



“THE MESSAGE OF THE CHRIST CHILD, THE SHEPHERDS AND THE WISE MEN”

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE SHEPHERDS?

We all know that the shepherds were an important part of Hebrew Society. But, what do we know about them and why were they so important?

The shepherds were important because they took care of the sheep and the sheep were an integral part of the economy of Hebrew Society. The sheep provided

- Food to eat,
- Wool for clothing,
- Shelter in terms of their skins,
- Leather for various goods,
- And a medium of exchange.

The shepherd was critical to the sheep because they were essential for the survival of the sheep inasmuch as they

- Provided water to drink,
- Food to eat,
- Defended against predators like the bear and lion,
- Rescued the sheep from falls and injuries,
- And brought healing to the injured sheep.

The shepherd, however, was not part of the elite of society. This was due in large part to the fact that they spent much of their time in the field and had little opportunity to participate in worship in the synagogue or temple. When the shepherd was back in the community he had little time to meet the required ceremonial cleansings required to enter the temple. Hence, the shepherd was often held of low esteem because he had

- No political status,
- No educational status because he worked in the fields,
- No religious status because he was rendered ceremonially unclean because of his contact with the animals and their bodily fluids.
- And he had no economic status because shepherds were not well paid and were not held in high esteem. When David was offered King Saul's first daughter in marriage he responded, "Who am I and who are my kinsfolk, my father's family in Israel, that I should be son-in-law to the king?" When David was offered King Saul's first daughter in marriage he said, "Does it seem to you a little thing to become the king's son-in-law, seeing that I am a poor man and of no repute?"
- However, David in the 23rd Psalm reflects upon the importance of the shepherd to the sheep.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE WISE MEN?

The Wise Men, on the other hand, were entirely different. They were Gentiles or non-Jews and represented the most educated and the best within their culture.

The Wise Men were attached to the Persian Royal Courts. They were valued for their ability to interpret dreams and to foretell the future.

The gift of foretelling the future is something that is clearly evident in the gifts they brought the Christ Child which were

- Gold which is a gift for a king and Jesus is the King of kings.
- Frankincense which is the gift for a priest and Jesus is recognized as the high priest.
- And Myrrh which is the gift for someone who is to die and Jesus has suffered death upon the cross for the salvation of the world.

The scripture does not establish how many Wise Men there were but tradition tells us that there were three. This was probably because there were three gifts and hence three Wise Men.

The Wise Men were Zoroastrian Priests

- Who were followers of the prophet Zoroaster who believed in the God of the Sun, Mazda,
- Who believed every individual had a light in the sky, a fravashi,
- Who believed the brighter the star, the greater the individual.
- Who were highly educated in Astrology and Astronomy.
- And who possessed wealth as evidenced in the gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

The Zoroastrian's exist today and are known as the Parsees. They are the oldest monotheistic religion and believe in the struggle between good and evil. They are known as individuals of compassion who seek justice on the behalf of others today. One can only be born into the faith and this requires that the father be a Parsee. Although one of the most philanthropic religions in the world today, their number is rapidly declining with a population of around 100,000 in 2025.

WHAT IS GOD TEACHING US THROUGH THE SHEPHERDS AND THE WISE MEN?

As we look at the story of the wise men and the shepherds we find two groups of people that were invited to the birth of the Christ Child. The Wise Men were led by a star and the Shepherds were directed by angels but the two groups had little in common. They did not share the

- Same education,
- Respect,
- Wealth,
- Race or
- Social Circles.

And that is specifically why each was called by God, because they had nothing in common. God wanted the world to know that he came for all the world, he loves every individual even when we do not love ourselves, and he offers salvation to all who will follow him. It even shows that some will come into his kingdom later, the shepherds were there when Christ was born, the wise men may have arrived two years later.

The message of the Wise Men and the Shepherds for each and every one of us today is simply this, "You have not been forgotten, God has come for you, this is all for you."

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

WEEKLY EVENTS

CHILDREN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES

- Held during the 9:30 AM Worship Service
- Nursery & Toddlers: Room 6105 in the Family Life Center
- 3 & 4 year olds: Room 4110 in the Education Building
- K - 3rd Grade: Fellowship Hall
- 4th- 6th Grade: Room 6204 in the Family Life Center

CHILDREN'S GATHERING: 10:15 AM TO 11:00 AM

In between Children's Sunday School and Children's Worship, children can gather in the Fellowship Hall and enjoy food, drinks, and fellowship while listening to some of their favorite worship songs!

CHILDREN'S WORSHIP

- Held during the 11:00 AM Worship Service
- Grades K-6
- Located in the Fellowship Hall

SUNDAY MORNING NURSERY

- Open 8:00 AM - 12:00 PM
- Ages 0-2: Room 6105 in the Family Life Center
- Ages 2-4: Room 4110 in the Education Building

SUNDAY NIGHT CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS 4:30 - 7:30 PM

- All 1st- 6th graders are welcome to a night full of Faith, Food and FUN!
- The night will include Bible Discovery, Choirs, Games, Activities, and more!
- Dinner: \$5

Club 456/JAM Choir (4th - 6th graders)

- 4:30 PM: Drop off in the Fellowship Hall (Building #7)
- 7:30 PM: Pick up in the Music Center (Building #2)

Kids Club/ Carol Choir (1st - 3rd graders)

- 4:30 PM: Drop off in Fellowship Hall (Building #7)
- 7:30 PM: Pick up in the Fellowship Hall (Building #7)

UPCOMING EVENTS

FRIDAY, JANUARY 16TH: PARENT'S NIGHT OUT

- Dinner, crafts & activities, and watch a movie on the big screen!
- \$20 for 1st child, \$15 for each additional child
- **Drop off:** 5:30 PM in the Family Life Center Lobby
- **Pick up:** No later than 9:30 PM in the Family Life Center Lobby
- Scan the QR Code to Register by Sunday, January 11th



SATURDAY, MARCH 28TH: OPMC &

THE EARLY EDUCATION CENTER'S ANNUAL EASTER EGG HUNT!

- 10:00AM - 12:00 PM on Saturday, March 28th
- Cost: \$10 for Adults, \$5 for children/youth up to 17 years
- Full Lunch (hamburgers, hot dogs, mac & cheese, tater tots, fruit, and dessert), Ice Cream Truck, Inflatable Obstacle Course and Bounce House, Picture Opportunity with the Easter Bunny, and age appropriate Easter Egg Hunt categories with prizes!
- Location will be at the Fellowship Hall (Building # 7)
- Fun for all ages! Egg Hunts are limited to children from 1 year to 3rd Grade.
- Invite your friends and family!
- Scan the QR Code to Register by Sunday, March 22nd!



SAVE THE DATE!

February 20th - Parent's Night Out
March 13th - Parent's Night Out
July 20th - 24th - Vacation Bible Camp

YOUTH MINISTRY

WEEKLY EVENTS

SUNDAY SCHOOL

Sunday School - 11:00 AM - 11:45 AM

We join together in the Youth Classroom and then break into smaller conversation groups.

SUNDAY NIGHT SCHEDULE

- 4:30 - 5:30 PM - Service opportunities:
Youth Choir, Children's Ministry, or Church A/V training
- 5:30 - 5:55 PM - Activity/Game in the Gym
- 6:00 - 6:20 PM - Dinner (\$5) in the Gym
- 6:25 - 7:00 PM - Worship in the youth worship center
- 7:00 - 7:30 PM - Age appropriate small groups

UPCOMING EVENTS

WINTER RETREAT: ROCK THE UNIVERSE

- Friday, January 23rd - Sunday, January 25th, 2026
- Rock the Universe is an unforgettable weekend of faith and fun. On Friday the 23rd and Saturday the 24th January 2026, experience powerful beats from Christian Music's brightest stars and thrilling rides at Universal Studios Florida.

YOUTH MISSION TRIP: BELIZE

- Saturday, June 20th - Friday, June 26th
- Destination: Belize
- Partner Organization: Praying Pelican Missions
- We are returning to Belize to continue our partnership with Mark and Shari Somerville.
- Cost: Youth - \$900 Adults - \$1300
- Register by scanning the QR code below and clicking the event

SPRING CONFIRMATION RETREAT

- Friday, May 1st - Sunday, May 3rd
- This is the first retreat that our rising 7th graders/confirmation students can participate in. We look forward to having a big group this year! There are opportunities to kayak or enjoy their slip-and-slide into the lake. This year we are going to have tubing in the lake!
- Cost: \$80



FUNDRAISERS

PARENT'S NIGHT OUT FUNDRAISER

Youth and parents lead kids 0-6th grade in games and crafts, serve dinner, and end the night with a movie in the Fellowship Hall. The proceeds from PNO go directly to the accounts of the students who work the event.

UPCOMING DATES

January 16th, 2026
February 20th, 2026
March 13th, 2026

YOUTH ACCOUNTS

Each student can earn money for use on trips and events that are held in an account for them. Students can earn money working Parent's Night Out events and our biggest fundraiser, the Pumpkin Patch. If you have any questions about youth accounts or would like to check your student's account balance, you can contact Jason at 904-264-2241 ext. 282.

EARLY EDUCATION CENTER

The Early Education Center staff would like to wish all the members of the church A Happy and Healthy New Year! Please continue praying for the staff, parents, and children in The Early Education Center.

We are glad to start off the New Year sharing God's Word with the children and hope that all of you had a wonderful holiday season with family and friends. Our mission statement is "Inspiring lifelong learning and good character morals in our students by guiding God's children through love and play".

Our themes for this month are: Ringing in the New Year, Snow Week, Outer Space, Pets and At the Farm. Our Bible Lessons will include Keep the Christmas Spirit in the New Year, The Four Seasons, Martin Luther King Jr., Unique as Snow, and Pets are a Blessing. We are so excited to announce that Ms. Vickie will be doing Chapel every

Thursday, while Ms. Ellen is out on maternity leave, along with Mr. Nick. Mr. Nick also teaches music every Tuesday to the children.

During the week of January 12th, we will be setting up for our annual Florida “Snow” week. The children will be able to experience snowballs, cold, ice and different aspects of snow and cold. Our Character Trait for January is Fairness, and our children will wear orange on January 20th. We will be teaching the children that there is no partiality with God. HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL!

Wonderful Wednesdays

Dinner Prices

PLEASE NOTE PRICE CHANGE

ADULT - \$8 AND CHILD (ages 3-12) - \$6
Non-season reservations must be made weekly.

Please call 904-264-2241 ext. 278

SEASON TICKET PRICES (JANUARY & FEBRUARY)

Adult - \$56 and Child - \$48

January 7 - Pot roast with carrots and gravy, lima beans potatoes, garlic bread, salad and chocolate cake

January 14 - Hawaiian Pork with rice, succotash, sweet potato casserole, roll, coleslaw and pineapple upside down cake

January 21 - Mexican seasoned chicken with yellow rice, black beans, Mexican corn, garlic bread, Caesar salad and apple cobbler

January 28 - Meatloaf with gravy, Italian green beans, mashed potatoes, roll, salad and blueberry white chocolate bread pudding

All Menus are subject to change.

Orange Park Methodist Men

We will meet in the Fellowship Hall for our next meeting at 8:00 AM on Saturday, January 17, 2026. The program will be presented by Pastor Charles Lever. All men of the church are members of the Methodist Men and are encouraged to come and enjoy one of our delicious breakfasts prepared by one of our cook teams.

Orange Park Methodist Women

Come Join A Circle

Deborah Circle

Chair - Connie Eden (904-343-5612)

Meets 4th Tuesday at 7:00 PM

Meets in Room 6203

Elizabeth Circle

Chair - Diane Burshuliak (904-477-1340)

Meets 3rd Thursday at 9:30 AM

Meets in Fellowship Hall

Mary Lydia Circle

Chair - Cindy Koon (904-210-3546)

Meets 3rd Tuesday at 10:00 AM

Meets in Fellowship Hall

Music Ministry

Upcoming Music Events

Come join a choir! With the new school year starting this is a perfect time to join a choir. There are choirs for everyone from ages 5 years to 99+ years. Everyone is welcome!

CAROL CHOIR - K through 3rd grade - meets Sunday at 5:30 PM - 6:10 PM in the Music Center

- Carol Choir is part of the Sunday Kids Club and sings several Sundays throughout the year.

JAM (Jesus A.nd M.e Choir) - 4th through 6th grade - meets Sundays at 6:30 PM - 7:30 PM in the Music Center

- JAM Choir is part of Club 456 on Sundays and sings for several services, including World Communion, Christmas Eve Processional, their own Children's musical and goes on an annual choir trip.

ReGeneration - 7th through 12th grade - meets Sundays 4:30 PM - 5:30 PM in the Music Center

- ReGeneration is a vocal youth ensemble who sings for Worship services throughout the year including Advent, Christmas Eve, Lent and Easter. They present a Dinner Theater in the Spring and go on a Choir Tour in the summer.

CHANCEL CHOIR - Adult Choir - meets Thursdays 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM in the Music Center

- The Chancel Choir involves singers with varying levels of experience. They sing for the 11:00 AM worship service every Sunday and for Advent, Christmas Eve, Lent and Easter.

INSPIRATIONS - Women's Choir - meets Thursdays 6:00 PM - 7:00 PM in the Music Center Rehearsal Room

- The Inspirations is a Women's choir for experienced singers. They sing several Sundays throughout the year including Advent, Christmas Eve, Lent and Easter.

DYNAMICS - Men's Choir - meets Thursdays 6:00 PM - 7:00 PM in the Music Center Room 2103

- The Dynamics is a Men's choir for experienced singers. They sing several Sundays throughout the year including Advent, Christmas Eve, Lent and Easter.

CHANCEL BELLS - meets Tuesdays 6:00 PM - 7:00 PM in the Sanctuary

- The Chancel Bells play several Sundays throughout the year. Music reading skills are helpful but not required

PRaise BAND - meets Tuesdays 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM in the Sanctuary

- The Praise Band sings for the 9:00 AM worship service every Sunday and for Advent, Christmas Eve, Lent and Easter. Please contact Nick Despres if you are interested in the Praise Band at 904-264-2241 ext. 236.

If you are interested in any of the choirs or have questions please call the Music Center 904-264-2241 ext. 245.

Symphony Tickets

If you are interested in going call the music center office at 904-264-2241 ext. 245. Tickets are \$35.00 and we will be sitting in the Terrace located above the stage. We will meet at 6:00 PM in the church parking lot. Below is the schedule for all of the concerts in this series:

- Friday January 9th - John William's America
- Friday January 16th - Bruckner's Majestic Eighth
- Friday February 13th - Romeo & Juliet: Tchaikovsky & Bernstein
- Friday March 6th - Mozart & More: Concertos for Two Pianos
- Friday March 27th - Barber & Mendelssohn
- Friday May 15th - Beethoven's Triple & Brahms
- Friday June 5 - Rachmaninoff's Third

All concerts will be Terrace seating, tickets \$35.00

Senior Adult Ministry

Rock "N" Ages

Start your year right by joining us at the Rock N' Ages Luncheon. It will be held on Tuesday, January 6th at 11:30 AM in the Fellowship Hall. There will be a very exciting program. Please bring a dish to go with ham.

Invite a friend and join us. If you have questions, please call Cindy Koon at 904-210-3546.

MISSIONS

NIMBLE NEEDLES

Nimble Needles is celebrating 20 years of crafting and comforting very deserving folks in Clay County. Folks who are spending time in rehabilitation facilities or have moved to a nursing home or assisted living facility and can use a little something to help make their situation a little more comfortable, a little more manageable, and a little more cheerful. Our recipients feel noticed and loved by receiving a handmade item made especially for them. All of this would not be possible without the grateful donations of fabric and yarn that we receive. Your donations help us continue our mission work, so please keep them coming so we can serve Christ another 20 years.

ANGEL TREE

Every year our congregation donates Christmas gifts that help benefit the Department of Children & Families Kids First (Fosters in the system). They were overwhelmed and appreciative of what our congregation did this year for these children. Here are our numbers for this Christmas season:

Gifts for 75 Angels which were for children of all ages plus 32 Backpacks for high school students at Orange Park High School. Non-perishable foods and basic necessities for 30-40 teens (jackets, gloves, personal care items, ponchos & umbrellas, socks, etc).

Thank you for your generosity during this Christmas season.

Committee Meetings

Here is a listing of the committee meetings for January. All meetings are at 7:00 PM except where noted.

JANUARY

Tuesday, January 6	Altar Guild (4:00 PM)
Tuesday, January 12	SPR Committee
Tuesday, January 13	Board of Trustees
Monday, January 26	Finance Committee
Tuesday, January 27	Church Council

OUR CHURCH FAMILY EXTENDS OUR SYMPATHY To

Cyleta Boyle in the death of her sister, Brenda McKinney

STAFF DIRECTORY

Church phone number - 904-264-2241

PASTOR

Dr. Charles C. Lever, Sr. Pastor, ext. 273
clever@opmethodist.org

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Robyn Voigt, Director of Pastoral Communications, ext. 273
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Janice Reid, Accompanist, ext. 237

NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS

THE DOVE is a faith based publication of Orange Park Methodist Church. It is not a forum for community news, political debate or personal opinion. Submissions are to be made in Microsoft Word attachments sent via email to rvoigt@opmethodist.org. Space is limited. All submissions are subject to available space and are subject to approval and redaction at the sole discretion of the editor.

JANUARY RECOGNITIONS

ANNIVERSARIES

Randy and Tara Bunn	01/02	38 years
Richard and Marjorie Harris	01/17	39 years
David and Janet Ballantine	01/21	42 years
John and Erika Lippincott	01/24	17 years
Wilbur and Sue Anne Rubright	01/27	36 years
Joe and Peggy Grantham	01/29	54 years

BIRTHDAYS

Sara Burge	01/01	Julia Cramer	01/18
Jerry Habeck	01/02	Leel Knowles	01/19
Jose' Claudio II	01/03	Jill Schmidt	01/19
Kelley Drawdy	01/04	Lillian Bell	01/20
Jacob Butacan	01/04	Tyler Fleming	01/20
Peggy Stone	01/05	Aurora King	01/20
Lillian Foster	01/06	Jaxon King	01/20
Oliver Manning	01/08	Aedan Bonneval	01/22
John Lippincott	01/06	Mary Johnson	01/23
Alicia Turpish	01/08	Isabella Oyola	01/23
George Martin	01/08	Dave Harwood	01/23
Bill Bazemore	01/08	Walker Stowers	01/23
Charlie Schmidt	01/08	Wyatt Stowers	01/23
Linda Renehan	01/09	Sharon Noel	01/24
Hailey Fleming	01/09	Sharlene Schlichtman	01/24
Marti Boatright	01/10	Andrew Turpish	01/24
Kathleen Rowlinson	01/10	Karen Toth	01/24
Richard Carden	01/11	Dave Conaway	01/25
Kathy Wray	01/11	Joanna Armistead	01/26
Carolyn Sellars	01/13	Logan Seeley	01/26
Dorothy Davis	01/13	William Strong	01/27
Sandy Austin	01/14	Kathleen Moore	01/27
Andrew Mansen	01/14	Anna Freehafer	01/28
Geneva Gray	01/14	Mark Meier	01/28
Erika Lippincott	01/14	Norman Jones	01/28
Charlotte Ryan	01/14	Ashlyn Eden	01/29
Lee Lobello	01/15	Mindy Maconi	01/30
Ray White	01/16	Lynn Murphey	01/31
Stasha Martin	01/16	Martha Reid	01/31
Nolan Stowers	01/16	Michael Griffis	01/31
John Norton	01/17		