

Mountain Spirit

DECEMBER 2018

Episcopal Church of the Holy Spirit

"A Welcoming, Loving Christian Community Committed
To Serving God, One Another And Our Neighbors"

Coming in Advent...

**Wednesday
December 5**

Potluck and
Presentation:
5:45pm
"Black Madonna"

**Sundays
in Advent**

December
2, 9, 16, 23

Dec. 23

10:30am
Christmas Pageant
and
Holy Eucharist

Dec. 24

7:00pm
Christmas Eve
Service and
Holy Eucharist

Dec. 25

10:30am
Christmas
Day Service



IN THIS ISSUE!

A touching article about Berta (p. 2), watching and waiting during the Season of Advent (p. 4), a presentation about the Black Madonna (p. 5). how you can double the impact of your First Sunday offering (p. 7) And something useful for the New Year: Tax Tips from Bill Sewell (p. 9). For perspective on value, see The Gifts of the Three Wise Cats (page 10).

Berta By Joyce Hollyday

WE STOOD IN THE CHURCH SANCTUARY,

surrounded by piles of bright tissue-paper flowers, festive streamers, and banners of the paper cutouts known in Mexico as *papeles picados*—all joyfully fashioned the week before by those of us who meet every Thursday as *Mujeres Unidas en Fe* (Women United in Faith). We went to work decorating, bringing to life the colorful ofrenda for our November 2 *Día de los Muertos* (Day of the Dead) celebration.

When we were finished, Berta added a plate of fruit, explaining that she loved the shiny color of the tangerines and the sweet aroma of the guavas. She seemed especially tired that day. But we had no idea that she would hold the place of honor at the heart of our ofrenda. Nothing could have prepared us for that shock. Only thirty-eight years old, the mother of a twelve-year-old daughter, Berta Valdez Garcia passed away three days later.

When we gathered again, Veronica and Esmeralda knelt in front of the ofrenda, clutching their rosaries, leading the rest of us in prayer. Berta grinned out at us, surrounded by flowers, candles, and her favorite foods, offered in the Mexican tradition of honoring the dead. Heaped on plates were tamales, snap peas, pink wafer cookies, and *chicharrones*—wheels of fried pork rinds—doused with the blazing hot sauce *valentina*.

I smiled when I saw the food. Berta had a mischievous sense of humor, and we had two running jokes between us. She never thought I ate enough of her food at our weekly *Mujeres* lunches.



Berta Valdez Garcia.

When she urged me to eat more, I would ask, “*Picoso?*” (“Is it spicy?”). “No, no!” she would laugh, as I took a bite of her *mole* or *carnitas* that filled my mouth with fire and my eyes with tears.

We also teased each other about our language struggles. Berta laughed and laughed at my futile attempts to get my tongue to roll the Spanish double-r. And it seems I have the absolute worst name for Spanish speakers, whose words are all phonetic, rendering Joyce Hollyday as “Hoy-say O-ye-die.” With practice, Berta conquered the strange hard “J” sound that doesn’t exist in Spanish but insisted on pronouncing my first name with two syllables.

Berta (continued from page 2)

Gathered around the *ofrenda*, we wept our way through the praying of the rosary, and then we told Berta stories. She adored her daughter Celeste and held every baby she ever encountered. She loved our summer days with all the kids in the community swimming pool. When friend Becca Heskamp and I returned from our trip to the Arizona-Mexico border with hand-painted Mexican Christmas ornaments for everyone, Berta looked over each candle, angel, bell, and bird, then grinned at me and said, "Can I have two?"

She had a hard life, plagued with physical difficulties, but we never heard her complain. The common mantra about our dear friend after her death was, "She was short in stature but big of heart."

The most renowned of our Berta stories happened at the end of our second annual Lunch with the Law—a bold idea by the *mujeres* to host a feast for our county sheriff and his deputies, our chief of police and other local law enforcement officials, in the hopes of getting to know them and avoid ever being deported. The discussion over lunch centered on the struggles that the *mujeres* and other undocumented immigrants have because they are not allowed to get driver's licenses in North Carolina.

Berta stood as tall as she could and held up the picture she had just taken on her phone of the chief of police, declaring to him, "If you ever try to give me a ticket for driving without a license, I'm going to show you this. You can't give me a ticket—you ate my *gorditas*!" The room erupted in laughter, with the chief of police laughing the most heartily.

For nine nights the family and friends of Berta packed into the tiny home she shared with Celeste and José Luís, spilling out into the yard, praying the rosary, observing the Mexican Catholic tradition of *novenario*. Huddled with Berta's loved ones around the homemade altar filled with flowers and candles, I felt overwhelming gratitude to be a small part of this community that knows well how to mourn, remember, and celebrate.

Berta was laid in her casket dressed like Our Lady of Guadalupe, in a bright red satin dress and green mantle adorned with gold braiding, holding her rosary and two white flowers. Tears flowed again as we each had our moment to say goodbye to our sweet friend. As I bent over and touched my lips to her forehead, I smiled remembering the last time I dropped off Berta at her home. She thanked me and walked up onto her porch, where two Mexican Christmas ornaments in the shapes of a parrot and a peacock danced in the breeze over her head. She waved. Then she called out, "I love you, Joy-eece."

I love you too, Berta.



Remembering Berta at the *ofrenda*.

DURING THE SEASON OF ADVENT, WE WATCH AND WAIT for new revelations of God's real presence in our hearts and on the earth. We prepare ourselves to welcome an unimaginable peace and a renewed sense of hope for the world and for ourselves. Yes, we're getting ready for the birth of Christ, but at the heart of the season beats a universal invitation to look for what is good and loving in the world around us, with an expectation that we will see it. To encourage us in our watching and waiting, our Sunday worship and First Wednesday program will include special offerings of music, story, poetry and drama that reveal the many ways in which God can and will approach us, and how we might respond.

Here is a summary of what is planned:

1 Advent, December 2: The sermon this day will feature meditations based on the scripture and themes of Advent, written by Susan Sherard. The service will also include responsive special music.

First Wednesday, December 5: Given the darker days, we'll begin the potluck at 5:45. The potluck meal will be followed by a presentation from Beth Maczka, current Executive Director of Y.W.C.A. Asheville and a long-time social justice advocate. Beth's recent sabbatical led her on a pilgrimage to discover the wisdom of the Black Madonna, and she will share with us images and stories of the surprises she encountered along the way.

The church office will be closed from December 24 through January 1. Pastoral care issues should be directed to David McNair through his personal phone or email.

2 Advent, December 9: We will welcome Dr. Linda Beatrice Brown – author, poet and retired professor of African American literature – as our guest preacher. Several years ago, in her own spiritual quest, Linda found herself writing poetry about the experience of Mary, Mother of Jesus, which introduced her to a new understandings about the nature of God.

3 Advent, December 16: Special music by Madison County musician Mary Eagle, who will play the mountain dulcimer, sing traditional carols, and lead us in singing.

4 Advent, December 23: Our young people will present a play titled "Mary's Song" which explores Mary's pondering while she decides how to respond to God's calling.

Christmas Eve – 7:00pm: Traditional service with Christmas carols, hymns, candles, and Holy Eucharist.

Heads Up Youth! (and youth leaders)

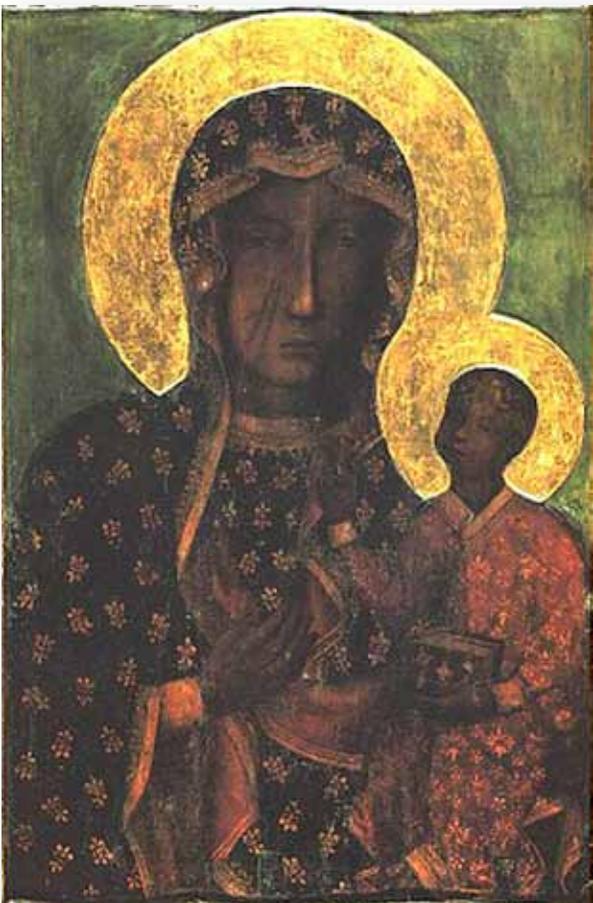
Dec. 2 Pageant rehearsal. Morgen and Justin will direct the rehearsal. Later, a youth event happens at Grace Church in Asheville: 1:00-3:00pm.

Dec. 9 Pageant rehearsal. Youth leaders will meet after Sunday School to look ahead to next semester.

Dec. 16 Last Pageant rehearsal!

Dec. 23 Perform pageant. Jenna Sharrits will be at ECHS and meet with youth after the service.

Dec. 30 No Youth Meeting.
New Year's Eve weekend



Our Lady of Czestochowa "The Black Madonna"

(See the color internet version of Mountain Spirit for a better depiction of this painting.)

Join us on Wednesday, December 5, beginning at 5:45pm for a potluck followed by a program titled "Black Madonnas and Stories of Delight." Our guest leader will be Beth Maczka.

The term "Black Madonna" or "Black Virgin" refers to statues or paintings of the Blessed Virgin Mary in which she, often with the infant Jesus, are depicted with black or dark skin. Generally found in Catholic and Orthodox countries, the statues or paintings are mostly wooden but occasionally stone, often painted. The pictures are icons, Byzantine in style, and most often made in thirteenth- or fourteenth-century Italy. Four to five hundred Black Madonnas exist in Europe, and at least 180 Vierges Noires in France. Some are in museums, but most are in churches or shrines. A few are associated with miracles.

Our Lady of Czestochowa, also known as the "Black Madonna," is one of the most venerated of these paintings and possibly has the longest history. Located in southern Poland, legend has it that the image dates back to the time of the twelve apostles and was painted by St. Luke on a wooden tabletop from a table built by Jesus during his time as a carpenter. According to the legend, while Luke was painting it, Mary recounted to him the events in the life of Jesus, accounts which Luke eventually used in his gospel. *(continued on page 6)*

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Jim Sparrow..... 1	Caleb Loomis..... 14	Linda Ballard 22
Carol Slaughter 4	Lee Ballard..... 15	Joey Larson..... 23
Bendik Clark 7	Margie Haaga..... 15	Anne Hutzel 28
Diane Vestal 9	Natalie Willis 15	Ginny Koranek..... 28
Matt Yeakley..... 10	Carol Cumbie 19	Pam Stein..... 29
Natasha King 11	Ernie Miller..... 19	John Graeter 31
Larry Smith 11	John Zeller 19	

Black Madonnas

(continued from page 5)

This Black Madonna has a long history of passing from one European ruler to another and associated with saving cities from conquests by invading armies. For example, in a major battle with the Saracens, the image was displayed from the walls of Constantinople, and the Saracen army was subsequently defeated, leading many to credit the portrait with saving the city.

Later it was credited with saving a Hungarian city in the eleventh century, a Polish city in the seventeenth century, and in more recent times, causing the Russian army to draw back from invading Poland in 1920. The image of Our Lady of Czestochowa acquired its nickname "Black Madonna" from the soot residue which discolored the painting as a result of centuries of votive lights and candles that were burned in front of it. Our leader for the presentation, Beth Maczka, is the CEO of the YWCA of Asheville. A native of Maryland, she has lived in Asheville for almost thirty years.

She has worked with the Self-Help Credit Union, The Affordable Housing Coalition of Asheville and Buncombe County, Pisgah Legal Services, and as Senior Program Officer with the Community Foundation of WNC. The theme that runs through all of her work and continues at the YWCA is Beth's commitment to racial and economic justice, particularly for women. Beth graduated with honors from Davidson College. As a student she traveled with the Gandhi Peace Foundation and later received a Watson Fellowship for a year's experiential travel. For this year, she focused on Economic Development through women's religious communities in India.

Beth recently completed a three-month sabbatical during which she traveled to Europe, visiting six different countries and five different Black Madonnas. Beth is also the proud mother of two college-age girls.

(Editor's note: Thanks go to Wikipedia for the historical background material in this article.)

Christmas Angel Project

ECHS will once again serve Madison County foster children by providing Christmas gifts for thirty children selected by DSS. We will have the Christmas angels, including the child's age and wish list, available by November 25. Select an angel and return your gifts no later than Sunday, December 16. **Please do not wrap gifts and be sure to clearly mark your angel's gifts with the child's initials and number.** You are asked to spend between \$100 and \$150; if you unable to do this, share an angel with a friend or ask Donna Turnbaugh if she can help through grant funds. This project has always been very successful due to our generous Holy Spirit parish. Thrivent Financial has once again made a generous donation to support this project. Let's make Christmas 2018 another memorable one for our county's foster children!

DOUBLE the IMPACT of Your First Sunday Offering to Homeward Bound!

HOMeward BOUND is a nonprofit organization with the goal of ending homelessness. Our December First Sunday offering goes to Homeward Bound, which currently has a matching gift challenge. The Creating Hope and Homes Gift Challenge will match all donations dollar-for-dollar up to \$100,000. The deadline for the gift challenge is midnight, December 31.

Homeward Bound is a nonprofit organization that has the goal of ending homelessness. It follows the best practice model of Housing First, the most effective, cost-efficient, sustainable, and humane intervention for homelessness. People experiencing homelessness are quickly housed and given support and resources to maintain housing stability. The success rate of Homeward Bound's housing programs is impressive: of the more than 1800 people they have housed since 2006, 89% remain in permanent housing.

Homeward Bound also operates a Day Center in Asheville. The center offers services such as showers, phones, storage, a mailing address, and a safe place. The Day Center serves as many as 200 homeless people a day.

This year, Homeward Bound is asking the public to donate new or gently used camping equipment such as small tents, cold weather sleeping bags, camping sleeping pads, and backpacks for our area's homeless veterans.

Approximately 45% of the area's homeless population are veterans and a portion of these veterans are living outside. Donna Turnbaugh is willing to deliver any of these items you can donate.

Another program of Homeward Bound is Room in the Inn, which serves up to 12 homeless women at a time. Room in the Inn partners with faith communities which take turns hosting the women for a week at a time, providing all of their meals, transportation, and overnight accommodations. Holy Spirit has participated with Room in the Inn for several years, partnering with Weaverville Methodist and Weaverville Baptist churches. In 2018, ECHS hosted in April and October.

Please help his valuable program however you can, by contributing to the first Sunday offering (which will be doubled!), donating camping equipment to help homeless vets survive winter, or participating in our next Room in the Inn week in March, 2019.

(Thanks go to Donna Turnbaugh for writing this article.)

MOUNTAIN SPIRIT is the monthly newsletter of the Episcopal Church of the Holy Spirit, Mars Hill, North Carolina, a parish within the Diocese of Western North Carolina. For more information about the church, visit our website at: www.holyspiritwnc.org
Editor: Lorrie Cooper

OUR GUESTS ON DECEMBER 9

Dr. Brown

We will welcome Dr. Linda Beatrice Brown as our guest preacher on Sunday, Dec. 9. Retired professor, writer, playwright and retreat leader, Linda will include in her sermon readings from her book, ***A Mother Knows Her Child, Poetic Meditations from Mary.***

A published poet since the age of 19, Linda taught African-American literature at Kent State University, UNC-Greensboro and Bennett College, where she was the Willa B. Player Distinguished Professor of the Humanities and director of the Honors Program.

Linda and Susan Sherard created and co-led "Peace Pilgrimage," a series of classes and a one-day pilgrimage honoring the civil rights movement in Greensboro. Linda is a long-time member of Holy Trinity/Greensboro, where she sings in the choir and is active with the Servant Leadership Program.

Dr. Anderson

Dr. Ruth Anderson, director of the Servant Leadership School of Greensboro, will be joining us on Sunday, Dec. 9, and will be available at lunch to talk with people about the new web-based curriculum being developed by the school.

We are in conversation with her about Holy Spirit serving as a pilot program, to test the usability and effectiveness of this new medium for the core classes that have been offered by SLS for over 25 years.

Adam and Jennifer Reda traveled to Greensboro for the classes last year, so speak with them about their experience if you are interested, and plan to speak with Ruth after the service.

Sunday, December 9, Following the Service

**A MEXICAN MEAL & SILENT AUCTION
OF HANDICRAFTS
MADE BY THE MUJERES —
LOVE DONATION FOR THE MEAL**

You haven't lived until you've eaten authentic Mexican food! Sometimes it can be a tad hot, but ALWAYS it's delicious! Proceeds from the meal and auction will go to a fund to help our *mujeres* (our Mexican women's group, ***La Esperanza***) and their families when they are facing a financial need such as health, car, home, etc. This meal and handicrafts auction are how the women work together to meet those serious needs.

Tax Tips from Bill Sewell

Under the new tax laws taking effect this year, the standard deduction is doubled. This means some taxpayers that have been used to itemizing deductions on their 1040 will no longer benefit from doing so. However, there are still some strategies that—depending on your circumstance — may allow you to take advantage of your giving to the Church or other qualified charities to reduce your income tax bill.

DONATION OF STOCK – If you own low-basis stock that you plan to sell, it may make sense to instead donate the shares to satisfy your charitable giving. By donating the shares directly, you can get full credit for the current market value and avoid paying capital gains tax on the difference between the basis and market value. To learn about how to donate stock to the Church, see Bill Sewell, Church Treasurer.

CONSIDER “BUNDLING” YOUR DEDUCTIONS – If you find that you don’t have enough deductions to itemize every year, you might consider deferring or advancing deductions that would normally be paid every year. For example, property taxes owed for 2018 can be paid in the first week of January 2019 and taxes owed for 2019 paid prior to the end of the year.

Church pledges can be paid, in part or in full, on a pre-paid basis. Even if you don’t have enough deductions to itemize every year, you may be able to use this strategy to itemize on alternate years. Consult your tax advisor.

QUALIFIED CHARITABLE DISTRIBUTION

Taxpayers age 70½ or older that have assets subject to a “Required Minimum Distribution” such as IRAs, 401(k)s or similar tax-deferred plans may be able to reduce their tax bill by making their contributions to the Church or other qualified charities DIRECTLY from the tax-deferred account using a Qualified Charitable Distribution. The Qualified Charitable Distribution can be used to satisfy a portion or all of the Required Minimum Distribution, thus lowering taxable income. For more information on Qualified Charitable Distributions, consult your IRA or 401(k) custodian.



Note: Bill does not drive a VW bus. But Santa has one and sometimes drives it when the reindeer need a break.



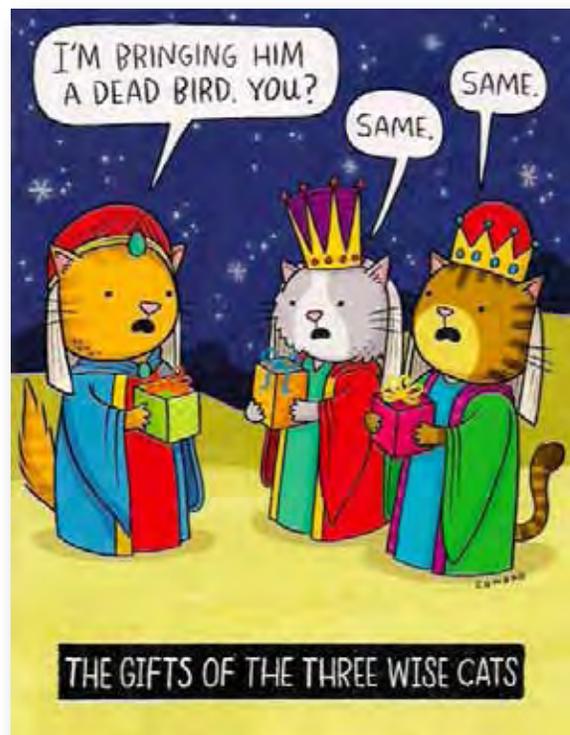
Lin and Pete with this year's Heritage Festival quilt. How appropriate that they, of all the people who bought chances, won the quilt to take to their new home.

Good-Bye, Dear Friends!

In mid-November, our friends Lin and Pete Von Dreele headed west to other mountains. After being a significant part of ECHS life for many, many years, they made the decision (a difficult one, they say) to move to Colorado, where they will be closer to a daughter. Promises were made of future visits, as well as phone calls and face-to-face chats via internet.

But we will miss seeing Lin and Pete here at Holy Spirit Church every Sunday. We feel immense gratitude for their generous gifts of so much time and energy to the many aspects of ECHS.

God bless you in your new home, dear Lin and Pete!



After you laugh, think about it: what is the value of gold and frankincense to the King of the Universe? We bring to Him what we find valuable. What would YOU bring? (Me, it would be a bag of pure Jamaican Blue Mountain coffee. Would come in handy for those cold mornings on the way to Egypt.)

Las Posadas is the Spanish term for “lodging” and refers to the inn in the Nativity story. *Posadas* is a Latin American tradition extending over nine nights (*novena*), representing the nine months of Mary’s pregnancy. The nine-day celebration begins on December 16 and ends December 24.

Each year a family becomes godparents to the Nativity and Holy Child, and this family makes the journey of nine nights. On December 9 homes are chosen where the journeyers will visit. Each night the godparents carry the Nativity – a large one! – to a different home and ask for lodging, which is done in song. When finally invited in, the women kneel in front of the Nativity, and begin praying the rosary.

After prayers and song, hot chocolate, tamales and sweet rolls are served. The family in the home receiving the nativity and Holy Child on the night of Christmas Eve acquire the godparent role for the following year. The celebration on Christmas Eve is larger. The Holy Child is dressed in a new outfit made by the current godparents. The Child is sung to and laid to sleep, which is called *La Acostada del Niño Dios*.

6:00pm, Friday, December 28

We invite you all to join in a night of *Las Posadas* with our Mexican neighbors on Friday, Dec. 28. (We also will be visited by the community from *La Capilla* in Hendersonville coming all the way here to celebrate *Las Posadas* with us.) More details to come.



Image courtesy of Comboni Missionaries. Our thanks to Rebecca Sharp for writing the article.

Barry in Our Prayers

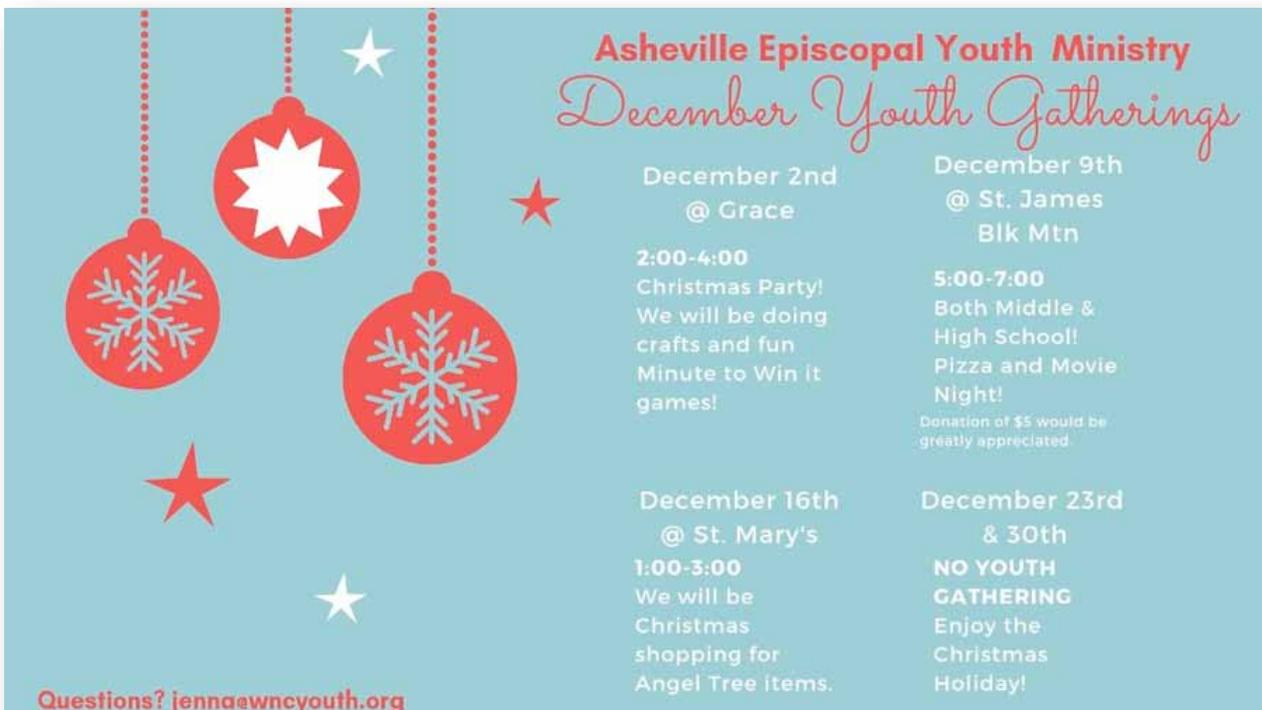
by Dick Jordan

For several weeks now the name of Barry Morgan (friend of Dick Jordan) has been included in the Sunday service bulletins. Barry has been in a North Carolina state prison since 1992. A model prisoner, a truly redeemed man, he was on the verge of parole fifteen years ago when suddenly the law and administration changed. And he was back to square 1, losing his parole. Accepting this turn of events without bitterness, he continues to be a model of AA recovery and Christian devotion inside that prison. He walks the walk.

Several weeks ago he wrote to report he had developed a degenerative spinal condition. His spinal cord was being compressed by uncontrollable fluid leakage with the result that the cord is now less than half its proper diameter. If untreated, this condition will degenerate into quadraplegia.

On November 16 Barry wrote:
"Thank you for your card and your prayers. Three weeks ago I was seen by Dr. John Barr, a neurosurgeon at Duke, to review the recent MRI. He wanted to cut out most of my T-2 and T-8 vertebrae, burn two holes in my spinal cord with a laser to insert a tube to drain spinal fluid, then put two eighteen-inch metal rods along my spine. It's a seven-hour operation with a 40% possibility of my emerging from the surgery as a quadriplegic. I told him I had prayed about it, and God's answer was that He already healed me in 1991 when I regained the use of my leg. Just like Paul in 2 Corinthians, God has given me the strength to endure this spinal injury for almost twenty-eight years, and if I become a quadriplegic, He will give me the strength to endure that too."

We'll keep Barry in our prayers. If you would like to know more, talk with Dick. Expressions of love and support would help buoy his spirits: Barry Morgan #0291548, 272 Glen Road, Troy, NC 28371.



Asheville Episcopal Youth Ministry

December Youth Gatherings

<p>December 2nd @ Grace</p> <p>2:00-4:00 Christmas Party! We will be doing crafts and fun Minute to Win it games!</p>	<p>December 9th @ St. James Blk Mtn</p> <p>5:00-7:00 Both Middle & High School! Pizza and Movie Night! <small>Donation of \$5 would be greatly appreciated.</small></p>
<p>December 16th @ St. Mary's</p> <p>1:00-3:00 We will be Christmas shopping for Angel Tree items.</p>	<p>December 23rd & 30th</p> <p>NO YOUTH GATHERING Enjoy the Christmas Holiday!</p>

Questions? jennaewncyouth.org