



NORTHEAST GEORGIA
PRESBYTERY

JANUARY NEWSLETTER

According to most surveys, the top three New Year's resolutions are to exercise more; to lose weight; and to save more money. There's something about the calendar flipping over to a new year that prompts us to contemplate how this coming year could be better than the last; indeed, how we can be a better version of ourselves than we were last year. This desire to be "better" seems deeply rooted within us; witness the staggering number of self-help books, videos, and other means people use to try and accomplish various goals of improvement. Yet we also struggle with the reality that even though some gains can be measured and marked, at the core of our being we often feel as though we're on a merry-go-round – despite the apparent forward motion, we're not making any real progress.

But Paul points us to the ground of all our hope for transformation: "If anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." (2nd Corinthians 5:17)

This is one of the most powerful truths in all of Scripture: as we are united with Christ by faith, we literally become new creations. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we can at last become the people we were created to be. The circumstances of our birth or family of origin, our socioeconomic status, our race, our education level, even our very DNA – none of these things has ultimate power over our destiny, which is unlocked through faith in Christ and unleashed by the Holy Spirit.

God's purpose is for each of us to come to resemble Christ himself, while yet remaining distinct individuals, each made in the image of God. This process is by no means instantaneous and requires diligence and discipline on our part. As we "keep in step with the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25) we collaborate in this holy work through a serious commitment to worship, prayer, meditating deeply on the Scriptures, and by deliberately living in transparent and loving community with other believers, sharing the grace and truth of Christ with the world.

While it often feels like we're going backwards or sideways instead of forward, we have the promise of God that "...the One who began a good work in you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ." (Philippians 1:6) This means that it's not our resolution that will carry us home, but the sworn resolution of the Lord Jesus Christ, and he will finish what he started. And that's really good news. Happy New Year!

Yours in Christ,

Ed



AROUND THE PRESBYTERY

Announcements & Opportunities

Dear Church Treasurers,

Thank you for your support of the work we share in Northeast Georgia Presbytery. December brings not only the anticipation of the Advent Season and celebration of the birth of our Lord and Savior, but the mundane tasks of closing the year on our finances. As we near the fiscal year-end for both the Presbytery and our denomination, please be reminded that payments toward 2025 per capita and 2025 shared mission giving (Covenant of Commitment), as well as Special Offerings, should be mailed so they are received in our office no later than Friday, January 16, 2026. Payments received after that date will be credited to 2026.

Speaking of Special Offerings, changes due to actions taken at this year's General Assembly are coming to the Special Offerings program in 2026:

- The Pentecost Offering is ending in 2025. Gifts received coded as Pentecost in 2026 will be recorded as a gift to Christmas Joy.
- The Peace & Global Witness Offering is ending in 2025. Gifts received coded as Peace & Global Witness in 2026 will be recorded as gifts to the new World Communion Offering.
- D500115 (Mission Co-Worker Fund) is now closed. Gifts received for that fund will now be recorded as gifts to E052199 (Global Ecumenical Partnerships).

And updated remittance sheet that reflects these changes for 2026 is available on our website.

Thank you!
Anita

Ordination Anniversaries

We celebrate and give thanks for the NEGA clergy marking ordination anniversaries this month. The Clergy Care Committee encourages you to hold these individuals, their families, and their ministries in your prayers.

Gary Bagley
Barbara Epting
Meg Jackson Clark
Harold Harris

2026 NEGA Presbytery Meetings

February 28 Covenant Presbyterian Church
Athens, Georgia

May 19 Location to be announced

August Leadership Training Event
Date and location to be announced

October 20 First Presbyterian Church
Clarkesville, Georgia

More details coming soon

**A NOTE FROM
STATED CLERK
REV. JACOB DOUILLIEZ**

Once, I was driving home from a meeting about an hour away. I was on roads I hadn't traveled before, way up in the mountains of Western North Carolina. As I drove around a bend, I came upon a small mountain church that had some tableau scenes set up on their front lawn. The first scene was of the manger and a stable, the second was of three crosses, and the third was of a large stone rolled away from the opening of a cave. Even for someone not of the faith, these moments are likely instantly recognizable. They represent the highest and holiest moments in our calendar. And yet, as my view of the church was obscured by yet another bend in the road, I was struck by what wasn't represented.

This is a weird time in our calendar. We've had the big moment, the presents have been unwrapped and incorporated into our lives, the brilliant decorations have been repacked carefully for next year. Lent is just visible on the horizon, but for a few weeks, we're in this liminal space represented by that patch of grass and rock between the manger and the cross at that mountain church. We're beyond the "highlight reel" and in the thick of the fierce ordinariness of a life of faithful discipleship.

I think we tend to focus on these big moments because of their high impact nature. They meet some deep need within each of us, a desire for some sense of certainty about who we are and what we know to be true about this life and the next. These are critical components of our witness to the Gospel and they answer a deeper need in the world around us. But the bulk of Jesus' ministry happened in places that we'll never see a tableau scene for. The bulk of our life of faith happens in those spaces too.

The beautiful thing about our faith is that we are not called to meet the deepest needs of the world on our own. Jesus has already done that for us, and we only need tell people about it. That frees us to model our own life on those everyday moments that the Gospel writers recorded for us. Jesus feeding the five thousand didn't change the world, but it did fill a lot of hungry people for the day. Jesus healing the blind man didn't change the world, but it allowed one man to see the beauty of creation again. Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead didn't change the world, but it did answer the grief of Mary and Martha in a profound way. Miraculous as these moments were and are, at their core, Jesus is singularly focused on meeting the most immediate need of those around him.

We can do this too: by showing up at the hospital when someone is ill, by giving of our time and resources to make sure others have access to food and clothing, by offering kindness when the rest of the world shows indifference (or worse). It won't change the world, but it will make a world of difference for one or two people. And that's enough.

Dear Clerk of Session, Grace and peace as we begin a new year. Thank you for your faithful and often unseen service that helps keep our presbytery connected and strong. As you plan for the weeks ahead, please note a few upcoming reports due in early 2026. The Necrology Form is due February 4, 2026. The Covenant of Commitment for Shared Mission Support and the Annual Salary Standards Review for Installed Pastors are both due February 13, 2026, with Covenant and Interim or Transitional pastors reviewed at covenant renewal. The Annual Online Statistical Report is due February 20, 2026, with the reporting portal opening January 2, 2026, and you may wish to begin gathering 2025 membership and baptism data. Links to all 2026 forms will be shared as they become available. Thank you for your continued partnership in ministry, and please feel free to reach out if you have questions or need assistance.

Yours in Christ,

Jacob

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SMALL AND MIGHTY



A Time to Connect and
Equip Leaders in Small
Membership Churches

Join Us for a Monthly
Conversation on Zoom

First Tuesday
7-8 pm ET / 6-7 pm CT

Next Small and Mighty Zoom Gathering

January 6, 2026

7:00 – 8:00 pm ET / 6:00 – 7:00 CT

If you have interest in learning more about the Association of Smaller Congregations or have questions about this Small and Mighty Zoom Gathering, please reach out to ASC President, Caroline Dennis at cvdennis.wpcgwd@gmail.com

International Nonprofit Stephen Ministries Celebrates 50th Anniversary, Launches National Tour

Stephen Ministries, the international Christian nonprofit best known for the Stephen Ministry system of lay caregiving, is celebrating its 50th anniversary with a nationwide anniversary tour.

Founded in 1975 by pastor and clinical psychologist Dr. Kenneth C. Haugk, Stephen Ministries began in St. Louis with the training of nine lay caregivers. Over the past five decades, the organization's resources have reached tens of thousands of congregations across more than 190 Christian denominations in 31 countries, as well as hospitals, retirement communities, correctional facilities, and campus ministries.

More than 80,000 Stephen Leaders have been trained to implement Stephen Ministry, equipping over 600,000 Stephen Ministers who have provided emotional and spiritual care to millions of people facing difficult life situations. In addition to Stephen Ministry, widely used resources include Journeying through Grief, Cancer—Now What?, and Don't Sing Songs to a Heavy Heart.

As part of its anniversary celebration, Stephen Ministries is expanding its reach beyond congregations to equip people for caring ministry in workplaces, schools, and communities. Recent publications include the award-winning books *The Gift of Empathy* (2023) and *Caring Assertiveness* (2024), with discussion guides and additional books planned in the coming years.

The 50th Anniversary Tour began in St. Louis and will continue with events in cities including Houston, Tampa, Phoenix, Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Atlanta, Baltimore, and Kansas City throughout 2026. Each event features teaching, reflection on the ministry's history, and a look ahead at what is next.

Stephen Ministries is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. More information is available at stephenministries.org or by calling 314-428-2600.

GEORGIA PRESBYTERIES' GATHERING 2026

February 20-21 @ @ Epworth by the Sea, St. Simons Island, GA

Join Presbyterians from across Georgia beginning at 1 PM Friday, Feb 20th, to learn and grow together. This event is designed to inspire action, spark meaningful conversations, and equip attendees through practical workshops that benefit churches of every size. Leave encouraged, equipped, and empowered to bring your congregation—and your community—closer to God's vision of welcome, service, and faithful mission.

Our time together will be grounded in worship. We'll give thanks for the tables that shape our lives and imagine how we might extend them to welcome others.

Liturgist: The Rev. Aisha Brooks-Johnson, Executive Presbyter, Presbytery of Greater Atlanta

Music Leader & Choir Director: Trenton Durham, Associate Director of Worship, Roswell Presbyterian Church.

Join the Georgia Presbyteries Choir!

Everyone who wants to make a joyful sound to the Lord is welcome to be part of our Conference Choir! We'll rehearse Saturday morning during the workshop block in the Jones Auditorium. No audition needed — just bring your voice and your heart for worship!

We will conclude our event with a shared celebration of communion, offering a glimpse of the great table that awaits us all.

[Click HERE for the Information Packet](#)

<https://www.savannahpresbytery.org/georgiapresbyteries/>

