconditional love and moments of peace which hopefully Seth will be able to provide. In addition, the human part of the team offers prayer and Bible verses in appropriate situations in our visits locally but also during deployments.

This ministry is a team endeavor, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank Seth's handlers and his ministry partners for their faithful service. And many thanks to our wonderful ESLC congregation who always welcome Seth and all of us with love and encouragement! Happy New Year and may God bless you with His peace, love, and comfort in the coming year. To God be the Glory, *Kyra Carbone, Top Dog*

CHRISTMAS IN HAITI

Pastor Walta called to wish everyone at Eternal Shepherd a Blessed Christmas and Happy New Year! All of the Pas Bonbon children send prayers of Thanksgiving for all we do for their school. I asked what they had planned for Christmas, and it will be a day of celebration at the Pas Bonbon church/school. Joining the 320 students will be their parents so the worship service will be held outside. What would a child expect as a gift for Christmas? The young girls a doll, the older girls a dress. The young boys a toy car, the older boys a soccer ball or shirt. The Christmas dinner at church will be fruit and vegetables from the trees and plants we provided. They will also have sugar cane and in limited supply of coconut milk brought in by members. School is now on Christmas Holiday and will resume January 13th. They are all looking forward to a new year and wonderful days at school.



If you want more information on our Mission Committee please contact Lars Helland. ESLC is Blessed to be a Blessing !

OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD UPDATE: The 2024 Shoebox season set a record. Our church packed 353 shoeboxes, which is more than we've ever packed before. We collected 946 additional shoeboxes from the community. That means that 1299 more children will hear the Gospel, and we pray that God will work through that Gospel message to bring all of them to faith in Him.



This year history was also made at the Processing Center in Boone, NC. For the first time ever, they processed over three million shoeboxes since 11/26! Thanks be to God for His work through this ministry. The goal of Samaritan's Purse was to see over twelve million shoeboxes sent out worldwide. Later in January we'll know if they reached their goal. We already know where our shoeboxes were sent. **In 2024 our shoeboxes were sent to Honduras, Columbia and Ukraine, and to one "Hard to Reach" country that isn't named.**

I'm so thankful for the enthusiasm from everyone who has volunteered to help with this ministry. Due to the added interest, we're going to form an Operation Christmas Child Committee. Hopefully that will allow the ministry to continue to grow going forward, allowing us to pack even more shoeboxes every year. **Our first meeting will take place after late service on Sunday, January 19th in room 301.** If you're interested in being involved in any way with this ministry, please plan to attend the meeting, and bring your ideas with you! If you're homebound and have told your Elder of your interest in helping, you can expect a phone call from me prior to the meeting. Snacks will be provided. Call me with questions at (864)882-4386. *Thank you! Terri Baumann, Project Leader*



DID YOU MISS THE MINISTRY OF THE MONTH IN DECEMBER?

Did you know that it was the Prayer Shawl Ministry? Did you know that over 200 prayer shawls have been made for us as a congregation to give to friends and family that are ill, hurting, or struggling? We have given almost 190 of them already. There are about fifteen available now to be given.

Find out more about this ministry and how you can participate including gifting these prayer shawls to friends and family. Check out the bulletin board. The prayer shawl information will be there through January. If you have any questions, please contact Susan Hauser.

Hospitality continues as an important ministry in our church since our church believes that fellowship with other Christians is vital. We always remain committed to our church and are always looking for new members. We are increasingly utilizing this ministry more and more with each passing day. We would love to have more people involved: This requires as LITTLE or as MUCH as you would like to help with: providing food, set-up, serving and clean-up at certain functions. All these are helpful and needed. If you are interested in joining our ministry, please contact Colleen Hesemann.



On Sundays, we are involved with treats for Bible study between 1st. and 2nd. services. This again can be as MUCH or as LITTLE as you want, having the coffee made and any treats that can be homemade, store bought or packaged: Emphasis being put on amount...it need not be large quantities...working with other families is often helpful. If you sign up and are not sure how to proceed, just let Colleen Hesemann know and she will help you learn the ropes (which is not difficult). It will allow you to get to know more people and is great fun. The pumper pots are now color coated...matching color to color and they will work.

Hospitality has worked to "organize" the kitchen. Items have been removed and they are currently in the basement. If you feel that any of these items be returned, please let hospitality know. Many of these items have taken up shelving space and have not been used for the last two years.

Thanks to all who do so much to further our "hospitality" ministry.
Blessings, Colleen

ON-LINE GIVING Remember you can give on-line. Just go to our church website at www.eternalshepherd.org and click on the On-line Giving bar in the top right corner on the homepage. ~*Thank you for your faithful support.*



Scrip Cards are available and make great gifts as well as earn money for Eternal Shepherd at the same time.

Please note we have Publix, Ingles and Walmart gift cards available. For orders pick up an order form from the Scrip Box or please contact **Beckie Rau** at (864) 944-6096. After the order is received one of the Scrip ladies will contact you to make arrangements for delivery. Scrip Card Team: **Beckie Rau, Libby Dunlap, Elisabeth Baker & Sue Hauser.** ~*Thank you for your support.*



FEEDING THE HUNGRY MINISTRY

Our next Feeding the Hungry Ministry Event is Saturday, 1/11/25. To prepare for this event, we need 4-8 volunteers to help assemble the sandwiches and pack the lunches. We will meet at church in the Fellowship Hall at 7pm on Friday 1/10/25. It will take approximately one hour to complete this task. Then on Saturday, 1/11/2025, we will need 4-6 volunteers to assist with the delivery, set-up, and handout of the lunches to the Our Daily Bread home. We need to be there by 11am. If you would like to volunteer for either of these times, please call Mark Kunkel at (248) 766-8002 and let me know? *Thank you for your support!*



Volunteers Needed for BabyRead

BabyRead desperately needs volunteers to read one-on-one to moms and their babies or toddlers at public venues twice a month for one hour each time. We currently have 10 new families who are waiting for a volunteer reader. All of our current readers are assigned to other families. To become a BabyRead volunteer, visit www.babyread.org. Please consider serving in this ministry.



FOOD BANK NEWS: Please help us in collecting preferred needed canned, or boxed grocery items each month to help restock the Golden Corner Food Pantry's shelves. **January's** preferred product is "***Canned or Dried Beans***" (Please place your items in the containers marked Food Bank down by the Fellowship Hall). *~Thank you for your generosity and support.*



ESLC CARD CART

Come check out our new assortment of cards.

If you have a chance, stop by the **Card Cart Ministry Display in the Fellowship Hall.** You might find a card that is just perfect for someone you know! There is a wide variety for all kinds of occasions and the price is perfect!!! \$.50 for all cards and \$5.00 for a box of 12 found on the bottom of the cart.



Hospitality Happenings for January

- 1/5 — Terri Baumann & Susan Sherman
1/12 — Vendo Toming & Sue McCart
& the Honduras Mission Team
1/19 — Joan Callahan & Linda Nichelson
1/26 — Sue Watson & ?



Hospitality is going full speed. We provide for Memorial Services and Sunday Bible Study. We always remain committed to our church and are always looking for new members. This requires as little or as much as you would like to help with: providing food, set-up, serving and clean-up. All these are helpful and needed.

If you are interested in any of these, please contact me at 864-784-0421 and I will gladly help. ~Colleen Hesemann

January Birthdays

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| 1 – Doug Zirbel | 21 - Richard Grotheer |
| 5 – LJ Rebholz
Adam Warber | 22 - Dennis Hippchen
Joe Nichelson |
| 7 – Susan Robirds
Joyce Thompson | Bill Smith
Larry Snyder |
| 9 – Sara Baumann | Gerry Walton |
| 10 - Benjamin Madden
Carol Welte | 23 - Carol Shealy
24 - Grover Stewart |
| 14 – Jacquie Wilson | 27 – Ken Dunlap |
| 16 - Jim McKibben | 29 – Sherry Wyatt |
| 17 – Monica McCrary | 30 – Mike Hauser |
| 18 – Beth Renfroe | |
| 20 - Susan Tyner | |



January Anniversaries

- 8 – Jeep & Jean Feldt
13 – Cecil & Cara Murray
15 – Ray & Sherry Wyatt
20 – Henry & Julie Gambrell
Mike & Sue Kunce
24– Craig & Kathy Bergeson
27 – Jim & Elaine Randles
31 - Monty & Julie Moore



SPECIAL GIFTS/MEMORIALS

In November the following gifts were given:

**In honor of *Rich & Colleen Hesemann's marriage*
the General Fund received a gift of \$100.00,
and the Hospitality Fund received a gift of \$150.00**

Other Gifts:

The Comfort Dog Ministry Fund received gifts of \$166.97

**The Disaster Response Team Fund received gifts of \$3,235.00,
and a gift of \$1,000.00 from Blessings Shared Grant**

The Elders Fund received a gift of \$100.00

The Food Bank Fund received gifts of \$123.84

**The General Fund received a gift of \$800.00 from Blessings Shared Grant,
and a gift of \$90.00 from Thrivent Choice**

The Haiti Mission Fund received a gift of \$200.00

**The Honduras Mission Fund received gifts of \$14,787.57
from team members for Team 2025 travel,
and Helping Hands for Honduras received gifts of \$350.00**

**The Hospitality Fund received a gift of \$28.00,
and the Hospitality Coffee Fund received gifts of \$25.00**

**The Little Lambs Preschool Fund received gifts of \$136.71.
and the LLP C.A.R.E. Scholarship Fund received a gift of \$100.00**

The LWML Fund received gifts of \$989.28

The Operation Christmas Child Fund received gifts of \$200.00

The Pastor's Discretionary Fund received a gift of \$30.00

The Safety Committee Fund received gifts of \$148.13

The Youth Gathering Fund received gifts of \$300.00

Little Lambs Tales

“Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.” (Isaiah 40:30)

As we ring in the New Year at Little Lambs Preschool, we are reminded of God’s promises of hope and renewal. After several weeks of rest and relaxation, the teachers and staff are ready to enter the new year of 2025!

We will be focusing our attention this month of January on the season of Winter! You will see a lot of crafts, songs, and stories that revolve around snowmen, ice castles, animals that hibernate in the winter and anything related to snow!



Students come back to school on January 7th and on January 20th we will be out of school for MLK day.

As the month of January concludes we will look forward to ushering in the month of February and the theme of love for God and one another.

We are renewed and refreshed in the presence of these beautiful children of God and feel God’s continual blessings at work!

Thank you for your continual support and prayers for this most important ministry of Eternal Shepherd Lutheran Church.

Blessings to you and your families,
Gina



SERVICE TIMES

8:30 a.m. Worship Service
(Communion 2nd & 4th Sundays)

9:45 a.m. Sunday School
& Adult Bible Study

11:00 a.m. Worship Service
(Communion 1st & 3rd Sundays)



THOSE WHO SERVE

Pastor: David Hammer

Deaconess: Holly Cox

Secretary: Celeste Entrekin

Preschool Director: Gina Cote

Choir Director: Rick Schmidt

Choir Accompanist: Michelle Rowland

Organist: David Phillips

MISSIONARIES

Joanna Johnson, Taiwan

Nate Esala, Lutheran Bible Translators

David & Dr. Arianna Shirk, Kenya

S.E.D. Missionaries to Peru

Eternal Shepherd Lutheran Church
220 Carson Rd.
Seneca, SC 29678