

Skipwith Pilot



Seven Churches in Revelation

Revelation chapters 2 and 3 mention seven churches addressed by the Apostle John.

These churches are generally believed to have been established between AD 52 and 60. The church in Ephesus was founded during Paul's second missionary journey and later received his teaching and guidance for about two years during his third missionary journey. The other churches were most likely founded by Paul's co-workers and through the missionary influence that flowed out from Ephesus.

Through these seven churches, Jesus clearly shows which churches receive praise and which receive rebuke. Historically, the average lifespan of a church is often said to be about 70 years. When Revelation was written nearly 2,000 years ago, these churches were faithfully carrying out their respective missions and were approximately 30–40 years old. It implies that these churches stood at a critical crossroads: would they renew themselves in response to Jesus' praise and correction, or would they decline and disappear under Roman persecution?

The seven churches were not small congregations. For example, in Ephesus, Paul taught the word of God daily in the hall of Tyrannus for two years during his third missionary journey (Acts 19:9–10; AD 53–57). As a result, *"all who lived in Asia, both Jews and Greeks, heard the word of the Lord."* Ephesus became a major hub for missionary work in Asia, and through it, the other churches mentioned in Revelation—Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea—were naturally established.

However, Jesus did not praise these churches simply because of their size or influence. Jesus rebuked the church in Ephesus for having abandoned its first love. Contemporary missiologists often describe the churches that Jesus commended as *healthy churches*, not necessarily large ones. Even today, the church around the world continues to carry out its missions under persecution. They are small, but they are strong.

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However, history shows that the church does not disappear because of persecution. On the contrary, the church has often become spiritually compromised during times of peace and stability. Under persecution, the church is purified, experiences the power of the Holy Spirit, and is given opportunities for genuine spiritual renewal.

At the heart of spiritual renewal lies the renewal of worship. Worship is a spiritual encounter in which we enter God's presence. Through worship, our spirits are renewed, and our souls are empowered by the Holy Spirit. Then we are sent into the world to live out a transforming ministry of service. In this light, it is helpful to reflect on the three altars Abraham built during his early life in Canaan.

The first altar, built at Shechem (Genesis 12:6–7), shows that divine strength flows from God's word and revelation. The second altar, built between Bethel and Ai (Genesis 12:8–9), represents the moment of choice—whether we will live according to God's will or our own will shaped by the world. At such crossroads, we must continually seek and depend on the Lord. The third altar, built at Hebron (Genesis 13:14–18), signifies that through fellowship with God, we experience restoration by God's grace through the work of the Holy Spirit.

These are the blessings we experience through faithful worship in our daily lives. Like the churches in Revelation, we too stand at a crossroads and must make intentional spiritual choices. God speaks through the prophet Jeremiah: *"You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart"* (Jeremiah 29:13).

I hope and pray that God will bless everyone in the Skipwith family and community as we faithfully build an altar of worship to the Lord every day.

Grace and Peace
Rev. Dr. Bright Lee



Warm Your Heart Fellowship Luncheon

Please join us immediately following the worship service on Sunday, February 15, for a hot lunch and a time of warm fellowship. A variety of soups, chili and stews will be served along with ham biscuits, crackers and beverages. Please bring a dessert or side dish to share. Donations will be accepted to support the work of one of our church ministries.

A Message from the Leadership Council

Skipwith Family,

As those of you who have been present at worship service on a regular basis have noticed, we have an abundance of empty pew seats on Sunday mornings. At our peak, we were averaging over 120 attendees each week. Attendance has recently been in the 25 to 30 range with about half of that being the choir. Such decline is indicative of a comparable decrease in giving.

To meet our current budget requirements, we need to average just over \$4,000 in contributions each week. In the first six months of this fiscal year, we averaged about \$2,900 per Sunday. As of December 31, our cash position was less than \$1,000 above what we need to cover funds reserved for Special Accounts such as the Memorial Fund, Missions, Backpack Ministry, and the Columbarium Fund.

The challenges we face involve capacity and sustainability, i.e., we have fewer givers that can continue covering the cost of operating a church, which includes employee salaries, contract workers, and operational expenses. This spring we plan to initiate a spirited Stewardship campaign with the hope of improving our financial situation. Our goal is ambitious and may not result in all that is needed to continue the level of operation that we have been accustomed to for so many years. However, as members of Skipwith United Methodist Church, we want to make our situation known to all.

The Leadership Council knows that Skipwith is near and dear to our members. We have been recognized in the community and at the state conference for the vast amount of mission work that is completed by our small church. Let's turn our love for Skipwith into positive financial actions this year so that our work can continue.

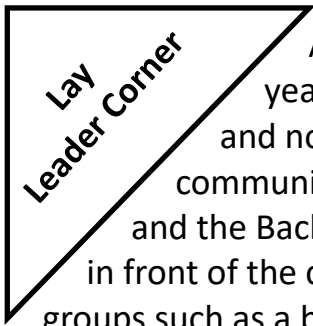
Thank you for your prayers and faith that God will be with us as we go forth.

United Women in Faith Support the Lamb's Basket



One of the missions of the United Women in Faith is to relieve hunger in our community. In November, 2025, we gave \$200 for the purchase of Thanksgiving turkeys. We collect donations monthly to support this program. Additionally, members volunteer one Thursday each month at their facility. We want to be a part of the solution!

Martha Worsham, Leader



As you read this newsletter, we are already one month into the 2026 new year! The Chrismon Tree and all the Christmas decorations are put away and now we can focus on finding our way as a church in the new year. Our community mission outreach continues with the Lamb's Basket, Skipwith School and the Backpack Ministry, Meadowbrook House, and the Little Free Food Pantry out in front of the church. We also serve our community by opening our building to various groups such as a bridge club, a dance group, and numerous support groups. Our small groups such as the choir, the Betty Crane Circle, the men's group, Sunday school classes, and soon to start young woman's group provide opportunities to nurture and support one another. Sunday worship and Wednesday Bible study opportunities feed and nourish our souls. Our pastor, Bright Lee has been working very hard to provide us with ways to evangelize with our family, friends, and neighbors and teaching us the importance of prayer. We as United Methodist are called to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

For over 60 years the generosity in giving to the church by its members has allowed us to serve the community, operate the building and pay the church staff. However, for the last 5 to 10 years our membership has dropped as we have lost beloved members that have left this earth for their heavenly home. We have struggled to attract new members thus leaving us struggling to meet the operating expenses of our church. Included in this newsletter is an important letter from the Leadership Council. Please take the time to read it, ponder it, and pray. May God hear our prayers and show us the way forward.

With love and respect,
Sandy Parker



New Year, New Ministry! 2026 brings a new opportunity for you to let Skipwith's love be shown! If you knit, crochet, or sew, please consider joining with others in a new prayer shawl ministry. What could be better than being wrapped in a gift of love and prayers? Our goal is to have a collection of prayer shawls available for people to take to those who have a health crisis, new baby, death in the family, or another situation where having a tangible sign of prayer and caring would be helpful. This is a way to share God's love with church members and members of our community. Please contact Bev Myers if you are interested in participating in this ministry. Call Bev at 804-301-1489 or email: myersbee@gmail.com.

UPDATE ON OUR MINISTRY AT THE LAURELS



As many of you know, I was informed in December that they no longer need a Bible Study at The Laurels since they need to have more Arts and Crafts. Every week we had a good response to the Bible Studies, with attendance from 12 to 20 every week. We still need current magazines or devotionals for the residents. Please place them in the box provided at the entrance to the church. Thank you! Also, I still will be happy to visit anyone who needs a visit. Please let me know. Your prayers are also greatly appreciated!

Vicki Keith (804-217-8133)

Angel Giving Tree Family



Thank you for your generosity in providing the gifts for the Skipwith Elementary School family we sponsored at Christmas. Brittany Finch, the guidance counselor, said Tydrick and Tyion's grandfather cried when he came to pick up the gifts. He was so overwhelmed and overjoyed by all of the help and assistance. The boys and their grandad have found permanent housing in Eastern Henrico County and the boys received a school variance so they can complete the school year at Skipwith. God is good!

Safe Harbors Visits Skipwith

The United Women in Faith learned a great deal from our January guest speaker from Safe Harbors. The outreach director, Ms. Tyler Wallace, shared the purpose and functions of the mission which fights domestic abuse and human trafficking. In Henrico County, they have served 17,000 clients since opening in 2000. While they do receive some government funding, they rely on donations and volunteers to exist. They support survivors through emergency housing, counseling, independent living skill instruction, financial management skills, job interview practice, assistance with the judicial system, clothing, and any other need that is preventing the victim from independence. Henrico County has prosecuted 152 individuals for charges related to human trafficking. Since sexual trafficking is a \$150 billion industry, it continues to increase. Our eyes and hearts were opened by the incredible work of this organization. Our circle donated \$150. to Safe Harbors and many supplies that they can use in their four emergency houses.

Martha Worsham, Leader



Bible Study & Prayer at Skipwith UMC

For **five weeks**, we will study **the Seven Churches in the Book of Revelation (chapters 2–3)**. Together, we will reflect on the messages Jesus gave to each church:

- The **Loveless Church**
- The **Persecuted Church**
- The **Compromising Church**
- The **Corrupt Church**
- The **Dead Church**
- The **Faithful Church**
- The **Lukewarm Church**

Through this study, we will learn **what Jesus rebukes and what He commends** in each church—and prayerfully discern **what kind of church God is calling Skipwith UMC to be** as we seek **spiritual renewal and revival**.

Each session will also include a meaningful time of **prayer for one another and for our church**, guided by the **fellowship of the Holy Spirit**.

Everyone is welcome.

Come grow with us in Scripture, prayer, and community.



Finance Report

Reported figures as of December 31, 2025

Funds collected to date for FY 2025-2026:
\$78,230

Funds expended to date for FY 2025-2026:
\$108,896

Funds still required to meet current obligations: \$30,666
(negative is favorable)

February 3—Rusty Curle
February 3—Ann Moore
February 5—Matthew Barber
February 10—Grace Lee
February 12—Kristi Harmon
February 15—Beth Tolley
February 17—Ron DePue
February 18—Bruce Chambers
February 19—Carrie Christ
February 21—Earl Cheatham
February 22—Rita Mathews
February 23—Bernard Dandridge
February 26—Lois Parker
February 27—Tom Muldoon

February 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 10 AM Sunday School 11 AM Worship 3:30 PM AA	2	3 12 Noon AA 5:30 PM Self Defense Art Class 6 PM AA	4	5 10 AM Dance	6 10 AM Self Defense Class 12 Noon AA 6 PM NA	7 10 AM OA
8 10 AM Sunday School 11 AM Worship 3:30 PM AA	9	10 12 Noon AA 5:30 PM Self Defense Art Class 6 PM AA	11	12 10 AM Dance	13 10 AM Self Defense Class 12 Noon AA 6 PM NA	14 10 AM OA
15 10 AM Sunday School 11 AM Worship 3:30 PM AA	16	17 12 Noon AA 5:30 PM Self Defense Art Class 6 PM AA	18 Ash Wednesday	19 10 AM Dance	20 10 AM Self Defense Class 12 Noon AA 6 PM NA	21 10 AM OA
22 10 AM Sunday School 11 AM Worship 3:30 PM AA	23	24 12 Noon AA 5:30 PM Self Defense Art Class 6 PM AA	25	26 10 AM Dance	27 10 AM Self Defense Class 12 Noon AA 6 PM NA	28 10 AM OA

Betty Crane Circle of the United Women of Faith

Due to a scheduling error, the February 10 meeting of the United Women in Faith has been cancelled. The speaker from Sylvia's Sisters will present at our March 10 meeting.

Martha Worsham, UWF leader

**SKIPWITH UNITED METHODIST
CHURCH FEBRUARY**

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Love God

Follow Jesus

Serve Others

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Ash Wednesday invites us into the forty-day journey of Lent, calling us to repentance, prayer, and hope for renewal.