

JANUARY
2024

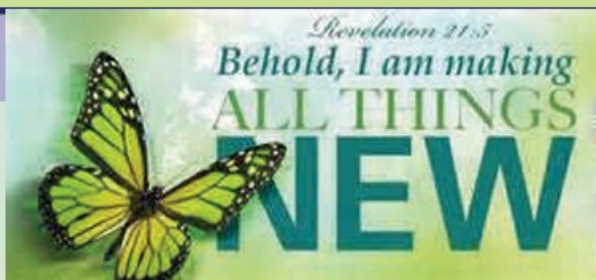
Westminster Window

1520 Rickwood Rd.
Florence, AL 35630
256-766-3841



Westminster
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

IN REMEMBRANCE OF
REV. JOHN J. MCKELL
DEC. 8, 2023



"I am making everything new!" :Rev 21:5

"See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland." Isa 43:19

As we end yet another year and begin a new one I began to look to Scripture to see where we are going. The theme of "newness" permeates all of Scripture. New wine, New Moons, new harvest, new life...God makes all things new each and every day.

Sometimes that can be frightening. When new things begin they are, by definition, unknown. We fear the unknown. Have you ever heard the phrase "The devil you know is better than the devil you don't"? It is easier to deal with the problems in life we now have than to envision the possible problems that may come with change. The problem is that, with this philosophy, the assumption is the unknown is going to be bad. When God is involved, the new thing that He is doing is always good, even when we cannot see it.

New Years is a time to look back over the past, to remember the good and learn from the mistakes we have made. But it is also a time to reflect on what is to come. If God is "doing a new thing" and "making everything new" what vision can we find to embrace what God is doing? Is He creating a new heart in you that will help you grow in relation to Him and others? Is He blessing you in new ways that will allow you to respond to Him and offer more of yourself into His care? Is He wiping the slate clean or is He just making some adjustments in your life? What will this "new thing" call you to do and where will it lead you?

That is what New Years is all about. Yes we look back, we take stock, we review where we have been, but even more so, we look forward. What blessings has God given me and how have I used them for His work? What new gifts is He bestowing and how can I best respond?

Take stock of your life as we begin anew this year. Look at your life and your blessings. But don't stop there...What blessings has He given to Westminster and how faithfully have we returned those to His service? What is He trying to accomplish through this church? How can we as individuals and we as a congregation help to bring about God's plan for us here in this place and among His people?

May 2016 be a continual blessing to each one of you. —John McKell 2016

If you had been a lowly shepherd who heard the angels sing,

Would you have left your sheep alone to find the baby King?

If you had been the innkeeper pressed and hurried since the dawn,

Would you have done the best you could, or told them to move on?

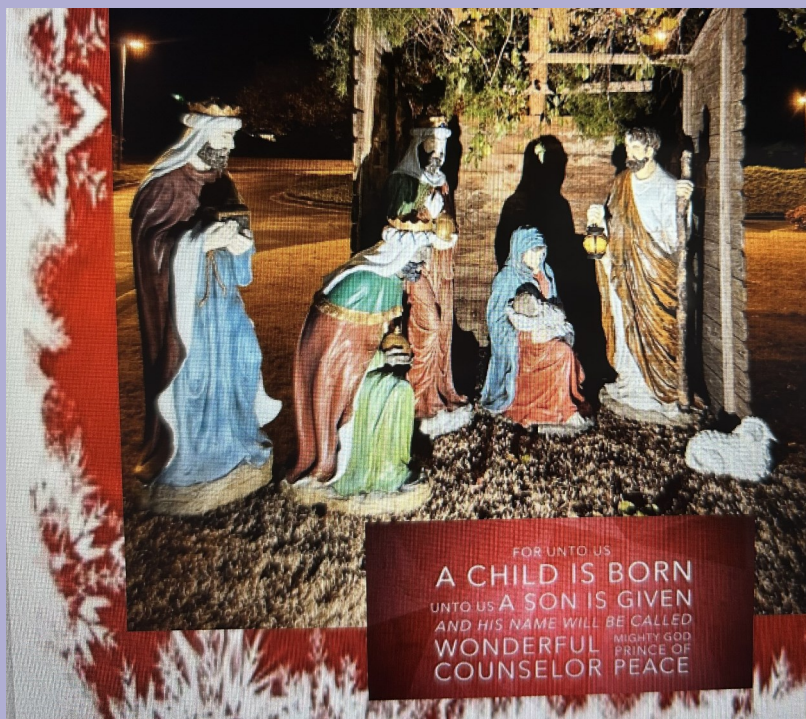
If you had been a wise man due respect and courtly graces,

Would you have left it all behind to search in unknown places?

We cannot know what we'd have done if we had been there then.

We only know what we do now when chances come again.

—Written by John McKell's Niece



January

Katie Shea	11
Nick Winn	18
Tanner Crosslin	22
John Bruninga	23
Bob Moody	23
John Freeman	28
Carole James	28



**Dan & Barbara
Hendricks**



**Lud & Liinda
Seme**



**Bill & Nancy
Valentine**

MQ & Sally Parker



Linda Seme would like to thank everyone who helped make the Advent Vignettes so beautiful! Special thanks to Alonda Crosslin, Paula & Lacy Offutt, Avery Guinn, Bailey White, and Barbara Hendricks!



Avery & Bailey



Alonda & Paula



Avery & Lacy



I remember tearing across town on my bike to visit Grandma on the day my brother dropped the bomb: "There is no Santa Claus," he jeered. "Even dummies know that!" My Grandma was not the gushy kind, never had been. I fled to her that day because I knew she would be straight with me. I knew Grandma always told the truth, and I knew that the truth always went down a whole lot easier when swallowed with one of her "world-famous" cinnamon buns. I knew they were world-famous, because Grandma said so. It had to be true. Grandma was home, and the buns were still warm. Between bites, I told her everything. She was ready for me. "No Santa Claus?" she snorted, "Ridiculous! Don't believe it. That rumor has been going around for years, and it makes me mad, plain mad!! Now, put on your coat, and let's go." "Go? Go where, Grandma?" I asked. I hadn't even finished my second world-famous cinnamon bun. "Where" turned out to be Kirby's General Store, the one store in town that had a little bit of just about everything. As we walked through its doors, Grandma handed me ten dollars. That was a bundle in those days. "Take this money," she said, "and buy something for someone who needs it. I'll wait for you in the car." Then she turned and walked out of Kirby's. I was only eight years old. I'd often gone shopping with my mother, but never had I shopped for anything all by myself. The store seemed big and crowded, full of people scrambling to finish their Christmas shopping. For a few moments I just stood there, confused, clutching that ten-dollar bill, wondering what to buy, and who on earth to buy it for. I thought of everybody I knew: my family, my friends, my neighbors, the kids at school, the people who went to my church. I was just about thought out, when I suddenly thought of Bobby Decker. He was a kid with bad breath and messy hair, and he sat right behind me in Mrs. Pollock's grade-two class. Bobby Decker didn't have a coat. I knew that because he never went out to recess during the winter. His mother always wrote a note, telling the teacher that he had a cough, but all we kids knew that Bobby Decker didn't have a cough; he didn't have a good coat. I fingered the ten-dollar bill with growing excitement. I would buy Bobby Decker a coat! I settled on a red corduroy one that had a hood to it. It looked real warm, and he would like that. "Is this a Christmas present for someone?" the lady behind the counter asked kindly, as I laid my ten dollars down. "Yes, ma'am," I replied shyly. "It's for Bobby." The nice lady smiled at me, as I told her about how Bobby really needed a good winter coat. I didn't get any change, but she put the coat in a bag, smiled again, and wished me a Merry Christmas. That evening, Grandma helped me wrap the coat (a little tag fell out of the coat, and Grandma tucked it in her Bible) in Christmas paper and ribbons and wrote, "To Bobby, From Santa Claus" on it. Grandma said that Santa always insisted on secrecy. Then she drove me over to Bobby Decker's house, explaining as we went that I was now and forever officially, one of Santa's helpers. Grandma parked down the street from Bobby's house, and she and I crept noiselessly and hid in the bushes by his front walk. Then Grandma gave me a nudge. "All right, Santa Claus," she whispered, "get going." I took a deep breath, dashed for his front door, threw the present down on his step, pounded his door and flew back to the safety of the bushes and Grandma. Together we waited breathlessly in the darkness for the front door to open. Finally, it did, and there stood Bobby. Fifty years haven't dimmed the thrill of those moments spent shivering, beside my Grandma, in Bobby Decker's bushes. That night, I realized that those awful rumors about Santa Claus were just what Grandma said they were -- ridiculous. Santa was alive and well, and we were on his team. I still have the Bible, with the coat tag tucked inside: \$19.95. May you always have LOVE to share, HEALTH to spare and FRIENDS that care . . . And may you always believe in the magic of Santa Claus! Author unknown



MERRY
CHRISTMAS





Westminster Gets a Shiny New Mailbox for Christmas



A happy ending prevailed after a challenge with our old rusty mailbox and a persnickety postman !!! With an excellent group effort and fast action track record, life soon looked a lot brighter.

Our friendly church secretary, Billie Sylvester, was approached by the postman who complained that the outgoing mail was getting wet because the mailbox door lid would not stay closed very well.

So Billie dutifully placed the next batch of outgoing mail to the back of the mailbox so it would stay dry. Perfect solution, right? Nay ! The petulant postman moaned because he had to disembark from his vehicle and reach "all the way" to the back of the mailbox to reach and retrieve the mail. Hmmm! So Billie informed our beloved Pastor John Mckell of the "crisis." John then advised the chair of Buildings and Grounds (B&G) of the need for a solution.

Immediately Nick Winn applied pliers to tighten the mailbox door. He also measured all the dimensions of the box, and e-mailed those measurements, along with box photographs to the B&G chair who the same day ordered online a replacement mailbox from a wide selection.

The next morning the new mailbox appeared to fit precisely onto the mounting platform atop the existing solid metal post. HOWEVER ! Will the old rusting mailbox be easy to remove from the metal platform ?? No ma'am and No sir ! With chisels and tire tools, the B&G Boys, Joe Littrell and Joe Salter, finally dislodged the rustic relic to make way for the shiny new black mailbox which soon was anchored in place.

After the pole was sanded and painted glossy black, Linda Seme and Cathy Shea carefully placed the stunning gold letters and numbers perfectly in line on the mailbox: 1520 Rickwood Road.

SO WE CAN KNOW & SHOW OUR CARE PRAYER LIST

Immediate: Janice McKell, John Horton, Sandra Perry, Babs Moody & Char Terry

At Home: Jean Blair

Green Oaks: Lynda Hicks

TN Assisted Living: Dot Solomon



2023 CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS In Joyous Celebration of Jesus' Birth

<u>BY:</u>	<u>IN MEMORY OF:</u>	<u>IN HONOR OF:</u>
Charles Anderson	Hilda B. Anderson	
Alonda Crosslin	Sue McClure & Greg McClure My mom & brother John McKell, Our beloved pastor	
John & Joyce Horton	Rev. John McKell	Our families
Carole James	Connie Carole James	
Karen James	Rev. John McKell Maretha Seale	
John & Paula Offutt and Lacy	Rev. John McKell	
M. Q. & Sally Parker	Our Parents Rev. John McKell	
Lud & Linda Seme	Rev. John McKell	Janice McKell
Cathy & Katie Shea	Hazel Barron Shea	
Billie Sylvester	Rev. John McKell	
Bill & Nancy Valentine	Our Parents	

2023 CHORAL SCHOLARSHIP FUND With Joyful Praise Celebrating Jesus' Birth

<u>BY:</u>	<u>IN MEMORY OF:</u>	<u>IN HONOR OF:</u>
Elaine Brooks	Bob Brooks, my husband	My family
Alonda Crosslin	Sue McClure & Greg McClure	
Carole James	Connie Carole James	
Cathy & Katie Shea	Rev. John McKell	
Bill & Nancy Valentine	Darwin Mitchell	



John & Ann Freeman are thankful for all the prayers concerning John's recent leg surgery/rehab. He is doing great & using his walker for safety while getting around. He is still staying with his daughter, Christie in Starkville until he is released from the doctor.





Rev. John McKell Obituary

Rev. John Joseph McKell, 61, passed away December 8, 2023.

A visitation will be held on Wednesday, December 13, 2023 from 9:30-10:30 am at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Florence. A funeral service will follow in the sanctuary at 11:00 am. A graveside service and burial will be held on Thursday, December 14 at 2:00 pm, at Gwinnett Memorial Park in Lawrenceville, GA.

Rev. McKell was preceded in death by his parents, Dr. Joseph and Martha McKell; and parents-in-law, William and Charlotte Denman.

He is survived by his wife of 30 years, Janice McKell; brother, Mark McKell (Mary); sisters, Leah Horton (Dr. William Horton), Susan Clark (Burk), and Sheryl Curtis (Marc); nephews, Cameron Clark (Natalie), Graham Clark (Elizabeth), and Eric Curtis (Jessica); and nieces, Lindsey de Beer (Marc), Dr. Lauren King (Denton), Brooks Lyddan (Sam), Allie Clark, Mia McKell, Annie McKell, and Stephanie Curtis (Mark Sprouse).

Rev. McKell served as pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church for the last 25 years. Prior to this, he was pastor of Newdale and Grassy Creek Churches in North Carolina, Leland Presbyterian Church in Mississippi, and held other roles at churches in his hometown of Tampa, Florida and Scotland.



Home

*Take pause for just a moment
And look up to the skies
I want to show you heaven
As seen through joyful eyes*

*The moment I arrived here
I saw the sweetest sight
All those who'd gone before me
Surrounded by His light*

*They reached out and embraced me
And instantly I knew
That I'd fulfilled my purpose
And one day you will too*

*It's natural you are sad now
But try to let that go
There's overwhelming peace here
And beauty all aglow*

*We have no pain or suffering
No thought of right or wrong
No one here's an outsider
Each one of us belong*

*There is no sense of judgment
His light reveals our soul
Each one unique and perfect
We make each other whole*

*So when you really miss me
Just cast your eyes above
Remember, I am home now
And, sending you my love*

Donna Schilling





Merry Christmas from Bob, Babs & Brad Moody!

Never regret a day in
your life. Good days give
you happiness, bad days give
you experience, worst days give
you lessons, and best days
give you memories.



The Offutt's tree Christmas lights up the yard!



Merry
Christmas
Love, Nick, Sue, & Bella



Bob & Bug Howard traveled to NC during the holidays to visit family. Bug even got to try horse-back riding!



Nick
Winn
&
Joe
Littrell



Nick, Sue, Cathy, Joe &
Bessie



Linda, Susan, Le-
nore, Lud & Billie



MQ & Sally Parker Family



Mrytle Morris, resident of Montreat Apartments, had a great visit with Santa! She is one of the approx. 100 residents of Montreat.

Westminster Presbyterian, First Presbyterian Florence & First Presbyterian Sheffield provide Board Members for the governing of these apartments.



Merry Christmas from Avery Guinn & family!



**Avery's nephew, Aiden
excited for Santa to
come!**



[youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)

White Christmas live at Spark Eventure Park

**Avery Guinn perform-
ing at Spark Eventure
Park in Killen**



Tom Lovell, Transitional Presbyter of NAP, has been great in assisting Westminster during this time of loss. We have been able to continue worship with Supply Pastors. The following individuals are also there to assist WPC:

Brandon Miles, Pastor of First Pres of Florence

Jaina Glaze, Pastor of First Pres of Sheffield

Wes Stubblefield, First Com Liaison

Please continue to pray for Janice McKell & WPC



**Happy New Year
from the Crosslin's:**

**Phillip, Alonda,
Kyndall, Tanner &
Madeline Edwards**

*Happy
New Year*





News

Even though we all sadly said farewell to our beloved pastor John McKell, our church still experienced a fruitful year in 2023 in many ways, particularly on B&G projects:

Just to name a few : A new roof on Rickwood side of church; a beautifully illuminated Lawn Cross dedicated to the memory of Sledge & Charlotte Cannon; Elimination of unnecessary insurance premium payments on inoperative church van due to efforts by Nick Winn to arrange for and coordinate van removal and donation to Veteran's Org.;

Landscape and courtyard marvels by Joe Littrell, including stunning waterfall garden at our Pavillion;

Replacement of several large floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking courtyard with new lighting, and landscape enhancements and attractive plantings all over the church property;

WPC Children Safety Measures on Playground with extensive disassembly/removal work by Nick Winn and John McKell to eliminate the unsafe large heavy wooden "B Boat" potentially endangering our playground kids;

WPC Northwest Corner Cleanup project by Nick and Sue who trimmed, cleared, & hauled loads of tree limbs/bush clippings & debris to disposal site; (the list goes on and on).

2024 should be a great year too. !



From the Heinitz Family:
Robbie, Audra, Ayla, Weston & Kora Grace



Natural Bridge in Double Springs Lakeshore Inn Restaurant Friday, Feb 2, 8:30



Natural Bridge Park in Winston County features a 148-foot sandstone bridge that towers 60 feet above winding pathways, and it's the longest natural bridge east of the Rockies. It's definitely a majestic sight to see. The park has a picnic area perfect for bringing a lunch to eat before or after you hike the approximately 2 mile trail through the park. At the back of the park is a small waterfall that is refreshing to listen to, and there is a stream that runs throughout the park. During the spring, you'll find all kinds of wildflowers, and in the fall you'll see the vibrant fall foliage. Under the natural bridge at Natural Bridge Park is a cave-like bluff that you can walk around in. This natural bridge formation dates back to two million years ago, and it is known that the Creek Indians lived in the area. They probably used this cave-like formation as shelter from the elements. Don't miss the Indian face that's etched by nature in the large rock! The park also offers a great gift shop that has local products as well as products from all over the US. Natural Bridge Park is open daily from 8am to sunset, year round.



Bob & Brad Moody braved the cold to cheer Auburn on in the Music City Bowl game in Nashville, TN. The outcome was not what they had hoped, but War Eagle always!



TEENS

DOING THE MOST GOOD™

The Salvation Army Teen Christmas project is completed for 2023. The shopping, bagging, and delivering of the Christmas gifts was completed on December 8, when **204** gift bags were delivered to the Salvation Army distribution center. None of this would not have been possible without the generosity of the WPC congregation. So, THANK YOU to those who so generously donated to this project! Another big THANK YOU to the shoppers and helpers: Paula & Lacy Offutt, Sally & MQ Parker, Dan James, Joe Littrell, Linda Seme, & Lenore Favenesi.



Here's a little invitation from us:

Please come to our New Year's Open House!

Stop by for a minute or stay for a while,

We'll be celebrating the New Year in style!

Lud & Linda Seme's Open House

New Year's Day

3:00-6:00 p.m.

308 Winborne Dr.

Florence, Alabama



Florence
Duncan

MERRY
CHRISTMAS

Send Comments/Articles to:

Alondacr@gmail.com

256-710-8662

ROAD TRIP

STOPS ACROSS

CALIFORNIA



Alonda & Kyndall
Crosslin enjoyed
their Pacific coast
trip!