



---

\*Smarter Start Toolkit - a guide to establishing healthy digital habits with your new device

\*Sundays HS & Middle School 9:00 a.m. Room 216

Head to the sanctuary when you arrive. You'll be dismissed from there.

\*Confirmation - Begins January 2025

**Events:**

December 29 One service 10:00 am We will remain in the sanctuary.

January 18 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr Celebration Washington Street Education Center (WSEC) from 1-4pm

February 25 A basketball game that takes a stand in the name of Love. SRSLY Details soon.

College Scholarship Link

Please remember to complete a **registration form**. Click on the link below.

Thank you so much!

**Safe Sanctuary Forms:**

[Registration Form](#)

Event Permission Form



Advent: WORDS For the Beginning

December 22 Hope Is Worth The Risk

Scripture Luke 1:46-55

A teenage girl dared to say 'yes' to God. Even when it made her vulnerable to hope, to disappointment, to fear.

A teenage girl chose Hope, and in doing so, entered into God's redemptive dream for the world - even and especially when it disrupted her understanding and expectations.

'As she sings, Mary weaves a vision of the world as God intends it, stitching together a pattern of justice and mercy in her words.

Her hope in the promise of God transcends time and space, extending a sacred invitation and inspiring us today. to live out our faith in tangible, transformative ways.' Hope Is Worth the Risk Kayla Craig

How can you, like Joseph, use your influence to protect and uplift?

How can you, like Mary, voice a hope that challenges the status quo and sings of a reality where justice and mercy reign?

Breath Prayer

Inhale: Lead me, O God,

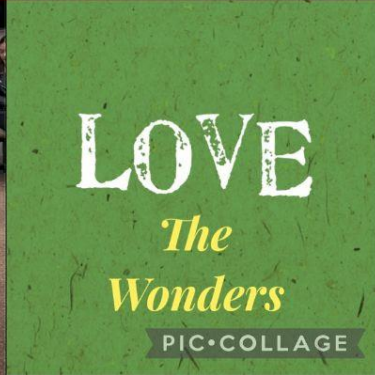
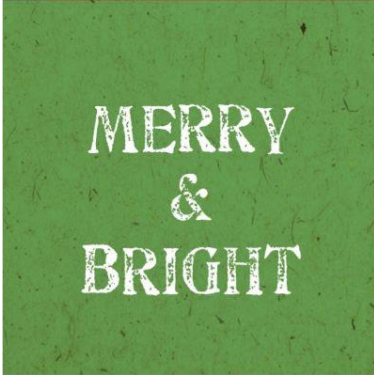
Exhale: My hope is in you.













Saturday January 18 1-4 pm  
Washington Street Education Center  
500 Washington St.

*Join us for Harambee, a joyful Freedom Schools tradition! Harambee (Swahili for “let’s pull together”) is a time filled with songs, cheers, chants, stomps, and an inspiring Read-Aloud Guest. This vibrant celebration brings us together in unity of purpose and gets our scholars energized for the day ahead.*

*Experience the power of community as scholars shout Freedom School cheers, sing the motivational anthem “Something Inside So Strong” by Labi Siffre, and celebrate cultural*



*pride, social awareness, and collective action.*  
*We can't wait to see you there!*





PIC•COLLAGE



# Merry Christmas

PIC•COLLAGE



"Everything is a rhythm. God is a rhythm. Breathing is a rhythm. Circulation is a rhythm. Heartbeat is a rhythm. Pulse is a rhythm. Everything that is alive is a

rhythm." ~Bishop T.D. Jakes

Click on the image above



When I consider the Christmas story now, at 84 years of age, what resonates with me most is that, according to our Scripture, the news of the birth of Jesus came first to the shepherds.

Not the mayor of Bethlehem nor the town council; not to the local priest nor his bishop; not to the Roman Prefect nor his minions, but to the shepherds.

Common, ordinary, maybe less-than-holy, fringe-of-society shepherds were the first to hear the news of God "moving into the neighborhood" as Eugene Peterson writes. So, maybe, I think, this wonderful event also is for me.

Max

Emeritus Professor



The general application for all GBHEM scholarships is Dec. 15 – March 13.

<https://www.gbhem.org/scholarships/apply-for-scholarships/>



*They entered the house and saw the child in the arms of Mary, his mother. Overcome, they kneeled and worshiped him. Then they opened their luggage and presented gifts: gold, frankincense, myrrh. ~Mt 2:11 The MSG*

*When the angels returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go right now to Bethlehem and see what happened. Let's confirm what the Lord has revealed to us." They went quickly and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. When they saw this, they reported what they had been told about this child. Everyone who heard it was amazed at what the shepherds told them.*

~Luke 2:15-18 CEB

In the book, *Why This Jubilee*, author James Howell shares that St. Francis of Assisi asked his friend Giovanni of Greccio to erect the first manger scene, complete with straw crib, oxen, donkeys, and an image of infant Jesus. It seems that liberties were taken and a cave with a manger of stone layered for comfort is a far more likely scenario. It's not the exact details surrounding the birth of Jesus that leave me wondering. Whether lambs were bleating or doves were cooing a heavenly lullaby is a lovely thought, but not where my curiosity lies.

It's the people from all walks of life who dared to enter that space that intrigue me. Astrologers and shepherds, Jews and pagans, from fields and far east. They walked away from jobs that demanded responsibility and consumed their time. As a sheep owner recently shared "Sheep do their best to do themselves in. All. The. Time." Who took over? Did it matter? And what about the priests? Did they just take off? What did they pack beyond the gifts symbolic... and for the record, I place blame for the stress I feel to find presents with a depth of meaning squarely at their feet.

They offered themselves before an infant holy. There were no deep philosophical conversations. There was no advice giving as to how this infant would one day have to shepherd people who were much like the woolly creatures to whom they would return. They surrendered positions of authority and shame in lowly status. They offered themselves wholly and in that, they entered holy presence. *Overcome, they kneeled and worshipped him.*

I love me a clean looking shepherd, perfect bleached white costume of pageant perfection. I also know what my kids looked like after a short stint in the fields, jumping on top of hay bales and over bison patties. You heard me. There's a fair amount of dust and dirt involved and nobody comes out of the field the way they entered. Did those shepherds clean up a little before they went? *They went quickly.* They went quickly, leaving the to do list behind and maybe a long overdue clean up. They showed up just as they were and it was all good and their hearts were blown open wide.

Shepherding would seem to me to be a job well suited to introverts; or like me, people who had imaginations at the ready. And this is what I find fascinating. *They reported what they had been told about this child. Everyone who heard it was amazed at what the shepherds told them.*

How do you go from fields silent to wide open throttle Moth Story hour championship storytelling? And let's remember, the laundry detergent and towelettes

weren't packed. People were not repulsed by these wool watching storytellers. *Everyone who heard it was amazed.*

I realize that life is often lived in the fields...of dirty laundry, of bleating lambs foraging the pantry, of messy rooms and emotions reserved for those in whose company they feel safest to implode. Even when the loveliest of portrayals is posted, the truth is that life is blissfully messy.

And yet it is in that mess, God's invitation is extended.

As Max Lucado wrote,

'Christ grew in Mary until He had to come out. Christ will grow in you until the same occurs.

He will come out in your speech, in your actions, in your decisions.

Every place you live will be a Bethlehem, and every day you live will be Christmas.

You, like Mary, will deliver Christ into the world.'

On any given Sunday morning, I enter a personal Bethlehem made of cinder blocks and filled with light. Christ is growing in them. He comes out in their speech, in their actions and in their decisions.

And when I see the faces of those who find their way home, especially in this season, it feels like gift after Christmas gift because they, like Mary, have delivered Christ into the world.

And just like the 'wise men' and shepherds, it is in the presence of a Child that the journey finds you forever transformed.

Merry Christmas.







**PARENT & CAREGIVERS GROUP**  
January 2025

Connect with other parents and caregivers, share experiences and discuss a wide range of topics related to raising children.

**FIRST BOOK DISCUSSION**

**The Anxious Generation**  
How the Great Reset of Childhood is Creating an Epidemic of Mental Illness  
Jonathan Haidt

**SUSAN ADAM-RITA FACILITATOR**

*More information...* [www.chelseaumc.org/events](http://www.chelseaumc.org/events)



 **Dr. Laurie Santos** 



**The Science of Well-Being for Teens**

The most popular class in Yale University's history. Now free for teens.

**Teens are experiencing a mental health crisis**

A recent survey found that 37% of teens say they have poor mental health. Explore what the field of psychology teaches us about how to be happier, how to feel less stressed, and how to thrive in high school and beyond.

## Thrive in high school and beyond.

In this 6-week course, Dr. Laurie Santos brings together the best insights from her popular Yale course Psychology and the Good Life - now re-designed specifically for teenagers.

This course will share evidence-based strategies for feeling happier in high school and beyond. Learn about common **misconceptions** about happiness; **biases** that get in the way of happiness; **behaviors, thoughts, and feelings** that lead to happiness; and how we can achieve our happiness **goals**. By the end, you will learn a set of tools for feeling better and building healthier habits.



## Feel better. Build healthier habits.

### Misconceptions

Discover what it means to be happy. Examine misconceptions about money, grades, and social media that hold us back.

### Biases

Learn how biases affect our happiness. Explore strategies for healthier comparisons and dealing with our limited attention.

### Strategies

Uncover how we can harness our behaviors, thought patterns, and emotions to boost our happiness and experience better moods.

Feel Better. Build healthier habits.

<https://www.drlauriesantos.com/science-well-being-teens>

Yes, I enrolled. No, I did not agree to be a part of the research study.

Yes. I can't recommend this highly enough. Yes.

If you're looking for the teachings of Jesus and meta analytics, this is your one stop shop.

You'll find the link to enroll in the link above.



Life is big, screens are small...  
and you deserve to live your fullest life.

<https://screensanity.org/tool/smarterstart/>