

First Presbyterian News

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Out of the Darkness There Comes A Light!

Lighting the Advent Wreath in the Tradition of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love

MERRY CHRISTMAS!! "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." – John 3:16 (NIV).

Last Sunday, began the liturgical calendar year for 2023 and also the start of Advent. "Advent" from the Latin "adventus" means "coming." As Christians Advent is a special time dedicated to celebrate the coming, or birth of Christ, our Lord and Savior. Looked at another way, Advent is a time for penitence, prayer and worship that symbolizes Christ, the Light, coming into the darkness and bringing hope, peace, joy and love. One way our church symbolizes this coming of Christ Jesus is through the lighting of the Advent wreath.

The Advent wreath has five candles; three purple, one rose/pink and in the center, a large white candle. Three of the candles are purple because violet is a liturgical color which signifies a time of prayer, penance and sacrifice; the rose/pink candle symbolizes "Joy" and the large, white candle is the "Christ" candle. Last Sunday during worship we lit the first purple candle which symbolizes "Hope" and the feeling of expectation of the coming of Christ. The second week of Advent will bring the lighting of the second purple candle known as the "Peace" candle contemplating the peace brought by a Christ centered life as demonstrated by Joseph and Mary. Despite how their families and community may have looked at them, their faith and belief in God and the coming Christ brought them peace. The third week of advent, the rose/pink candle is lit symbolizing "Joy" to express the joy of the coming of Christ and the salvation he brings to the world. With hope and peace, we are joyful but we are not complete Christians without God's love. The fourth week of advent we light the final purple candle known as the "Love" candle. When we know God's love, we are called to share that love with others AND love one another as God loves us. Finally, on Christmas Day, we will light the Christ candle, celebrating the birth of Christ. The Christ candle sits at the center of all the other candles to remind us that Jesus Christ is at the center of all we do and all we are.



As co-chair of the Worship committee, I have learned so much more than I ever imagined in preparing for worship during Advent. The colors, the symbology, and all that goes with it. I hope this shortened explanation kindles, or re-kindles, a greater appreciation of Advent and a greater understanding of what it means to celebrate the birth and coming of Christ. I believe, though, that we should keep the Advent candles in our hearts and mind through out the year. My wish for all is that each and every one of us remember there is always Hope; Christ will never forsake his children. When we find life overwhelming and hard, Christ will bring us Peace when we trust and follow him faithfully. No matter how dark our lives or world may seem, as the Psalmist reminds us, Joy always comes in the morning. Finally, God sent us Christ out of Love and with Love for ourselves and one another, we can truly lead a Christ centered life.

Mike Freshour

Co-Chair, Worship Committee





Women's Bible Study - We are meeting each Wednesday at 10:30 in the Philathea Room. Our study continues with C.S. Lewis writings where we learn that Satan can and will, if allowed, use any situation to his advantage. It may be a just and noble cause or situation, but if allowed, Satan will turn, twist, distort and distract a person, or persons so the situation could be used by him. We will continue to meet through Dec. 14. Taking a break for Christmas (Dec 21 & Dec. 28). We will restart our study on January 4.

Come learn with us as we learn to recognize Satan's tactics so we are better able to remain strong.

Greeting Card Ministry - We are having such a great time creating new and beautiful cards to send out to our fellow church family members. If you have not had a chance to come out, please do. Our next meeting will be January 10, 2023. We will not meet on the first Tuesday, due to its proximity to the holidays. Come join us! No talent is required.



PRAYER list

Prayer List - Pattie Grubbs received a new pacemaker; Mark Foster had surgery to restore his voice. Mike Rand having heart catheterization; Chris Jones - upcoming surgery. Frances Anne Thackston - moving to Liberty Health and Rehab. Ginny Troy—COVID; Special request for Marge Nelson for All Saints Day; Rick and Frances Harrell had a wonderful blessing: a new granddaughter, Cameron Elizabeth; Ronnie and Ann Crabtree also blessed, with 4th great grandchild—Elizabeth Jane Puryear - Congratulations! To both families. Laurie Morris had eye surgery, it went well, will take some time to fully heal. Robert Bates received good news: kidney transplant forthcoming. Heather, Jim Luedtke's daughter in need of prayers; James Moore (friend of Chris Jones) health concerns; Billy Franklin - Heart surgery; Ricky Pool's family after his passing. Michelle Francis - lost mother and daughter to cancer and her granddaughter has been diagnosed with same deadly cancer. Gratitude given for Michaella Fraser Freshour finding out her injury is less severe. Continued prayers for: Connie Troy, Pat Hay's unborn great grandchild, Luanna Daniel, Tricia Burton's daughter.



Christmas Joy Offering - December is the time of year when we receive The Christmas Joy Offering. The Christmas Joy Offering has been a Presbyterian tradition since the 1930's. Through this special Offering, we reflect God's perfect gift to us, with generous support of church leaders among us – past, present, and future – who have pointed us to God.

The Offering distributes gifts equally to the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions and to Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color.

The Assistance Program honors and celebrates leaders like retired pastors, church workers and their families who have faithfully guided and led us but who now find themselves in critical financial need.

The Offering also honors and celebrates emerging leaders like students in schools and colleges who develop leadership skills as they pursue their education and prepare to bring their gifts in service to the world God loves so much.

Jesus' example as a child born to be among us and lead us to eternal life provides a pattern for us to follow as we celebrate those who have led us in the past and will lead us into the future. Through the Christmas Joy Offering, we come together to support past, present and future leaders, embodying God's perfect gift to us, Jesus Christ.

Special Offering envelopes and bulletin inserts with more information will be available on two Sundays, December 11 and 18. If you wish to contribute to this offering but are not in church either of those days, just get your donation to the church office; be sure it is marked "Christmas Joy Offering."





Just a Few Shoeboxes - As one of your elders for World and Local Missions I am thrilled to report on the success of our Operation Christmas Child shoebox drive this holiday season. I challenged you to a higher than usual goal of 50 boxes in light of the overwhelming humanitarian needs in today's world. You met and exceeded that goal with a whopping total of 85 boxes filled! God's presence is certainly growing here!

And just look at the ripple effect our 85 little shoeboxes will create.

Every shoebox gifts departs on an amazing journey. Long before shoeboxes arrive in more than 100 countries, volunteer National Leadership Teams train pastors and community leaders who want to share the message of the Gospel and bless children. They learn how to host child-friendly outreach events, and how to implement the follow-up discipleship program.

Pastors around the world host outreach events in places where people may not know Christ and invite them to follow Him. Other churches use the boxes as resources for outreach in orphanages and other at-risk areas.

Pastor Waisea Liwaiono hosted an Operation Christmas Child outreach in Vunika, a rural community in Fiji that had no church. He then invited the children to attend the follow-up discipleship program. As the students gathered for Bible lessons, their parents grew curious and began attending, too. The local witch doctor became a believer and offered his property as a place for the new church to meet. Today 80 people attend regularly, and five additional churches have been started in surrounding villages!

Elizabeth Groff received a shoebox gift years ago as a lonely child in an orphanage in Ukraine. She received her shoebox gift during a time she described as 'rock bottom.' "I was alone. I felt lost. That is where Jesus met me. He didn't leave me there," she said. "He showed me that He loved and cared for me through a simple gift – through a shoebox." Elizabeth's favorite item in her box was a shiny yellow yo-yo. "It represented love. Someone cared enough to send me this box," she said. Elizabeth went on to start a shoebox club at her school; then, as a student at Virginia Tech, she headed a 300-member shoebox club on campus. Now she's packing shoeboxes with family and friends and continues to share her incredible story of God's faithfulness.

There is no end to these stories. Check out www.samaritanspurse.org for more examples of the work your little shoeboxes are doing for God's kingdom. Thank you to all those who participated, and a special thanks to our secretary, Sherolyn, for her help with this endeavor.

--Kim Albert



December 4 - Second Sunday of Advent

Sermon Title: "Christmas Transformation"

Scriptures: Isaiah 11:1-10; Matthew 3:1-12

December 11 - Third Sunday of Advent

Sermon Title: "Expectation and Reality"

Scriptures: Isaiah 35:1-10; Matthew 11:2-11

December 18 - Cantata - Our Chancel choir will present their annual cantata - "One Silent Night".

December 24 - Christmas Eve

Sermon Title: "Unto Us a Child is Born"

Scriptures: Isaiah 9:2-7; Luke 2:1-20

December 25 - Christmas Day

Sermon Title: "Fullness of Grace and Truth"

Scriptures: Jeremiah 31:3-14; John 1:1-14

January 1 - First Sunday after Christmas

Sermon Title: "A Savior and a Brother?"

Scriptures: Psalm 148; Hebrews 1:1-4, 2:10-18



Magic of the Season

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As we approach Christmas, I am thinking of Christ and His many teachings. In particular, this month draws me to His commandment to "... become as little children..."(Matthew 18:3) I can get excited about that commandment as I can have some child-like qualities: my husband always teases me that the words he hears most from me are "I want ...", I also prefer to choose to do fun things rather than chores, even though what is "fun" for me may be a "chore" for others, like digging to create a garden, biking or hiking many miles, but these are things I'd choose over dusting or washing windows any day. I am certain these are not the child-like qualities Christ is wanting from us.

I remember as a child, how magical much of the world seemed. How excited I was to grow up and know everything. How eager I was to learn, and anxious to please. The magic of childhood is that they do not have the worries of adults. Childhood, at least when I grew up, was basically carefree. Children naturally tell the truth and say it like it is. They believe even unbelievable ideas. As a child, we looked with wonder of how Santa knows all and can get to all people. We read in scripture we should "become as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him even as a child doth submit to his father."

As adults we argue, we want to justify and understand how everything works, sometimes we question why we should be punished even when we've made a bad choice. If we get stopped by the police for speeding, we may blame the area, the police, or anyone else, but ourselves.

If we can return and allow the childhood magic to work in us, we can accept all that the Lord has for us, His children. He sees, knows and loves all of us. We can accept even the hard times.

The Christmas season has its own special "magic". People tend to be more loving, caring, thoughtful and tolerant than they are at other times of the year. As we return to the magic of Christmas, I pray that we can return to the unfailing faith of a child, and trust what our Father in Heaven has told us through the Holy Scriptures, even if our adult brains try to tell us that it is unbelievable or impossible. Through Christ all things are possible, and He has us in His loving hands. If we will return to "being as a child" we will find the magic. I pray we can have this magic in our lives each and every day of the year. ~ *Sherolyn*

PNC Update - As we begin this season, I feel like it is fitting to reflect on what Advent truly means. With the arrival of Black Friday, Cyber Monday and all the hype the world heaps on us, they would have us think that Christmas has arrived. We rush around from store to store and surf the net searching for the perfect "things" to put under the tree. We spend hours decorating our homes inside and out to achieve the picture-perfect "look" for the yuletide appearance.



Well, spoiler alert! Christmas is not here. It does not begin until December 25th and continues for 12 days after that. Advent starts four Sundays before Christmas and each week we light another candle as we prepare and await the arrival of the Christ child. All through the Old Testament times the prophets had predicted the coming of the Messiah, the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world. This is the time of year when we focus on the coming of the Lord, the long-awaited Redeemer.

During this Advent season, this time of arriving, may we make room in our hearts for Emanuel, God with us. Try not to let the distractions of the world turn your eyes away from the true reason for the season. The Almighty God who loves us so much, even when we continually fall short, made a way for us to be made acceptable to be with Him forever. "Come thou long expected Jesus".

Your PNC continues to work with our search firm to identify and vet potential candidates for our pastor.



Your prayers are appreciated as we continue the task that you have entrusted to us.

Grace and peace,

Don Cherry, PNC Chairman



DECEMBER

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
27 - Advent begins 10:00 - Sunday School 11:00 am—Worship	28	29	30 10:30 Women's Bible Study 12:00 Noon AA 6:00 pm NA 6:00 pm—Choir	December 1 7:00 pm - Al-Anon 8:00 pm - AA	December 2 12:00 PM AA	December 3	
4 - Advent 10:00 - Sunday School 11:00 am—Worship	5	6	7 10:30 am Women's Bible study 12:00 Noon AA 6:00 pm NA 6:00 pm—Choir	8 7:00 pm—Al-Anon 8:00 pm - AA	9 12:00 PM AA	10 10-12 noon NA - Business Mtg	
11 - Advent 10:00 - Sunday School 11:00 am Worship	12	13	14 10:30 am Women's Bible study 12:00 Noon AA 6:00 pm NA 6:00 pm—Choir	15 7:00 pm—Al-Anon 8:00 pm - AA	16 12:00 PM AA	17	
18- 5 Cents a Meal collection 10:00 - Sunday School 11:00 am - Worship 12:30 pm - Session & Deacons	19	20 	21 12:00 Noon AA 6:00 pm NA 6:00 pm—Choir	22- 7:00 pm—Al-Anon 8:00 pm - AA	23- Office Closed	24 Christmas Eve Service at 5:00 pm	
25 10:00 - Sunday School 11:00 am—Worship				28 12:00 Noon AA 6:00 pm NA 6:00 pm—Choir	29 7:00 pm - Al-Anon 8:00 pm - AA	30 12:00 PM AA	31
Office Closed for Holidays							



December BIRTHDAYS

- 1 Alice Irby*
- 1 Johnny Watkins
- 4 Joann Newland
- 6 Emma Blalock
- 6 Jamie Albert
- 6 Gary Bain
- 10 Connie Troy
- 11 Sherolyn Barnett
- 15 Frosty Owens
- 17 Taylor Raney
- 18 Erin Thackston
- 19 Donna Carter
- 19 Martha Thompson*

- 20 Colter Wickemeyer
- 20 David McCollum
- 20 Nancy Pool
- 20 Eloise Wilder
- 20 Glola Osborne*
- 24 Patrick Cherry
- 24 Michael Owens
- 25 Carroll Seat
- 26 Wayne Adams
- 28 Betty Plaster
- 31 Frank McKinney*



* In Memory



Celebrating You
on Your
Special Day

If we don't have your birthday listed, please call the office and let us know.

From the Elders

Session Notes: **Since our last Newsletter, our Session discussed:**

The Session met on Sunday, November 20, 2022

1. Rev. Coleman opened the meeting with prayer.
2. News of the congregation was shared.
3. The Community Thanksgiving service will be Tuesday, November 22nd at 7:00 pm.
4. Don Cherry reported on the Presbytery Meeting – November 17, 2022, at 2nd Presbyterian Church, Roanoke. Rev. Coleman was honorably retired.
5. The Stewardship Campaign kicked off on Sunday, November 13th concluding on November 30th.
6. Worship – Next communion dates are Sunday, December 4th and Sunday, December 25th.
7. Local Missions – We participated in Operation Christmas Child again this year. The goal was to send 50 shoeboxes. The goal was exceeded with 85 boxes being sent to Samaritan's Purse.
8. Property –
 - A. Don Cherry presented an update from Mike Rand on the progress of the insurance claim for the fire in the Manse.
 - B. The installation of the new heat pump air conditioning and heating system has been completed.
 - C. The chandelier light bulbs have been changed to "warm light" type from the current "daylight" type.
9. Budget & Finance – Financial reports through October were reviewed.
10. Rev. Coleman closed the meeting with prayer.



Women's Bible study - Wednesdays (December 7 & 14) at 10:30

Choir - Each Wednesday at 6 pm.

5 Cents-a-Meal collection - Sunday, December 18

Deacons and Session - Joint meeting/Social on Sunday, December 18 at 12:30 pm.

Greeting Card Ministry - January 10 at 10:30

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