Recently, my friend and pastor Lynn Shirley shared an article he wrote saying, "We have lived through a difficult year of unprecedented "fake news", internet hacking, congressional hearings, and political bantering and bullying that have left us all in a state of shock with the difficult task of knowing what or whom to believe, if we are to believe anyone or anything."

It may be surprising to some to realize what our nation and this world are going through is nothing new. Throughout the history of humanity, there has always been power struggles which pit people against each other to the point that people physically, psychologically and verbally attack each other as they become entrenched in their positions until someone wins and someone loses.

As we begin preparing for the Christmas season, we are reminded again that even in the midst of chaos, there is still hope. It is this hope that is shared in an Advent prayer from the Iona Community in Scotland. Located on a small island between the coasts of Scotland and Ireland, The Iona community was established around 536AD when a monk named Columba was exiled because he was caught up in a civil war. Like John and the isle of Patmos, Columba was imprisoned on that 3 square mile island where he would die four years later. But before he passed away, God transformed that island prison into a faith community that has endured for over 1600 years and became known as the “cradle of the Christianity in Scotland.” Throughout the centuries, the Iona faith community weathered the storms of Viking conquests, the dark ages and world wars and yet continues to be a beacon of light when the world gets dark.

As we light the advent candles, I share with you a Christmas prayer that comes from the Iona Community which says,

"Eternal God,
In the long-ago days when the earth was flat,
and heaven was above the clouds,
and disease was caused by demons,
your son was born to lighten all our darkness.

We now, after the Enlightenment, are in bondage to different limitations. We doubt what we cannot prove; we ignore what we cannot see, and finding little room for faith,
we must confess, we suspect angels and disbelieve good news.

We admit ourselves to be both infected and affected by the spirit of our time.
Behind talk of world peace, we hear the machinery of war;
Beneath the talk of global equality, we detect the posturing of the powerful;
Beside talk of your church being renewed, we recognize bondage to failed patterns of the past.

Rather than embrace the light, we become fascinated by darkness,
and must confess, we suspect angels and disbeliever good news.

Ah, God, who will save us?
Our cynicism is the fruit of our experience not the key to the future.
Our suspicousness helps us to smell the rat, never to recognize the dove.
Our perfect analysis may describe the mountain, but it is helpless to move it.

It is with little pride we must confess, we suspect angels, and disbelieve good news.

As Christmas approaches,
give us a share of that divine naivete enjoyed by Elizabeth and Zechariah,"
Mary and Joseph,  
and unnamed country folk,  
who encountered angels and believed the good news and recognized  
Christ among them.”

As we enter this Christmas season, in the midst of our chaotic world where people are  
bantering and bullying each other, let us cling to the hope of you and I can still cling to the hope of  
God’s gift of a Savior, God’s only Son who He continues to be “Emanuel” (God with us) for those who  
believe.

Peace,  
Jon

June 17-27,2020       June 15-24       August 3-12 or September 7-16

There has been some interest in offering a possible Holy Land Trip in 2020. Above are  
three possible trips with Inspiration Tours, Biblical Israel Ministry and Tours, and  
Maranatha Tours. One offers worship and fellowship experiences with the Isaacs,  
Karen Peck, the Bowling Family and Tim Menzies. The Biblical tour is led by Dr. John  
DeLancey who teaching style is similar to Ray Vander Laan. Finally, Maranatha Tour  
has been taking and leading trips to Israel for over 40 years. All three are 10-day trips  
and all airfare, food and room accommodations, travel, and taxes are covered in the  
package. The first trip option cost around $5900 pp ($1000 less if you use air miles).  
The second option cost around $4100 pp ($1000 less if you use air miles). The third  
cost around $3900. Each requires a $500 non-refundable deposit. For more  
information go to Inspirationcruises.com, biblicalisraeltours.com or Maranathatours.  
com. If interested, please contact pastor for more information.

Ray Vander Laan at Fairview UMC  
April 3-5, 2020

For those who cannot make it to the Holy Lands, an  
opportunity is given for a taste of the Holy Lands to come to  
you at Fairview UMC in Maryville, TN.  
Ray Vander Laan will be leading a seminar that will  
explore the week of Jesus life from Palm Sunday to Easter in  
the setting of the city of Jerusalem.  
The cost is $25 before January 31 and $35 dollars at the  
door. If interested in attending, contact church office.
Men’s Bible Study takes a break for the Christmas season
Many thanks for Fenton McCahill who loves to teach God’s Word and minister to those who attend the class.

Session and Deacons are scheduled to meet on December 19, at 5pm and 6 pm.
Annual Congregational Meeting has been Scheduled for January 5, 2020 following worship.

This is the busiest, joy filled time of the year for the church. The following events are worship activities that will be done during the month of December. We invite you to participate and/or support the various activities that involve Center Church and the Tellico Plains Community.

December 7- Cherokee Women’s Club Cookie Caper from 5-9 pm in Tellico Plains. The Homemade cookies are sold by the pound and moneys raises are used for High School Graduation Scholarships.

December 7, 8- The Tellico Churches (including Center Church) will be putting on a Live Nativity at the Charles Hall Museum. It will go from 6-8 pm both nights.
December 13- John Knox Center invites you and your family for an evening of celebration, fellowship, and a wonderful meal at the annual Advent Dinner Friday, December 13th, 2019. Appetizers will be served at 6:00 pm with dinner following at 7:00 pm in our Dining Hall. The cost for adults is $15, children are $7.50. Call their office at (865) 376-2236 to make reservation.

December 14 at 6pm and December 15 at worship- Center Church Invites all to worship in song with this year’s Christmas Musical- The Heart of Christmas. The music will warm your hearts. Bring a friend or neighbor and join us for the community presentation on Saturday, December 14 at 6pm or join us for the regular worship service presentation on December 15.

December 15 @5pm- You are invited to join us to go caroling. Our goal is to get at least two groups the sing to our shut in’s in Coker Creek and Tellico Plains. Afterwards, we will come back to the church or someone’s home for fellowship and hot Wassel or Chocolate. Come out and bring a smile to those who cannot make it to church this Christmas season.

December 20- 21 @ 7pm- The Youth will be having their annual Live Nativity program at the Church. Come and see how they will transform a cemetery into a living testimony of Christmas. Bring the family and enjoy the program in the warmth and comfort of your vehicle.

December 22 @5pm- All kids are invited to the Annual Christmas party in the church fellowship hall. Come and be ready to have a good time!

December 23 @10am and December 24 @8am. This is the annual Food ministry where up to 90 totes are filled with food to give to those in need this Christmas season. This is when you see what happens to the monies that were raised with the Haunted House. Volunteers are needed to shop, pack, and deliver two man totes to families all around Tellico Plains.

December 24 @7pm- You are invited to join us for a special Annual Christmas Eve Candlelight Service. As we break bread and share the cup of communion, we will once again remember the birth of our Savior.