



Aldersgate United Methodist Church
5767 Sellger Drive
Norfolk, Virginia 23502-5239



December, 2023

Vol. 26 Issue 12

*Advent Services each
Sunday at 11 AM*



*Join Us for Christmas Eve Service
Sunday,
December 24th at 6 PM*

What do we know about the real St. Nick?



The Real Saint Nick by Ralph F. Wilson

"A vast multitude was imprisoned in every place," wrote an eyewitness. "The prisons--prepared for murders and robbers--were filled with bishops, priests, and deacons ... so there was no longer room for those condemned of crimes." [1]

You'd hardly expect to find old St. Nick in jail. But St. Nicholas is more than a children's Christmas legend. He was flesh and blood, a prisoner for Christ, bishop of the Mediterranean city of Myra. What do we know about the real St. Nicholas? He was born, ancient biographers tell us, to wealthy parents in the city of Patara about 270 A.D. He was still young when his mother and father died and left him a fortune.

As a teen-ager, Nicholas' humility was already evident. He had heard about a family destitute and starving. The father had no money for food, much less the dowry needed to marry off his three daughters. He was ready to send his oldest girl into the streets to earn a living as a prostitute.

Under the cover of night, Nicholas threw a bag of gold coins through the window of their humble dwelling. In the morning the father discovered the gold. How he rejoiced: his family was saved, his daughter's honor preserved, and a dowry for her marriage secured. Some time after, Nicholas secretly provided a dowry for the second daughter. Still later for the third.

But on the third occasion, the girls' father stood watching. As soon as the bag of gold thudded on the floor, he chased after the lad till he caught him. Nicholas was mortified to be discovered in this act of charity. He made the father promise not to tell anyone who had helped his family. Then Nicholas forsook his wealth to answer a call to the ministry.

At the nearby city of Myra a bishop supervised all the churches of the region. When the bishop died, the bishops and ministers from other cities and villages--Nicholas among them--gathered to choose a successor.

Nicholas was in the habit of rising very early and going to the church to pray. This morning an aged minister awaited him in the sanctuary. "Who are you, my son?" he asked. "Nicholas the sinner," the young minister replied. "And I am your servant."

"Come with me," the old priest directed. Nicholas followed him to a room where the bishops had assembled. The elderly minister addressed the gathering. "I had a vision that the first one to enter the church in the morning should be the new bishop of Myra. Here is that man: Nicholas."

Indeed they did choose him as bishop. Nicholas was destined to lead his congregation through the worst tribulation in history.

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Have a very
Merry Christmas

From the Staff at Aldersgate

The Aldersgate Experience

Aldersgate United Methodist Church

"Aldersgate...a catalyst for God's call through fervent prayer, active compassion and meaningful outreach"

5767 Sellger Drive, Norfolk, Virginia 23502

Phone: 757-466-8999 Fax: 757-466-8999

Email: joyce@aldersgateumcnorfolk.hrcoxmail.com

Web page: www.aldersgatenorfolk.org

"Like" us on Facebook

Bishop.....Rev. Susan Haurpet-Johnson

District Superintendent...Rev. Cecelia Brooks, Ph.D.

Pastor..... Rev. Melody A. Duncan

Minister of Music..... Dr. Christina Pinkston

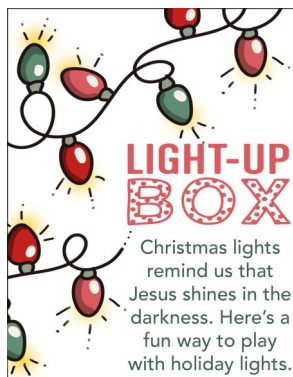
Church Secretary..... Joyce Russo

Office Hours.....9 AM--1PM—Monday-Thursday

Worship Service/Kid Zone...11 AM

Music Rehearsals— 6 PM Wednesdays

Some clipart and quotes used with permission only

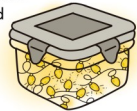


LIGHT-UP BOX

Christmas lights remind us that Jesus shines in the darkness. Here's a fun way to play with holiday lights.

What you need:

- A strand of Christmas lights
- A large clear plastic container and lid
- Green tissue paper
- Colorful beads



What you do:

1. Plug in the lights and place them in the container.
 2. Put on the lid. (If the lid isn't transparent, flip the box over.)
 3. Play with your light box, using these ideas as starters:
 - Cut tissue paper into triangles and arrange them in a tree shape. Decorate the tree with colorful beads.
 - Use the light box for tracing. Place a picture on it, with a clean sheet of paper on top. Then trace the drawing.
 - Use magnet tiles to build designs atop the light box.
- Try building a 3-D Christmas tree!



SIMEON'S SIGHT

When Joseph and Mary brought baby Jesus to the temple, they heard a special prophecy from Simeon.

Directions: Using the star key, write the words in the correct spaces to complete Luke 2:30-32, NIV.



"For my _____ have seen your _____, which you have prepared in the sight of all _____: a _____ for revelation to the _____, and the _____ of your people _____."

Luke 2:30-32, NIV

Answers: eyes, salvation, nations, glory, Gentiles, Israel



Saturday, December 9th
9:30—11:00 am
Children ages 2-5th grade

Reservations required—call church office
at 757-466-8999 or email at
joyce@aldersgateumcnorfolk.hrcoxmail.com

Please see Greg Dziagwa or Barbara Harrell if you are able to volunteer in the kitchen.



Christmas Eve Service—
Sunday, Dec. 24th 6:00 PM

New Year's Eve Service—
Sunday, Dec. 31st 11 AM in the Social
Hall with a Potluck Brunch.



Pastor's Christmas Message
Holiday Happenings—
dates, and times

Lay Ministry Schedules

And much more



Continued from page 2

In A.D. 303, the Roman Emperor Diocletian ordered a brutal persecution of all Christians. Those suspected of following the Lord were ordered to sacrifice to pagan gods. Nicholas and thousands of others refused.



Ministers, bishops, and lay people were dragged to prison. Savage tortures were unleashed on Christians all over the empire. Believers were fed to wild animals. Some were forced to fight gladiators for their lives while bloodthirsty crowds screamed for their death. Women suffered dehumanizing torment. Saints were beaten senseless, others set aflame while still alive.

Yet persecution couldn't stamp out Christianity. Rather it spread. Third Century leader Tertullian observed, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church."

Those who survived Diocletian's torture chambers were called "saints" or "confessors" by the people, because they didn't forsake their confession that Jesus Christ is Lord. Nicholas was one of these.

Finally, after years of imprisonment, the iron doors swung open and Bishop Nicholas walked out, freed by decree of the new Emperor Constantine. As he entered his city once more, his people flocked about him. "Nicholas! Confessor!" they shouted. "Saint Nicholas has come home."

The bishop was beaten but not broken. He served Christ's people in Myra for another thirty years. Through the prayers of this tried and tested soldier of faith, many found salvation and healing. Nicholas participated in the famous Council of Nicea in 325 A.D. He died on December 6, about 343, a living legend, beloved by his whole city.

St. Nick of yuletide fame still carries faint reminders of this ancient man of God. The color of his outfit recollects the red of bishop's robes. "Making a list, checking it twice," probably recalls the old saint's lectures to children about good behavior. Gifts secretly brought on Christmas eve bring to mind his humble generosity to the three daughters.

Yet if he were alive today, this saint would humbly deflect attention from himself. No fur-trimmed hat and coat, no reindeer and sleigh or North Pole workshop. As he did in life centuries ago, Bishop Nicholas would point people to his Master.

"I am Nicholas, a sinner," the old saint would say.
"Nicholas, servant of Christ Jesus."

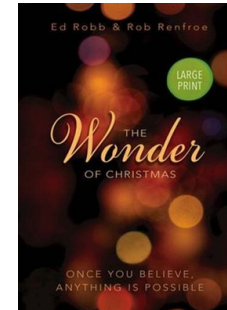
May each one have a very Blessed and Merry Christmas.

Pastor Melody

Article taken from (1)Eusebius, *Church History*, VIII, 6, 9.



Beginning Sunday, December 3rd at 9:45 am
"The Wonder of Christmas"



Let Pastor Melody know if you plan to attend.
Cost of book is \$9.00

**NEWS FROM
THE PEWS**

Thanks to everyone for all of the
birthday wishes, calls, and cards.
Joyce Russo

We are glad to see that Mary Ellen Gillispie
is well and back with us for worship services. Thanks
for all of the healing prayers.

Please note: NO Spaghetti Dinners on 12/21 and 12/28.
Please check your emails and bulletins for 2024 start up
date.

Church office will be closed on 12/25 and 12/26 for
Christmas and on 1/1/24 for New Years.





**Saturday, December 16th
5:30 PM**

followed by

Our Annual Living Nativity

**Please see Michele Floyd if you are able to volunteer for
this special community event**



Happy Holidays (Holy Days)

from The Aldersgate Choir to YOU!



**You are invited to join the choir beginning in January.
Rehearsals will occur on Wednesdays in the church's
sanctuary 6:00-7:30 P.M.**

Let's PRAISE HIM MORE in 2024!



Financial Stats for October, 2023:

Income: \$11,490.00

Expenses: \$13,880.82

Difference: \$ -2,390.82

Year to Date Income/Expenses:

Income: \$121,353.78

Expenses: \$127,160.92

Difference: \$ -5,807.14

Dedicated Offerings:

Communion \$ 10.00



**A Message from your
Treasurer:**

We are struggling to make ends meet. Giving was down while expenses were up for the month of October. Hopefully, we can make that difference up in the last two months of the year.

Please still be vigilant in keeping thermostats where they should be. When you leave a meeting, please make sure you return the thermostat back to where it was when you came in and also make sure you turn out all lights as both thermostats and lighting continue to be a problem area. Thank you!!!

Kathy Dziagwa, Treasurer

The Annual Charge Conference was held on November 18th at Oak Grove UMC.

Booklets are available in the Narthex for pick up.

The booklet contains the state of the church reports and also lists the new officers for year 2024.



Birthdays

12/27—Nicholas Albertson



Anniversaries

We currently have no Anniversaries listed for this month. Please let the office know if we missed yours.

Remember in Prayer

Home: Any of our church family who are at home and still not able to attend worship in-person

Those in our church family who are in the hospital, having tests or just not feeling well.

Those who have lost family or friends.

The United Methodist church international;
Our Bishops and District Superintendents as they continue to make decisions with denomination in mind.

If you know of others in the congregation who need to be included on this prayer list, please call the church office.



Newsletter Deadline
Friday, December 15th
for the January issue.



You do not have to wait until the deadline to submit your articles. You can email the office at any time or leave it on my desk....



Ushers

Randy Thrasher, Kevin Floyd

Counters

12/3 Debbie Supper, Bill Bunch
12/10 Millie Hanson, Gary Albertson
12/17 Neal Windley, Michele Floyd
12/24 Kevin Floyd, Diane Willis
12/31 Greg Dziagwa, Jimmie Powers



Lawn Maintenance

12/4 Team 1
12/11 Team 2
12/18 Team 3
12/25 Team 1
1/1/24 Team 2
Trash Collection—Neal Windley

Calendar Highlights



12/3; 10; 17; 24—9:45 AM Advent Study
10:30 AM Christmas Post Office
3 PM Christmas Concert—Epworth UMC performed
by GBUMC Master's Men group.

12/6; 13; 20—6 PM Choir Rehearsal

12/7; 14—5:30 PM Spaghetti Dinners

12/9 9:30 AM—Breakfast with Santa

12/16 5:30 PM—Tree Lighting and Living Nativity

12/26 6 PM—Christmas Eve Service

12/31 11 AM—Service in Social Hall with a Brunch

A special thanks to

Carolyn Powers and her daughter for making and donating 30 teddy bears to Newborns in Need– Tidewater Chapter.

Not only do we, the local chapter of NIN, but also the families to be served appreciate your kindness.

In faithfulness,

Rev. Joyce Wilkerson,
UMF Coordinator for NIN
Heritage UMC



Anticipating the Unexpected

I recently heard a Sunday message on “Are You Ready”. The speaker spoke of being ready to accept what ever comes our way; whether it be expected or unexpected.

As we approach the special season of Advent, are we ready for what is coming? As Christians we know and expect the birth of our Lord, Jesus Christ. What else do we expect? Do you celebrate his coming only on Sundays or Christmas Eve or do you anticipate and celebrate it all season long?

Do you have special things that you do as a family? Maybe you do an Advent Wreath or don't place the baby Jesus in the manger until after midnight on Christmas Eve. I grew up believing that the manger laid empty until you awoke on Christmas morning. It was always something special for us kids.

This season we have a lot of anticipation of what is going to happen due to world events. Are we ready? We pray that all will stop the everyday hustle and bustle and seek peace-if only for Christmas Day.

This year place a lighted candle in your window for peace. Maybe we will be surprised if we get the unexpected. Just in case—be ready. JR



The Christmas Card Post Office is Back!

Post Office will open at 10:30 am on December 3rd for business. Cost is still .25 per card.

CHRISTMAS CARDS



Please address member's cards as if the card is being mailed.

Deadline for all cards is Sunday, December 24th

All funds collected will be used for Missions/ Ministries.

See Michele Floyd if you have any questions.

Holiday Concert

Epworth UMC—Sunday, Dec. 3rd at 3 PM

Music performed by Great Bridge UMC

Master's Mens Group

