

“THE MEADOWS MESSENGER”
A Communication of Quaker Meadows Presbyterian Church
December 2018, Issue



October and November Financial Reports

We hope that you find this information helpful as you pray for this congregation and evaluate your giving and participation in the worship, work and mission of this part of the Body of Christ. Sincerely, the Session and Pastor.

Tithes and Offerings needed for each week of 2018 = \$1,744.48. This figure is based on a total 2018 budget of \$90,713.00 which was approved by the Session.

OCTOBER

Total Tithes and Offerings needed (4 weeks)	\$6,977.92
Actual Tithes and Offerings received (4 weeks)	\$6,797.00
This results in a budget shortage for this month	(\$180.92)
Total Expenses (4 weeks) resulting in an overage for the month	\$5,707.67 \$1,089.33

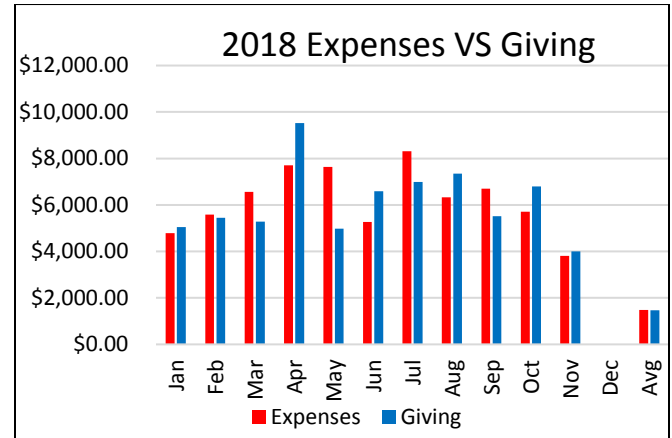
NOVEMBER

Total Tithes and Offerings needed (3 weeks)	\$5,233.44
Actual Tithes and Offerings received (3 weeks)	\$3,997.00
This results in a budget shortage for this month	(\$1,236.44)
Total Expenses (3 weeks) resulting in an overage for the month	\$3,809.69 \$187.31

YEAR TO DATE

Total Tithes and Offerings needed (46 weeks)	\$80,246.12
Actual Tithes and Offerings (46 weeks) received	\$67,532.75
This results in a budget shortage to this point	(\$16,202.33)
Total Expenses (46 weeks) This results in a shortage to expenses for the year	\$68,377.00 (\$844.25)

For those of you who understand a chart better than a bunch of numbers, below is the 'picture' of our YTD finances for November 2018 (through week 3 of 4):



Session Highlights

Stated Meeting – October 28th

The Session:

- Reviewed and approved the financial report for September
- Heard a report from the Finance Committee regarding their review of the detailed records for January – July 2018.
- Received the proposed budget for 2019 from the Finance Committee with a request that we consider canceling trash service from Republic in favor of a cheaper alternative. Final action was postponed on this request until the next Session meeting. In the meantime some research will be done on alternatives.
- Rev. Thurmond proposed that the Session be reduced from 7 members to 5. After some discussion the motion was tabled until the Elder Nominating Committee could make another try to fill the upcoming three vacancies.
- The tentative congregational meeting for November 18th to elect elders was not approved, since nominations are still open.
- Approved Unified Giving to the presbytery for 2019 at \$1,500.00.

Some Bible Trivia

1. Who took Saul’s spear after sneaking into his camp late one night?
2. Who visited a medium at night?
3. Who attacked a Midianite camp late at night?
4. Who paid Samuel a late-night visit?
5. Whose followers were afraid when they saw him at night and thought he was a ghost?
6. Where were a group of shepherds when they were visited by angels?

The Pastor’s Ponderings

The following is an article from the November 23, 2015 issue of The Presbyterian Outlook. It is a good follow-up to the sermon I preached on “Christ the King” Sunday about the Jesus who comes to set up his kingdom among us – even those of us who do not like the idea of living under the rule of a king.

Sometimes there’s God So Quickly
By Thomas G. Long¹

“Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus”, we sing in Advent, thinking as we sing about the Christ child to be born in Bethlehem. But one of the challenges of this season ... is that the baby Jesus is not the only Jesus who is expected, and he is not the only Jesus who shows up.

For most of us, the focus of our attention in the bustling days between Thanksgiving and December 25th falls quite naturally on the arrival of Christmas and on the coming of the holy child. This time of anticipation is often a warm time, a family time, a time to sing “I’ll be home for Christmas”, even if that homecoming is only in our dreams. Indeed, part of the astonishing good news that the angel announces to the shepherds outside Bethlehem is just how close to home, how immediate and how personal is the birth of Jesus:

“To you, is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior.” In other words, the shepherds are assured that this great event will happen not on some remote shore or in some distant galaxy; it will happen to them, here and now, in their own neighborhood. Nothing could be more local, more close to the heart and the hearth.

But the Jesus in swaddled cloths, “the little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes,” is not the only Jesus for whom we wait in Advent. As the lectionary’s trumpet blast on the inaugural Sunday of the church year reminds us, we are waiting not only for the lowly Jesus who is born in a manger down the street at the neighborhood inn, but we also wait for the Jesus who shows up emblazoned across the vast canvas of the heavens as the curtain rings down on history. We wait for the Christ who arrives not this time in a tiny village but in cosmic splendor at the end of all things, the “Son of Man coming in a cloud”, appearing in power and glory, who brings “distress among the nations” and a shaking of the “powers of heavens”. Even though we sometimes forget it, or repress it, in Advent we not only celebrate the first coming of Jesus, but we also look up and out toward the second coming of Jesus as well.

I have received hundreds of Christmas cards with pictures of the babe in the manger, but I have never received (or sent) a single card depicting the second coming. There are several reasons why the infant Jesus gets most of the press during Advent. First, the heaven-rattling, smoke-and-lightning images of the second coming are more jarring to our imagination, more disturbing, less comfortable. The infant Jesus is easier to embrace than the Jesus who prompts people to “faint with fear and foreboding, of what is coming upon the world”. This idea gets picked up in the film comedy “Talladega Nights”, in which Will Ferrell, playing the part of racecar driver Ricky Bobby, always begins his table blessings and other prayers by appealing to the “Lord baby

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Jesus”. At one point, his wife, Carley, calls him on this.

"Hey, um, you know, sweetie," she says, "Jesus did grow up. You don't always have to call him, 'baby'."

Ricky retorts, "Well, I like the Christmas Jesus best and I'm saying grace."

We, too, probably like the Christmas Jesus best. Given the choice between the tender infant born in a cattle stall so long ago and the Jesus who might be coming in a thunderclap at any minute, causing distress among the nations, we'll take the baby Jesus.

Perhaps another problem with the second coming of Jesus, and one that is more significant, is that we can scarcely imagine any more what we should do with such a notion. [Some Christians] think of Jesus descending from the clouds to the Mount of Olives as trumpets blast while the whole event is covered on CNN, but that sort of flat and prosaic interpretation of the Bible has lost its grip on the imaginations of many. Some Christians still say things like, "I'll visit you next summer, if the Lord doesn't come," but most of us go about our business without wondering if a thunderclap from heaven will cancel Wednesday's sales meeting.

So, then, what should we do with these biblical images and with the promise of the second coming of Jesus? What difference to our Christian faith and life here and now can we make of this depiction of a savior who arrives, not at the end of the holiday sales at Macy's, but "like a thief in the night" at the end of the ages, a Christ who ambushes time and history so suddenly and startlingly that people collapse with dread?

It helps, I think, to remember that Luke's picture of the "Son of Man coming in power" is in apocalyptic language, which is a vocabulary, a form of intense poetry really, that the Gospel writers trotted out when what they were trying to say what simply could not be said in everyday

speech. When we enter the world of apocalyptic, we leave ordinary, literal description behind and enter the world of metaphorical religious imagination. As biblical scholar John Barton noted, "We know that a text which began, 'The stars will fall from heaven and the sun will cease its shining, the moon will be turned to blood' ... will not be likely to continue, 'The rest of the country will have sunny intervals and scattered showers.'" So, when Jesus, speaking in the Gospel of Luke, begins to talk about the end of all things, he speaks in an apocalyptic voice: "Then they will see 'the Son of Man' coming in a cloud' with power and great glory." In fact, Jesus borrows the picture of the Son of Man in a cloud from an early apocalyptic document, the Old Testament Book of Daniel. The fact that he speaks in apocalyptic language means that he is in effect saying, to his disciples and to us, "Look, you want to know about the end of time. Well, it cannot be described in ordinary speech. You have to reach for it out on the edge of your faithful imaginations, and even then you will not grasp it. But let me give you these images, these [parable-like] pictures, to help you along."

Received this way, the portrayal of the second coming in Luke's Gospel is almost unimaginable good news. It announces that the ultimate end of all things is not some tinhorn human dictatorship but Jesus Christ, the savior. **History does not end in a whimper but in redemption.** Standing there in glory at the conclusion of all things is not the evil of Hitler, or the greed of Wall Street, or the pride of our own egos, but the Son of Man. Those who try to bend history toward horror and holocaust do not get to tell the end of the story. The end of the story is the mercy of God. So don't tremble in fear; rather "stand up and raise your heads because your redemption is drawing near."

The reason why the end of the ages creates foreboding and distress among the nations is because they have chronically invested in the wrong future. The nations have always desired to be empires and to maximize profit and power, but, when the curtain lowers on history, and the

glory and power are seen to belong to Christ, the words of the old hymn are shown to be true, “O where are kings and empires now?” And as theologian John Howard Yoder put it, “The people who bear crosses are working with the grain of the universe.”

However, this picture of the end of time and the second coming of Christ is not an invitation to stand on our tiptoes and look out over the horizon of history for the signs of his coming. Down through history, there have occasionally been Christians who thought they knew when the Day of the Lord would be. They would sell their possessions, abandon their vocations, don white robes, and stand on mountaintops waiting for the great cataclysm, which, of course, always failed to happen.

No, Jesus says, this misses the point. We should instead “look at the fig tree and all the trees. Every time they sprout leaves, you know the seasons are changing.” I think what Jesus is saying by this commonplace image of the fig tree is that even today, here and there, now and then, we can see the green leaves of Christ’s redemption sprouting forth. We should look for the cosmic and the ultimate in the immediate and the nearby. The light that will shine in glory at the end of all time is already beaming shafts of light into the darkness now. Looking for the breaking in of God’s kingdom is not a matter of wearing a robe and climbing a mountain; it’s more like watching the fig tree in your backyard garden.

Christopher Morse gets at this difficult theological truth in his book “The Difference Heaven Makes”. Morse surveys what the New Testament has to say about heaven, and he finds that many of us have it only half right. We talk at funerals and elsewhere about people “going to heaven”, as if heaven were a distant place toward which we are traveling. But the Scripture more often puts it the other way: Heaven is coming to us. “Heaven” is a biblical image for the place from which God acts toward the world, and heaven constantly draws near to us. Like ocean

waves breaking on the shore, the very life of God keeps breaking into the world, and we can feel the spray and smell the salt. In other words, the life of God keeps “adventing” into our time, our history, our life.

So, putting this all together, what we see in these Advent pictures of the end of time is that the glory and saving power of God, which are finally all-in-all, even now keep peeking through ordinary time and revealing themselves in the middle of things. As Blanche DuBois says in “A Streetcar Named Desire” when she suddenly experiences a moment of love and grace, “Sometimes there’s God so quickly.”

Therefore, Christians are to “be on hand for that which is at hand but not in hand,” says Morse. We are to stay awake, to keep our eyes open, for the “adventing” of God that could happen in any situation and at any tick of the clock. That is, we are to be “on hand” for the arrival of God which is surely “at hand”. We can then join in with God in what God is doing in the world, reminding ourselves it is God’s doing and not our good intentions or worthy deeds. We can be a part of God’s redeeming action in the world, but we do not own it or originate it. Thus, it is “at hand” but not “in hand”.

When I visit my 95-year-old father in the assisted living facility where he lives, I see other people like myself visiting their aging and declining parents. What is more, every time I walk down the hall I see interactions that, from one point of view, are quite ordinary, but from another point of view are amazing sacrifices and remarkable deeds of love and mercy. A woman pats the arm of her mother and speaks soothingly to her, even though her mother no longer recognizes who she is or remembers her name. A man carefully feeds his mother a piece of birthday cake, and another man changes his father’s diaper. These are, of course, family obligations and everyday deeds of support. But when we see them in the light of the end of time, in the light of the “Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory”,

we see something more. We realize that what we see in bright lights at the end, the victorious mercy and kindness of God, is even now breaking forth, “adventing” into the shadows of this time and place through these loving acts of care. These everyday acts of mercy are being gathered up into the ultimate victory of God in Christ. Because of that, they matter eternally.

So we come around full circle. The second coming of Christ, the cosmic revelation of redemption that brings all human history to resolution, is to be watched for not just in the clouds but also in the everyday events of life – in nursing homes, in fig trees, in works of mercy and justice, in our homes and backyards, and yes, in that small-town inn where the baby we have all been waiting for, the Jesus who walked among us doing deeds of mercy and peace, is born. (End of the article)

As we enter the Advent season and prepare ourselves for the celebration of Jesus’ first coming into our world as a baby, born of Mary in Bethlehem, let us also look for those moments when we just might see evidence that Jesus the King is at work in the events of our lives, defining and redefining what life is his kingdom is all about – a kingdom of the four aspects of Advent and more: Hope, Peace, Joy and Love.

Pastor Yvonne

It Could Happen ...

It was the day after Christmas at St Peter and St Paul's church in Borden, Kent, England. Father John, the vicar, was looking at the nativity scene outside when he noticed the baby Jesus was missing from the figures.

Immediately, Father John’s thoughts turned to calling in the local policeman but as he was about to do so, he saw little Nathan with a red wagon, and in the wagon was the figure of the little infant, Jesus.

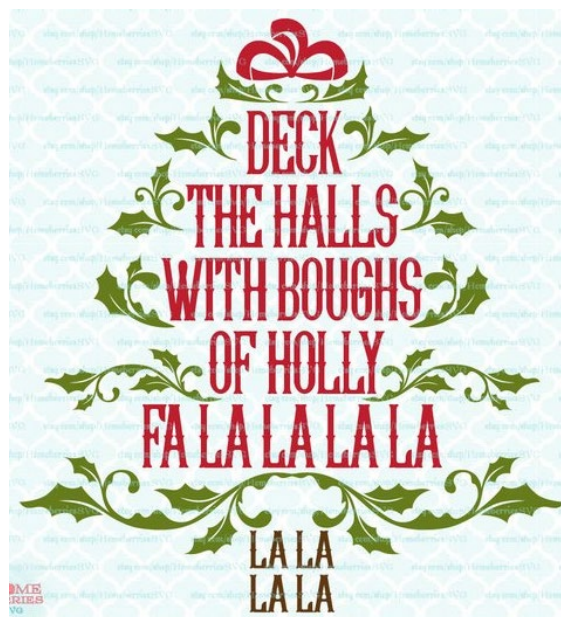
Father John approached Nathan and asked him, “Well, Nathan, where did you get the little infant?”

Nathan looked up, smiled and replied, “I took him from the church.”

“And why did you take him?”

With a sheepish grin, Nathan said, “Well, Father John, about a week before Christmas I prayed to Lord Jesus. I told him if he would bring me a red wagon for Christmas, I would give him a ride around the block in it.”

https://www.funny-jokes.com/humor/christmas/christmas_stories.htm



‘Tis the **season** to be

sTRESSED?

The Holidays can be very stressful for us. So, here is an article from the same issue of The Presbyterian Outlook as the article above which might help you navigate all the ‘stuff’ better.

Three Ways to Thrive During the Holidays

By Kenneth Phelps²

The holiday season is upon us, predictably filled with both excitement and [anxiety]. Though we hope Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's bring plenty of "jolly", many individuals are filled with mounting stress. While some stress (distress) is problematic and unwanted, such as loss or financial hardship, other stress (eustress) is characterized by anticipatory anxiety and excitement, such as having many friends over to one's home. Regardless of the source of stress, the commercialized buzz in the fall and winter months serve as a perfect petri dish for the virus of stress. The [image] of a virus is used purposefully, as stress can have debilitating effects on our immune system, mental health and many chronic medical conditions. While stress may be inevitable, our faith offers a useful remedy to the hustle and bustle.

1. Live in the Moment.

Individuals rarely live in the here and now. Our thought patterns and conversations frequently exist in the past and future. The self-dialogue of "should" – "I shouldn't have done that. I should have known better. I should be a better hostess. I shouldn't have spent so much money." – is often aimed at instilling guilt and shame about our past choices rather than facilitating personal growth. Future-oriented self-talk is problematic as well, filled with catastrophizing and hypothesizing about what might be – "What if we can't stay for the whole program? What if others judge our appearance? What if we don't complete the entire to-do list?" [Dwelling] on the past often leads to symptoms of depression, while fixating on the perceived future leads to anxiety.

One remedy to this [dilemma] is to purposefully live in the present moment. Present living can instill peaceful living. John 14:27 reads, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give

to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid."

On a daily basis, we can refocus our attention to our environment, taking an observational [point of view] informed by a grateful, peaceful gaze. What does this look like? When eating homemade cookies, take time and really taste the cookies. While sitting by the fire, notice the sensation of the heat on your skin. While navigating an illness, draw your attention to the family, friends or healthcare providers standing with you to fight the battle. Undoubtedly, we all find ourselves fueled by multitasking and media, rather than tapping into the brain's natural need for present living.

2. Take a Nonjudgmental Point of View.

Our references to the past and future are typically not just a recounting of events, but often laden with judgment (remember those "should" mentioned earlier?). Judgment commonly creeps in during the holidays. This can take the form of saying we are "a failure, useless or unlovable." Even in small ways, a statement of "I'm so stupid" after burning the holiday casserole enters our ears as quickly as it leaves our mouths, chipping away at our self-worth. Our human mind is wired to compare our circumstances with others. It becomes easy to slide into judgmental if/then statements – "If I didn't eat so much at Thanksgiving, I wouldn't be so fat."

We also slip into judgment of others, which our Heavenly Father compels us to avoid. Matthew 7:1-2 reads, "Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. For with judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get." Instead of judging the character of ourselves or others, a more useful technique is describing behavior. For instance, "I'm so stupid" might be replaced with "I burned that casserole, it happens." Likewise, "[Those people] are a waste of space" might be replaced

² Kenneth Phelps is an associate clinical professor of neuropsychiatry and behavioral science at the University of South Carolina School of Medicine, Columbia, SC.

with “I don’t understand their decisions and choices.” These simple [word] swaps can be unburdening and promote a culture of compassion, which is unquestionably needed during stressful times.

3. Create Rituals of Connection and Remembrance.

We do not navigate life in a bubble, but are surrounded by a larger community that craves connection. Our individualistic perspectives can break down our [natural] need for attachment. During the holidays, people need people more than ever before. Those who have lost family members through death or broken bonds often feel immense emotional pain and loneliness this time of year.

To overcome isolation and loss, small rituals can make a large impact. Examples might include: creating a gratitude list that can be shared at holiday dinners or posted at home; lighting a deceased family member's favorite candle scent; listening to treasured holiday music; reading Scripture or stories with children to celebrate Jesus’s birth; singing a Christmas carol each evening; having a tacky sweater gathering; getting new pajamas for Christmas Eve; decorating the tree with treasures from the past; volunteering at a local soup kitchen; adopting a family in need.

Ask yourself these questions: What are my most cherished memories from past years? How can I continue these rituals in new and creative ways? How can I nurture my relationships during this holiday season? What would those who cannot be with me this holiday season want for me? Being purposeful with our schedules can [fill] our routine with meaning and purpose.

Ultimately, people likely fall into [three] groups: 1) the “I love everything about the holidays” group who are obsessed with all things pumpkin, red/green/gold and garland, ... 2) the “I can’t wait for this to be over” group who are filled with bah-humbug, seeing more of themselves in Scrooge's

crankiness than ... enthusiasm, and [3) those somewhere in-between – we like the holidays but are happy that they don’t last all year]. I’m unsure that any of the above mentioned strategies will alter your current classification; however, my hope is the holidays will become a time to more fully connect with your faith and those most central in your life. Sadly, many have experienced tragedy during the holidays. The sights, smells, and sounds of Christmas bring forth a tsunami of emotional triggers, leading to exhaustion and uncertainty. Perhaps those of us fortunate enough to fall in group one can empathize with those in group two [or three], ensuring they feel seen, heard and loved in Christ. They will know we are Christians by our love; by our compassion; by our peace; by our connection.

Some Bible Trivia Answers

1. David and Abishai – 1 Samuel 26:7-12
2. Saul – 1 Samuel 28:8
3. Gideon and his men – Judges 7:19
4. God – 1 Samuel 4:1-14
5. Jesus, when he walked on the lake – Mark 6:48
6. Bethlehem – Luke 2:8-16

Bring Harvest Home 2018 Update

Year after year, I feel so impressed with how our congregation comes together to feed families for Thanksgiving. This year, I wanted to make everyone aware of what a collaborative effort this project has become. We fed 34 families and almost 200 people. These families received the groceries with which to make Thanksgiving dinner. Those who contributed food, money or time include:

- Quaker Meadows Presbyterian Church
- Table Rock Middle School
- Walmart Neighborhood Market
- Ingles Supermarket
- Shiloh AME Church
- McElrath Chapel AME
- Tim, the Bread Guy
- Anonymous donors

- El Bethel Baptist Church supplies weekly 'backpacks' to the children whose families we feed.

The work and planning involved in this adventure usually lasts a few months. Betty Williams is the super shopper, who alerts us of sales and keeps me on my game. The secretaries at Table Rock Middle help me notify parents and get the information sent home with the students. For those parents who may be new to the area or just need help understanding what we do, these ladies explain it to them.

We have enlisted the help from the children of our church. They helped pack the boxes that Ingles provides us. Christine Rose was able to acquire the amount of boxes we needed this year. I think the packing of the boxes would go faster if we could keep up with Lauryn Reel. She is as fast as lightning! All of the children got into teams, chose an item (peanut butter, canned corn, canned ravioli, etc.) and plopped one in each box. Also, when the parents showed up to receive their food, the children helped us load up their cars with their food. They are helping save our old backs!

The Christian Education Committee drives this project, and I appreciate everyone's energy to put it all together. The parents and grandparents and older siblings and aunts and uncles are so thankful. It is so nice to know that these children and families have the opportunity to eat a big meal and have extra groceries to get through a long five day weekend. Many of these students depend on our school to provide two meals a day. Five days can be a long time for them. God is so good!

We help spread God's peace with our words. This is a project where we can spread God's peace through our actions. When the parents and grandparents and older siblings and aunts and uncles drive up, I see many emotions written on their faces: some seem eager, some seem hesitant, some relieved, some seem nervous and some embarrassed. However, all of the wonderful

QMPC ladies and children who greet them make them feel at ease as we readily grab their food to deliver to their cars.

Again, thank you to all members of our church for supporting this project! Heather Kramer

Some Christmas/Winter Humor from:
<https://suzyred.com/christmasfunnies.html>
 and Jeff Larson







The Back Pew - Jeff Larson



and the Angel said unto them.. "Fear Not!", but many of the shepherds in their glaring humanity shouted.. "AAAAHHH.. run away!" **Luke 2:10ish**

Doings at Quaker Meadows Presbyterian Church

Elders on Call

- December 02nd – 08th – Judy Galey
- December 09th – 15th – Riddle Smith
- December 16th – 22nd – Doris Whisnant
- December 23rd – 29th – Lelia Bruder

Ministry with the Children

- December 02nd – a communion lesson, Christine Rose (downstairs)
- December 09th – Ruth Pershing (sermon), Anita Woods (downstairs)
- December 16th – Anita Woods (sermon), Betty Williams (downstairs)
- December 23rd – Heather Kramer (sermon), Christine Rose (downstairs)

December 30th – Ruth Pershing (sermon), Lelia Bruder (downstairs)

Upcoming Events

- Thursday, **December 06th, 13th and 20th** – Bible study at pastor's home @ 12:30
- Monday, **December 10th** – Circle # 1, Ruth Preston's home @ 10:00
- Sunday, **December 16th** – Session meeting following worship
- Monday, **December 24th** – Christmas Eve Communion/Candlelight service @ 6:30
- Thursday, **December 27th** – Session Dinner, Abele's @ 6:00
- Monday, **December 31st** – Circle # 2, fellowship hall @ 6:00

Birthdays

- Anna Burkett – Dec. 02nd
- Phillip Pershing – Dec. 09th
- Jerry Bradshaw – Dec. 14th
- Anita Woods – Dec. 14th
- Nicholas Johnson – Dec. 29th
- James Sanford – Dec. 31st



Tree image on page 6: <https://www.etsy.com/listing/463138825/deck-the-halls-with-boughs-of-holly>

Merry Christmas/Happy New Year image: <http://slotfanatics.com/showthread.php?17550-merry-christmas-and-happy-new-years/page2>

Cover Image: <https://www.shadesofgreen.org/accommodations/special-offers/monthly-specials/savings-january>