

Christmas Services

DECEMBER 2ND & 3RD
SANCTUARY CHOIR
CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

DECEMBER 10TH
CHILDREN'S
CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

DECEMBER 17TH
CANDLELIGHT COMMUNION

Kannapolis Church of God
2211 West A Street · Kannapolis, NC 28081
704-932-6582 · www.kcog.org



**KCOG Night at
Skateland
USA!**

**November 7th & December 4th
at 6:30p.m.
\$4 per person* Includes Regular Skates!
Fun for the Whole Family!**
*Part of the proceeds go to our Children's Ministry!



November/December 2017

Holidays or Holy Days? by Dr. Greg Sloop, Lead Pastor

We are in the middle of one of the most celebrated holiday seasons of the year, with Thanksgiving and Christmas right around the corner. I have often been outspoken about my distaste for the Halloween Hoopla every October 31st. Halloween, short for All Hallows Eve, was the night before All Saints Day in parts of Europe. The concept of trick-or-treat came from the idea and practice of leaving gifts on one's front porch to appease the spirits that roamed on this particular evening, prior to celebrating the saints the next day. Even further back, a harvest time festival associated with the Druids happened about the same time of year as Halloween, known as Samhain, where priests chanted and danced around bonfires in deference to restless spirits. So, I am not a big fan of Halloween because of its roots.

Others, however point to the fact that Thanksgiving is simply a day designated by Lincoln, and eventually FDR to follow the example of the Pilgrims in offering thanks to God for His blessings and bounty. We should thank God every day for His blessings, they say. Touche, I say. You are right!

And then many point to the pagan background of Christmas, with greenery and trees that harken to the observances of idol worship in the groves, and gift giving that is not necessarily Christian in origin. Besides, Christmas is just another way to say "Christ Mass" which is a patently Catholic reference. So Christmas comes with baggage, too?

Having stipulated to all the references to problems and background issues with these holidays (and don't even mention Easter), it would seem that we should just ignore all of these nights and days and not celebrate anything this season. However, the Scriptures give us some insight.

Romans 14:5-6 (NKJV) 5 One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. 6 He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks.

If it pricks someone's conscience to celebrate holidays, then honor their convictions and allow them that privilege. There will be no spiders or witches on my house on Halloween, but I will be at Sweet Street to share the gospel with thousands of people. I will offer thanks on Thanksgiving and every day. Boy, I love turkey and dressing! And on Christmas, I will celebrate the baby Jesus, and the adult Jesus, and the crucified Jesus, and the risen Jesus. Do what your heart and the Holy Spirit tells you. However, the reason I will not get overheated about celebrating in the ways I described above is found in the book of Ephesians.

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Ephesians 5:15–16 (NKJV) 15 See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, 16 redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

It is important to be careful, and to not embrace sin. It is important to not over step your conscience. However, I believe that the things once intended for evil can be redeemed for the glory of God. My soul was once full of sin, but then Jesus redeemed me. I will give out candy, give thanks, and celebrate the birth of Jesus because I intend to redeem the time and speak of God’s greatness and love. I will redeem the time in order to tell the lost about a loving Savior. I will redeem the time and show the world that I am not better than them, simply different. While the world may dance with the devil, gorge on pumpkin pie, and commercialize Santa Claus, I will give the treat of Jesus, thank the Lord for His goodness, and remember the real reason for the season, Jesus Christ. Will this be a season of holidays or holy days for you?

Hopes and Dreams for the Future God has for You by Pastor David Edwards

We are coming to the end of another year and at the time of this writing, I have just turned 37. I feel (and act!) a lot younger, but my hairline (and waistline) confirm the reality that I am aging. It’s okay! I am getting older and it happens (and has happened) to everyone. I reflect on 2017 as a great year, very busy and, just as in years past, there were victories, challenges, setbacks, and new hopes. We face and endure hard times, but a Christian’s life should be filled with hopes and dreams for the future. Hopes and dreams for the future God has for you. Why should we have hopes and dreams? Some of us/some of you have been through painful circumstances. Let’s look at one of my favorite verses of Scripture!

The apostle Paul writes in his letter to the church at Philippi, “being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the coming of Jesus Christ.” (Phil. 1:6)

Paul wrote that he was “confident of this,” meaning that he was completely certain and had no doubt. Maybe he had seen this time and time again. God started a good work in us! It began on the day we asked Jesus to save us, the day we admitted our need for a Savior, the day we confessed Jesus to be Lord and Master of our lives. His good work began on the day that we were “born again.” (John 3). When does this “good work” end? It ends either when He calls us home (“to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord,” 2 Cor. 5:8) or “until the coming of Christ.” If you and I are alive and breathing, God has a plan and a purpose for our lives. His plan isn’t complete; it isn’t finished; you are an unfinished work. He is working. He is working “all things together for good, to those that love Him, to those called according to His purpose” (Rom. 8:28). We can be confident, like Paul, that God will complete the good work He has started in our lives and that His plan is a good plan. To every age and every walk of life... God is not finished with you. He has begun a good work in you and He will not be finished until your last day or until Jesus returns. It’s not over yet! With every day we have, let’s “fight the good fight of faith.” (1 Tim. 6:12)



Missions Day Trip! by Rebecca Ketner

As part of our missions club, we ventured down for a great day of learning and exploration at the JAARS (Jungle Aviation and Radio Service) Center in Waxhaw, North Carolina. Connected with Wycliffe Bible Translators, JAARS was established to help provide solutions which enable people to get the Bible into some of the most remote areas of the world. While there, we took four wheel rides on an off road vehicle course, flew in a helicopter and 5-seated plane, recorded our voice in other languages, and looked at various other ways that technology and transportation are used to effectively train people for the mission field.

Thanks to the workers at JAARS, over the past 70 years, there has been thousands of Bible translations made possible. There is a huge task remaining though with approximately 700 million people and about 5,000 languages still with barely any or no scripture. Nelson Mandela once said, “If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head, but if you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart.” By reading the Bible in their own native language, people can see more clearly the picture of God’s love toward them as well as understand more fully how He can redeem, fulfill, and transform their lives. Not only do they get the lasting spiritual component, but secondary effects of this work include heightened literacy rates, education, and health worldwide. May we continue to pray for areas like Central Africa, South Asia, and Asia-Pacific that are in the most need that they may gain access to the life sustaining Word of God. After all, we have been entrusted with the responsibility to do our part in helping see that the good news of His saving grace is proclaimed to every tongue, tribe, and nation. For more information about the exciting things happening at JAARS, go to www.jaars.org or visit them on the next event day--October 14, 2017!



A Time to Look Back by Rev. Barbara Watkins, Prayer Pastor

2 Timothy 1:6 wherefore I put thee in remembrance that you stir up the gift of God which is in you....

This is a wonderful time of year to look back and remember how good God has been to us. How many could say they have experienced the delivering and rescuing power of God in those moments when your situation looked completely hopeless? God’s amazing grace intervened and your whole situation changed... amazing isn’t it? You can’t thank him enough and you share your testimony of his goodness and faithfulness. Then you are hit with another challenge and forget what God has just done. Our perspective gets blurry because of the problems we are now facing and this mountain looks so big that for a moment we fail to remember all the other mountains he has brought us over. In this Scripture, Timothy was facing his big mountain. Nero had become the emperor of the Roman Empire, and because of his rule believers were being persecuted and even dying for their faith. Timothy was tempted to fear for his life and his future and he may have wondered, “Will God be faithful to me during this time?” The enemy likes for us to think God is not able to do it again. He wants to temporarily have us forget to look back and remember what he has done. This scripture reminds us to stir up the gift of God; to look back or to repeat something like a song we play over and over again because it touches us and moves us in His presence. This is why He wants us to never forget what He has done and will continue to do for His children. So in this time of year—whatever you may be facing—I encourage you, just like you would play your favorite song or movie, to get alone with God. Let the Holy Spirit stir inside of you and help you to remember how faithful He has been to you. This is a wonderful time of giving thanks and praise, so as you sit still please let yourself be full of faith knowing his love for you. As the song says, “He’ll do it again....”

Four Reasons to Attend Church

By Rev. Dean Wood, Outreach Pastor

In the church, the summer months are considered to be a time that is filled with vacation, going to the lake, cooking out and enjoying the long lazy days in the sun. As the days get shorter, vacations become fond memories and school starts back. Our families settle into the routine of homework, raking leaves and expectation of the coming holidays. But did you know? During the summer at KCOG the ministry and fun never stopped. We had a great time with VBS, incredible teachings on Israel and the history of our Church, the teens stayed busy with white water rafting, teen talent, and numerous activities. We had camp meeting, music practice, food pantry's great services where people gave their lives to the Lord, and we came together as the people of God to worship and adore the Lord. What a great summer we have had!!

As I was reflecting on the wonderful summer we had it occurred to me that some of us have a tough time getting back into having church as part of our regular routine. In our busy lives taking time to be at church can be a challenge. Our personal church life is so very important in many ways to both you personally and to the church as a body. We love you and miss seeing you when you are not at church. I attached a great article from the Outreach magazine Jan 5th 2017 on the 4 Reasons attending Church is a must. Enjoy and God Bless.

Recently, an online post from a major ministry struck a nerve when it stated the necessity of church attendance for one's growth as a believer in Christ.

It's surprising to me how many Christians struggle with the idea of church attendance. We are at a crossroads in our nation on the importance of going to church. According to research, church attendance has remained virtually the same percentage of our national population for the past 70 years. However, this still means there are a huge number of American Christians who are not active in a local church—in the tens of millions.

Of course, this isn't a new problem. Since the beginning of Christianity, the early leaders had to challenge this mind set, saying "Do not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching" (Heb. 10:25).

A popular Christian motto is, "You don't go to church, you are the church." While I get this sentiment in some ways, it can lead to an unhealthy view, pitting "being the church" and "going to church" against each other. If we are truly the church, then we will surely get together with other believers regularly. We cannot "be" the church if we don't "go" to church.

Church never refers to an individual, lone-ranger Christian who goes about his or her Christian duties, never gathering together to worship with other believers. The church, by its very nature, means multiple believers, who live out Jesus' words in Matthew 18:20: "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them."

This is both the biblical and historical pattern set forth by the first followers of Jesus. They would get together weekly, and sometimes daily, to worship God. They would also share community together in each other's homes. Paul and the other apostles' letters were actually sent to these church communities that gathered in various cities to be read aloud together. Church means getting together with other believers to worship Jesus and hear the Scriptures together, and encouraging one another in the faith.

Craig Groeschel shared recently, "Do not reduce church to listening to a podcast. It's so much more than that. It's community. It's worshiping with others, praying for others, hurting with others, serving others, being involved in the lives of others."

And here's the reality of the Biblical call to gather with other believers: There are many options for "going to church" for each of us. You can look for a church that is right for you. I'm not telling you to go to a certain style, type, or denomination of church—I'm simply challenging you to gather with other believers regularly to worship and hear the Scriptures.

The biblical pattern for church is this:

- Every Christian should gather together to hear the Scriptures and worship Jesus with other believers weekly (see Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2; Acts 2:42; Col. 3:16; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15; Rom. 16:5; Acts 20:20; James 2:2; Ps. 84:4; Ps. 37:17; Ps. 92:13).
- It is also good to meet for smaller groups of Christian community in each other's homes regularly (see Acts 2:46).
- It's good to have leaders oversee the work and needs of each local church. Not all of us are called to church leadership, and so we should submit to and serve whoever God has called to lead at the place we find ourselves (see Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5; Heb. 13:7, 17; 1 Tim. 5:17; 1 Thess. 5:12-13; Phil. 1:1b; Eph. 4:11-12; 1 Cor. 12:28; 1 Peter 5:1-2; Acts 20:17).
- If there are believers who are unable, for physical reasons, to attend a church weekly, they should find a church or believers who will gather together with them regularly for worship in their own home (see James 5:14; James 1:27).

Here are four powerful reasons you should attend church weekly, and why church attendance can change your life:

1. God says so.

God tells us in his Word to "not give up meeting together" (Heb. 10:25). Paul even goes so far as to call the church the "bride of Christ." If you love Jesus, you will love the things that he loves—and he loves the church like a husband loves his bride. The church is important to God, so it should be important to us. God didn't call us to gather and worship to burden us, but to bless us. Church attendance can become one of the greatest blessings in you and your family's life.

2. Worshipping Jesus together is powerful.

Jesus lives inside of us by his Spirit when we believe in him. This is a profoundly incredible truth! But there is also something biblically powerful about gathering together with other believers to worship. Jesus said, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them" (Matt. 18:20). So he not only lives in us by his Spirit, but he is in the "midst" of us when we gather to worship him.

3. We need Christian community.

All of us long for community and connection with others. God has given us this gift in gathering together for church, and in smaller groups in each other's homes. It fulfills something inside of us to do life with, encourage and be authentically involved in each other's lives.

Christian TV, podcasts, books and conferences are wonderful additions to our spiritual lives, but nothing can take the place of consistent Christian community through the local church.

4. We grow more together than alone.

It can be messy when we step into each other's lives. We are all human, and no one is perfect. So it requires effort and intentionality and grace from God to do life together, even as believers.

Gathering regularly with other believers becomes a refining process whereby we help each other, pray for each other and encourage each other to want to follow Christ more wholeheartedly. It is a truly-beautiful thing. Don't let any excuses stand in the way of what you know God is calling you to do. God will strengthen you and empower you to do what he has called you to do. If you have encountered past wounds from leaders or from church members, I'm praying for you—that God would bring healing and grace to you as you seek to follow him and love his church. *Matt Brown (@evangelistmatt) is an evangelist, author and founder of Think Eternity, an evangelistic ministry that reaches thousands of people with the gospel each year through live events and online. This article was originally published on Matt's blog at ThinkE.org.*

We are Wanderers by Pastor John Taylor

Mark 16:15 and Matthew 28:19 are commonly referred to as the “Great Commission” for believers in Christ. It is where we hear Christ’s words to “Go” into all the world to preach the Gospel and make disciples. It is the Church’s imperative to be missional.

The Greek word used for “Go” is rich with meaning. “Go” is a command. The verb tense indicates that it is something that is already happening and will continue to happen, so you could render it, “as you are going” or even “after you have gone and continue to go.” The word also is used to communicate a sense of “wandering.” As Jesus wandered through the country preaching the Good News, so also the disciples, and the disciples that would follow, would be wandering all over the world preaching the same wonderful message.

Our church has never had a better opportunity to wander all over the world. Transportation is easier now than ever. We can travel by car across our state in just a few hours. We can fly to the west coast in about the same time. We can travel to the other side of the world in half a day. We can instant-message people in several different countries at the same time in seconds via the internet. And methods of communication improve every day. In a sense, we can wander the world without even leaving our living rooms. Think of the opportunities God has given us to share the Gospel!

KCOG is committed to do just that, and we do it in several different ways. We are now livestreaming our services. Just last week, my daughter Melissa watched our Homecoming service from her missions outpost in Costa Rica, where she and missionary Val Wood serve. The numbers indicate we are reaching thousands of people all over the world through this type of medium. Many of us use social networking to share the Gospel. This is in addition to our local outreach, which is also gaining momentum in reaching those in and around our community.

As the KCOG missions ministry continues to expand, we are intentionally moving forward with additional opportunities to share the message of Jesus Christ with the world. Next year (2018) we are planning three different international mission trips to share our love with those beyond our borders:

April 12-19, 2018, we will once again be taking a team to an Asian country (which we cannot name for security reasons), where we will supply Christian believers with Bibles, encourage underground Bible School teachers and underground church pastors, and prayer walk.

June 22-July 1, a team will be traveling to Cochabamba Bolivia, ministering to those in orphanages, reaching into the inner-city, and sharing God’s love with those who are broken.

Late Fall or Winter a trip is being organized to Haiti, the poorest country in the western hemisphere. Just a few hours away by plane lies one of the greatest harvest fields to reach people and share hope with the hopeless.

If you are interested in one of these trips, or just want to know what is happening with our missions program, I want to invite you to see me or one of the Missions Committee Members (Faye Taylor, Larry Ballard, Ann Hartzog, Judy Palmquist). We will also be notifying you about upcoming informational meetings for people who are considering joining one of these teams.

We will continue to be “wanderers,” taking seriously the words of our Lord. Let’s pray that the Holy Spirit will continue to empower us to do His perfect will.

Let Every Heart Prepare Him Room By Rhonda Barber, Children’s Pastor

Exodus 15:2 “...He is my God and I will prepare Him a habitation...”

Ready or not, the holiday season is upon us! I don’t know about you, but my family and I LOVE this time of year - especially Christmas! We go all out! We decorate the house, outside and inside, complete with FIVE Christmas trees (in a home of only 1,700 square feet)! We love to gather with family and friends, color, bake, watch Christmas movies, shop and more! But my favorite is something we added several years ago: Advent! We enjoy all the activities of the season, but Advent brings us to the very heart of what the season is really all about! Advent provides a deep and meaningful observation and celebration of Jesus’ birth. It shows God’s great love for us amid the hectic days of this time of year - and that His love is always available to those who consciously quiet their hearts to receive it.

Advent is about preparing ourselves and creating space for Jesus. Are we making room for Him in our lives? Think about it this way. In preparation for company, we sweep and pick up the unnecessary clutter lying around the house. We clean, dust and polish everything. Maybe we decorate and cook a delicious treat to create a warm welcome for our guests. If we knew Jesus would be stopping by our home for a visit, what preparations would we make? Would there be room for Jesus in our busyness? Would we have room for Him? I wonder if there is a parallel between the “no room at the inn” over 2,000 years ago, and today, where we say with our busyness that there is “no room at the inn” of our hearts? If we say we are too busy for Him, doesn’t that defeat the overall purpose of our celebrating?

Like Sabbath, in Advent we find rest. It allows us moments of simply being and freedom from relentless doing. Basically, it gives us a chance to catch our breath. Our prayer should be, “Slow us down, Lord, to enjoy your presence and know you better. Be our sanctuary and renewal. Help us to draw close to you and focus on what is most important.” I don’t believe there is anyone who couldn’t benefit from spending more time resting in God’s presence.

If you don’t already observe Advent, I would encourage you to do it! Especially if you have children. This year, Advent starts on Sunday, December 3rd. There are many ways to do Advent, from a simple personal devotional time, to a family night activity-based plan. There are many great resources out there to help you! One of our family favorites is a book called Jotham’s Journey. It is a storybook that divides the reading into day-by-day sections. It is a captivating story and the kids always anticipated the next night’s reading.

As we observe and experience this time of Advent, let us draw close to the Baby of Bethlehem who will one day (and I believe very soon) return as King of the whole world, taking us to Heaven to be with Him forever! So, let every heart prepare Him room...the King is coming!

Walk That Valley With Courage by Rev. Josh Shepard, Youth Pastor

Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil, for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

In a generation where the church has not been a priority anymore to a lot of people, we must as the Body of Christ and understand that the church goes outside of the four walls. Unless we live a life continually pointing to Christ on a day-to-day basis, unsaved people will not want to come to our church buildings or to church events. Loving others, loving souls, and loving God is not just something that our church says we should do but it should be a way of life for every Christian. Every day we live our lives in this world, the valley gets deeper and a little bit darker. However, if we trust in God and let his rod and his staff comfort us he will prepare for us a table in the presence of our enemies. So though we all are like sheep and go astray, let us come back together knowing that Christ Jesus will lead us and guide us will never fail us and he’ll never let us go.