

Introducing Journey Groups

Growing in faith is not a solo effort. We need to share that journey with others to better discern God's call in our lives, celebrate joys, and offer encouragement. The Bible reminds us many times that this is the case. The Psalmist wrote: *"It is good and pleasant when brothers and sisters come together in unity."* Nurturing these close relationships is also what Jesus did when he gathered the twelve disciples for teaching, fellowship, and service.



Those kinds of close relationships don't come easily. They develop out of trust, honesty, and intent. Avondale has always offered ways to help foster these bonds. But because these connections are so vital to building up the Body of Christ, we want to make sure we give every member of our congregation, as well as people beyond our walls, a compelling way to forge these relationships.

"It is good and pleasant when brothers and sisters come together in unity."

So, with planning and prayer, comes the introduction of "Journey Groups" to Avondale. "Journey Groups" include long-standing groups such as Sunday School, Circles, and Bible studies, but there are many new groups that will meet throughout the fall. Some will tackle familiar, but stirring topics that involve wrestling with belief and supporting each other through prayer and study. Others will focus on fellowship and fun through weekend hikes, evening dinners, even talking theology at breweries.

Journey Groups are an opportunity to grow closer to Christ by deepening our time together with study, prayer, mission, and fellowship. Indeed, God has given us the joy and strength of a faith developed not only through community, but through close connections. I urge all of you to navigate your faith by being a part of one of these groups and inviting others to do so as well.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John B. Earl". The signature is written in a cursive style.

"Called to love God, love one another and serve community."

Your Kingdom Come ...Your Will Be Done

"God's will, nothing more, nothing less, nothing else."

Determining what is the will of God before making a commitment to Avondale's 2016 financial campaign.

This year, prior to filling out your 2016 pledge card, we ask that you set your mind on divine things.

(Matthew 16: 23)

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect." (Romans 12: 2)

The request for money to do the work of the Kingdom is grounded in grace. (2 Corinthians 9: 8)
Before we make any level of commitment, before we have much money or little money, the deepest truth of our human identity is this:

"You are my beloved son. You are my beloved daughter. With you I am well pleased." (Luke 3: 22)
God is always the One who has given first.

Between now and our November 8 Dedication Sunday, the Stewardship Ministry Team is asking you to enter into a conversation with God in the asking of three specific questions:

- What are you guiding me to do regarding my 2016 financial pledge?
- God, what is your will?
- What would the faith community be like at Avondale if *all* members were to act and respond to the question: *"God, what is your will?"*

Where to Begin:

The Stewardship Ministry Team asks that you make a commitment to Four Steps to Faithful Kingdom Building.

1. **The process of discernment requires that you remain open to God's leading within your life.** In order for something new to be born there must always be some form of death. Ask yourself: Am I able to give up my will for the sake of discerning God's will? What needs to die within me

in order for God's gifts and direction to find room in my life? Am I willing to let something die to give God room to start something new? What will I lay aside or leave behind so that I will be open to new gifts of grace?

2. **Enter into a set period of time for listening/prayer.** For some it is helpful to find a specific place and to pray/listen at a specific time. For others, listening/prayer is done throughout the day.
3. **Make a commitment, between now and November 8, to read Scripture.** Read the passages of Scripture given to you in this pamphlet. See God's Word as the divine spectacles through which we discern God's will and leading. What Biblical images, stories, hymns have been central to your spiritual life-journey? What Biblical stories come to mind when seeking God's will in regards to giving your money to build the Kingdom? The following Biblical texts are worthy of your reading and prayer.

Philippians 1: 3 – 14

Matthew 6: 19 – 21, 24

1 Corinthians 15: 52 – 16: 2

1 Thessalonians 2: 13 – 17

Matthew 13: 44 – 52

Malachi 3: 7 – 12

4. **Test what you believe God is saying.** Carry your conversation with God daily. Do not hesitate to enter into conversation with others, in and outside of Avondale, in regards to your financial giving.

Dedication Sunday

Sunday, November 8 9 and 11am

Your pledge cards will be received and dedicated to the work of the Kingdom.

Blossoming Partnership with Sedgefield Middle

Many Avondale members have begun to seek ways to deepen relationships with the Sedgefield Middle School community. Sedgefield Middle School is located a mere 3/10ths of a mile from our campus. The school serves over 750 students who represent a diverse and overwhelmingly economically-challenged population.

On Tuesday August 18, the Presbyterian Women of Avondale hosted a back-to-school luncheon for the entire school staff. Over 80 teachers and support staff enjoyed a delicious, homemade salad buffet while visiting with their colleagues. Reverend Chris Lee welcomed the guests and made a point of affirming their calling to serve as educators directly impacting the youth in our community. A generous Avondale member donated Target gift cards enabling staff to stock their classrooms. Recognizing the need to lift up our educators, Presbyterian Women have committed to sponsoring several staff appreciation events in the coming months. Contact Brenda Coble or Lyn Sweet to join in this ministry.

In addition, several members work with students at Sedgefield as Reading Buddies. These members volunteer as mentors to students who greatly benefit from a positive, encouraging adult. Avondale is ready to kick-off the fifth year of Reading Buddies with several notable enhancements to the program. Contact Robert Rogers to join in this ministry.



Giving Back to Avondale – Thank You Sedgefield

Were those teachers toiling down in the church garden? Indeed they were! As we welcome Mr. Erik Turner as the new principal at Sedgefield Middle School, we have already experienced his passion for partnering in community service. On their first day back at work after summer break, Mr. Turner made it a priority for his staff to give back to Sedgefield Community Partners like Avondale. Ten staff members came to our campus and harvested produce, cleaned beds and planted kale and collards.

“The Bridge: Why a black Presbyterian Minister feels called to serve in a white church”

This is an excerpt of an article about Reverend Christopher Lee by Lisa Rab that appears in the September edition of Charlotte magazine. To read the article in its entirety, please click [here](#):

“Lee believes that being the only black person in the room is part of his calling. He sees himself as a bridge among people, particularly those parishioners who have told him they had some pretty negative opinions about African Americans before they met him and his wife, Brandy. It has not been easy. But if everyone retreats to separate churches on Sunday morning, he wonders, how can anyone, black or white, be expected to grow?”



New Journey Groups

Read below for a listing of the new journey groups at Avondale Presbyterian Church. There are 3 ways to sign up for a journey group:

1. Sunday Mornings – Complete a Connection Card at your seat or the Journey Group table (August 23 – September 13)
2. Register online at www.avondalepresbychurch.org. Click on the Journey Group link or click [here](#).
3. Email Jane Summey Mullennix (jane@avondalepresbychurch.org) or call her: 704-333-6194, ext. 12.

STUDY AND SPIRITUAL GROWTH GROUPS

Listen – Praying in a Noisy World by *Rueben P. Job*

Leader: Connie Love. This prayer journey with the help of Reuben Job's book will guide us in learning how to listen, understand, and follow God's guidance and direction.

Day/Time: Wednesdays/6:30 – 7:30pm

How to Avoid Getting Burned at the Stake: What Do You Believe? (Day/Time TBD)

Leader: John Earl. You will get burned at the stake only if you, as a Christian, know what you believe.

Film Fans

Leader: Tom Stout. Join us to watch comedies, dramas, and action films that all contain some component of faith, be it subtle or obvious.

Day/Time : 1st and 2nd Wednesdays of the month/6:30 – 8pm

Christianity After Religion by Diana Butler Bass (Day/Time TBD)

Leaders: Hannah H. Stockwell and Jane Summey Mullennix. Can we be "spiritual and not religious?"

The Cloud of Unknowing (author anonymous)

Leader: Ted Todd. This classic book on contemplative prayer will guide our group as we explore how Christian mysticism and monastic practices are applicable to daily, ordinary life.

Day/Time: Usually Tuesday nights, 1x/month/7pm

Men's Bible Study: Foundations for Men: A Blueprint for Building a Relationship With God

Contact: Jack Hunter. Have you ever wondered what it means to be in a relationship with God or how to begin and grow that relationship?

Day/Time: Thursdays/7:15 – 8:15am

Women's Contemplative Prayer

Leader: Jane Summey Mullennix. Start your week off right gathering with other women to center your soul in the Spirit of God. Learn how to find time for silence in your busy days.

Day/Time: Mondays/11am – 12pm

Women's Life Group (Day/Time TBD)

Leaders: Renee Miller and Jessica Shanks. We are a small group of women who are interested in learning more about the Bible and how it speaks in our daily lives. We enjoy deep discussions as well as each other's friendship and encouragement.

The Go Go Girls – Reflective Faith by *Susan M. Shaw*

Leaders: Hannah Stockwell and Nell McRae. A casual easy-going group of women who ask questions of faith as we engage the world and seek to change it.

Day/Time: 3rd Monday/7:30 – 9pm

The Gifts of Imperfection by *Brene Brown* (Day/Time TBD)

Contacts: Heather Hogston and Jane Summey Mullennix. We'll read and discuss this best-selling book that will help us with the last part of Jesus' commandment, to love your neighbor *as yourself*.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Naomi Fellowship (Book of Ruth)

Leaders: John Earl and Susan Brandau. We are the communal strength of widows and widowers gathering monthly for a shared meal, fellowship and study.

Day/Time: Monthly/Lunch

SUPPORT GROUPS (continued)

Full Catastrophe Living by Jon Katat-Zinn

Leaders: B. J. Byrd and Cynthia Rogers. Learn mindfulness techniques taught by Jon Kabat-Zinn of the University of Massachusetts Medical School.

Day/Time: Sundays/2 – 3:15pm

SOCIAL GROUPS

Cooking Class

Leaders: Mary Alice Bryson and Leslie Saleeby. We'll experience the joy of cooking and eating together, while learning new ways to prepare healthy food.

Day/Time: Tuesdays/6pm

Dilworth Dinner Group

Hosts: Jodie and Thomas Lawson. Come together for dinner at delicious Dilworth restaurants. Enjoy fellowship and deepen spiritual relationships with one another.

Day/Time: Every other Tuesday/7pm

South Charlotte Dinner Group (Day/Time TBD)

Hosts: Bill and Julie Caldwell. Get together for dinner at various members' homes or meet up at a neighborhood restaurant.

Divine Dinners

Contacts: John Magee and Cheryl Judd-Magee. Join us for fellowship and good food. We'll take turns hosting a dinner at each of our homes. Hosts will provide a main course and others will bring a side dish.

Day/Time: Weekend/Time: 6pm

Hiking Group (Mostly Weekend/TBD)

Leaders: Sharon McCarthy and Zach Chambers. Get out in nature, commune with God, and enjoy fellowship with other Christians through a monthly, local hike, led by experienced hikers.

Holiday Décor Clay Class

Leader: Cheryl Judd-Magee. We will create holiday mugs, bells, and centerpiece-sized evergreen trees over the first three weeks and then glaze and fire them during the last two. Cost of \$125.00 includes instruction and supplies/firing fees.

Time/Day: Wednesdays/6:30 – 8pm

Cycling Group

Leaders: Jim McCarthy and Ben Miller. Grab your bikes and hit the road with others who know cycling is good for the body and the soul.

Day/Time: Weekends/TBD Monthly

Men's Theology on Tap (Day/Time TBD)

Leaders: Steve Hummel and Dale Mullennix. If you enjoy craft beer and would like to know more about the process and latest products, this group is for you. If you long for a place to risk asking the questions you dare not ask at church, this group is for you.

SERVICE GROUPS

What's Up in Haiti?

Leaders: Jim and Carol Bowen. This short course on Haiti (6 – 7 sessions) will explore the people, culture, language, history, religion, geography, and politics of Haiti.

Day/Time: 6 – 7:30pm/3rd & 4th Tuesdays; September, October, November, and 1st Tuesday in December.

Beyond Charity to Advocacy: Seeking Justice

Leader: Sharon McCarthy. We'll explore the societal forces that create an underclass and consider what it takes to move from charity to advocacy through video, books, and speakers. Group members will help determine the direction based on their own questions and concerns.

Day/Time: TBD/7pm



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Avondale Avenues is published monthly on the fourth Tuesday. Editor: Ann Patterson.
Deadline for next newsletter is September 14 - publication date September 22.
 Phone: 704-333-6194 Fax: 704-333-5901 E-mail: ginny@avondalepresbychurch.org

Joys and Concerns

Ministry of Caring to Members of Our Church:

Alice Balfe, Anne Hamilton, Dot Burke, Edna Hilton, Eldon Stout, Frances Robertson, Jim Neely, Joanne Sahlie, the Gunter family, Ida Parnell, Libby Phillips, Mike Cathey, Molly Carver, Peggy Simpson, Rachel Darling, Susan Harrington, and the Vestal Family

Ministry of Caring to Friends of Our Church Family:

Art Dunlap (brother-in-law of D. J. Saleeby)
 Barbara Aylor (friend of Heather Hogston)
 Chuck Johnson (father of Marian Stout)
 David Boyd (brother of Louise Lawson)
 Fred Otten (father of Debi Medlin)
 Gayle Hackney (sister of Suzanne Baillie)
 Hunter Stubbs (friend of Branden family)
 Jeanne Deese (sister of Barbara Hill)
 Larry Hensinger
 (brother-in-law of Nadja Sefcik-Earl)
 Mary Cerena (sister-in-law of Barbara Witzel)
 Michael Morales (nephew of Debi Medlin)
 Sean Nolan (son of Marilyn Nolan)
 Mike Page (friend of Becky Chavaree)

Entering into the Church Triumphant
E. Diane Gunter
May 9, 1935 - August 1, 2015

Our sympathy is extended to Lamar, Tova, Kendall and to their family and friends.

Our sympathy is extended to Barbara Hill, whose father, Isom Lee "Buck" Melton, passed away on Tuesday, August 4, 2015 in Monroe, N.C.

Memorials

Ted Goldthorpe:	Olivia & Rogers Magee
Emily Bearden:	Debra & Bruce Darden
Betty Parker:	D. J. & Leslie Saleeby Presby Women of Avondale
Diane Gunter:	Linda Haigh Martha Waters Mickey Melton Paula Huffines Joe & Dorcas Epley Betty Marshall