

## Embracing Community During Advent and Christmas

Bishop Connie Mitchell Shelton



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North Carolina United Methodists, as we approach Advent and Christmas when we celebrate the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ to live among us as God incarnate, how might we bear witness to God's presence in our local communities?

Each year, we have a District Christmas Offering that allows us to support ministries throughout our connection. This year, let's go local.

That's right! This Christmas, we're inviting you and your local church to think about how you can show extra love to your neighbors in your community!

Imagine if all 435 churches in our conference focused on a particular need in each community in your context, what kind of impact might we have across North Carolina! Meals for families, gifts for children from immigrant families, gloves for people who call the streets home, money for disaster response — now, if you're thinking, "I don't know any of those persons," perhaps the Spirit is inviting you and your church to show up in new places to build real relationships with new people.

As we gather this season, how can we embody the love of God to those who need it most?

We want to hear how you are reaching out. Share your amazing stories on social media. Use the hashtags #nccgives and #IGiveUMC to spread the love.

In John 1:14 from Eugene Peterson's translation, it says, "The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, generous inside and out, true from start to finish."

May we join Jesus and move into the neighborhoods with generosity inside out, and tell your story by contacting the District Office at the information on the screen.

Let's make sure the people in our neighborhoods know God's love and presence through Jesus — Emmanuel, God with us.