

# First Presbyterian News

1

John McCarthy - Lay Pastor  
Sherolyn Barnett, Office Manager  
secretary@1stpres.cc  
Chris Jones, Choir Director  
Ernest "Avon" Traynham—Sexton  
Sue Wilkins - Treasurer



Face book:  
[www.facebook.com/firstpressobo](http://www.facebook.com/firstpressobo)  
Website: 1stpres.cc

Office Hours  
M-Th 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 pm  
Closed on Friday  
434-572-3581



Christmas  
Message  
from the  
Pastor

## ***Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love***

What is Advent? We all know generally what Advent is, a time a preparation leading up to Christmas. Advent, the word itself, comes from a Latin root meaning, "A coming to". So, within the context of Christmas, Advent is the coming of Jesus Christ, and we spend this season taking a closer look at the story of Jesus' birth and what that meant to the people of Israel, as well as the rest of the world. The four Sundays of Advent are titled with what Jesus brought to the dark and broken world, Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love.

**Hope:** Jesus came as a light in the darkness, shining like a beacon, with the hope of salvation!

**Peace:** The Gospel message brings the Lord's peace through the Holy Spirit, and with the knowledge that there is hope, the chaos of this world can be withstood through the Lord's strength.

**Joy:** There is great joy to be had in our reconciliation to God the Father, through God the Son, and by the power of God the Holy Spirit. When is the last time you jumped for joy because you have been saved from your sins and have the Holy Spirit dwelling within you? When is the last time you shouted Hallelujah! You are covered by the blood of the Lamb and have been made new through the Holy Spirit. This is a time for celebration because Jesus came into the world! Go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born! Let us not lose that original fire and joy in our hearts we felt when we first believed and received power through the Holy Spirit.

**Love:** God is love, and God showed His everlasting love through the sacrifice of His only begotten son Jesus. While yet we were enemies of God, Jesus died for us and reconciled us to the Father (Romans 5:10). God has spent millennia working out salvation history for our benefit, *so that sin and death could never again take hold in our hearts and snatch us away from our loving Father in heaven.* From the moment sin entered the world in Genesis 3, God told us, <sup>15</sup> "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." This was God's first promise of salvation. From that point on we have been under the covenant of grace with the cross as the climax of the story, but ultimately culminating in Christ's second coming, and the new heavens and new earth, but most importantly, God dwelling with His beloved children forever. It is a covenant of grace because grace is an undeserved gift. Through God's perfect justice and righteousness everyone stands condemned, but God loved us too much to leave the story there. <sup>16</sup> "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. <sup>17</sup> For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." (John 3:16-17, NIV) <sup>13</sup> "And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love." (1 Cor. 13:13) The Love of God is incomprehensible, but we can feel it through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and this is why we celebrate the Advent (the coming) of Jesus Christ. This love in our hearts is the amazing, good news that needs to be shared.

However, as we go through our lives with all the hustle and bustle of our daily responsibilities, the joy we felt as children at Christmas can start to fade. The excitement of lights and traditions can start to feel like burdensome responsibilities. "Whose house do we visit?" "Where did all these decorations come from, and when will I have the time ...

(Continued on page 2)



to put them up?" "What event do I need to get the kids to, and what am I responsible for?" There is a song by Faith Hill from the movie *How The Grinch Stole Christmas* that speaks to these feelings very well, and without even realizing it, the song shows us our need for God. Because we lose that feeling of the Christmas spirit as we get older, because we lose sight of the true reason we celebrate, and

that is God's love. The song starts out, "Where are you Christmas, why can't I find you? Why have you gone away, where is the laughter you used to bring me? Why can't I hear music play? My world is changing, I'm rearranging. Does that mean Christmas changes too?" Have you ever felt that way?

The climax of the song says, "If there is love in your heart and your mind, you will feel like Christmas all the time... I know I've found you, you never fade away." God never fades, and it is Jesus in our hearts that produces the love of God, which is everlasting. The Advent season helps us to refocus and see clearly the Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love that came with Jesus, and continues with us until He comes again. I pray you have a very Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year! ~ John

**Christmas Joy Offering** - The Christmas Joy Offering will be received on Sunday, December 17. The Joy Offering is one of four special offerings collected each year by the PCUSA. It provides assistance to current and retired church workers and their families in their time of need, and develops our future leaders at Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color.



50% of your gifts assist current and retired church workers and their families with critical financial needs. 50% of your gifts make it possible for students to learn and grow in faith at Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color.

When we give to the Christmas Joy Offering, we share our love with the leaders of our Church — past, present and future.



**Prayer List** - Wayne Adams and family after the passing of Janet. Aubrey Houghton and family after the passing of Jean. Jimmy Moore's family after his passing; Barbara Johnston; Caroline Laughorn - bone marrow transplant. Mark Foster had a biopsy with good news, and another surgery. Glenn Coleman had back surgery; Maddie Fraser Freshour had ACL surgery. Brittany Hazelwood's surgery delayed. Danny Hazelwood d recovering after surgery. Terence McDonald - many health issues. Cynthia Coleman-having shoulder issues.

**Prayers continue:** Patricia Burton, Chappell family, Ed Fraser, Kim Albert

**Virtual Poinsettias** - Offered again this year. You will have the opportunity to give a gift in honor or in memory of a loved one. The cost will remain the same as years past—\$25. The money collected will be used to decorate the sanctuary, provide beauty to the shut-ins and support the Pastor's Discretionary fund - in helping community needs.



In Honor of \_\_\_\_\_  
In Memory of \_\_\_\_\_  
Given by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Amount enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to **First Presbyterian Church**.  
**Order deadline** to have names in the bulletin is: **Wednesday, December 20.**



**December 3 - 1st Sunday of Advent**

**Sermon Title: "Hope"**

**Scriptures: Cantata Readings**

**December 10 - 2nd Sunday of Advent**

**Sermon Title: "Peace"**

**Scriptures: Isaiah 49:6-7; Luke 2:8-20**

**December 17 - 3rd Sunday of Advent**

**Sermon Title: "Joy"**

**Scriptures: Isaiah 52:7-9; Hebrews 12:18-29**

**December 24 - 4th Sunday of Advent**

**Sermon Title: "Love"**

**Scriptures: Isaiah 11:1-9; 1 Corinthians 13**

**December 31—1st Sunday of Christmas**

**Sermon Title: Light to the World**

**Scriptures: Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:22-40**

**January 7, 2024 - Baptism of the Lord Sunday**

**Sermon Title: The World Seeks a Savior!**

**Scriptures: Micah 5:2-4; Matthew 2:1-12**

**Persecution Project Foundation (PPF) – A Story of 3 Heroes**

In April, 2023, war erupted on the streets of Khartoum, Sudan’s capital city. The fighting began between two Islamist generals, but this meant little to the people living in the suburb of Ombada.

Many Nuba had left their native homeland to find jobs and educational opportunities in the big city. They brought their unique culture to Khartoum, but also their faith, as many of the Nuba are Christian-- even though Sudan is an officially Islamic State.

The neighborhood of Ombada quickly became a battlefield, as competing armies fought for control of more turf. Shelling, bombing, sniper fire, and pitched street battles engulfed the area. The Nuba could do nothing but hunker down in their homes and pray they would not be hit by bombs, or shot by rooftop snipers if they dared venture outside. During this crisis, several heroes emerged. This story focuses on three.

The first two heroes are Christians from the local Nuba church in Ombada. Two men decided they must do something to help their brothers and sisters escape the violence and evacuate to the comparative safety of the Nuba mountains. The men contacted friends in the Nuba, who somehow arranged for a few buses to be chartered in Khartoum for the purpose of transporting women and children out.



Over the course of a few weeks, the men, named Moses and Emmanuel, shepherded nearly 2,000 women and children onto buses, and sent them south to the Nuba!

But this story is about three heroes, not two. The third hero of this story is *you*. For, you see, the people Moses and Emmanuel contacted for help were Persecution Project staff working in the Nuba mountains. It was Persecution Project supporters like you whose generosity chartered those buses carrying nearly 2,000 lives to safety.

This story is a beautiful testament to how greatly God can use a few people when they decide to engage in "Active Compassion for the Persecuted."



**Women’s Bible Study** - The women will meet for their usual Bible study on Wednesdays, December 6 & 13th at 10:30. They will take a break for Christmas and not meet on the 20th, 27, or January 3rd. Returning to regular weekly meetings on January 10.



## The Greatest Gift

Christmas is always such a joyful time. I love this time of year, all the Christmas music and decorations. I feel excited that the world tends to come a little closer together during this time of year. Christ is the reason for the season. And His presence seems to be a stronger influence during this season, at least more seem to heed His spirit.

I love the Christmas TV shows and all the stories of Christmas.

How many stories and people have been affected by this amazing birth? Certainly many books, paintings, buildings, and movies have been dedicated to Him who came to save each and every one of us from our natural selves.

Isaiah prophesied of Christ. "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given..." (Isaiah 9:6 NKJV)

I love the fact that the angel said to the shepherds, "... I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people." (Luke 2:10 NLT) He didn't say that the birth of this wonderful child would bring joy to a certain privileged few, but to all people. All people are offered the joy only He can bring.

Many looked forward to His birth for centuries before the event. Many have celebrated His life since. Because of Him, life has meaning and we have much more purpose. His is our example to help us know how to live, to be more loving and tolerant of others.

Isaiah also bore testimony that "... he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound." (Isaiah 61:1 ESV)

Because of this special child, the prison doors of death are open; we are not condemned to die and be lost forever. We can have joy today and always. We all sin. We all have need to be freed from captivity of sin and death. Because of Him, we have promise of everlasting joy. Returning to the presence of our Father in Heaven and life eternal. He is the greatest gift we could ever hope to receive. I pray we will remember His gift to us, this season. ~ *Sherolyn*

**Operation Christmas Child** - This year we set a goal of filling 50 shoeboxes. We had individuals that donated boxes, some were filled on-line, and we held our first packing party, which was a huge success! And thanks to you we met our goal – the most boxes we have filled in recent memory!



What happens next? 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. Pastors around the world deliver the gifts to children as a part of outreach events in places where people may not know Christ and invite them to follow Him. In many places, they also offer The Greatest Gift, a Gospel story booklet Samaritan's Purse developed for shoebox recipients, and invite children to participate in The Greatest Journey discipleship program.

The following is just one amazing story that occurred due to people like you donating a shoebox with simple gifts inside:

Pastor Waisea Liwaiono hosted an Operation Christmas Child outreach and gift distribution in Vunika, a rural community in Fiji that had no church. He then invited the children to attend The Greatest Journey 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!




What greater Christmas gift can we give?!?!

MEN'S  
BIBLE  
STUDY



**Men's Bible Study** - The men will plan to meet on Thursdays at 6:30 pm through the 21st of December, taking break for the Christmas and New Year holidays. No meetings on December 28 or January 4. Weekly meetings will resume beginning January 11th.

# December

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
26 9:30 am - Sun Sch 10:15 am - Fellowship 11:00 am—Worship	27	28	29 10:30 - WBS 12:00—AA 6:00 pm NA 6:00 pm—Choir	30 6:30 pm - MBS 7:00 pm - Al-Anon 8:00 pm - AA	December 1 - Office Closed 12:00 PM AA	December 2
3 9:30 am - Sun Sch 10:15 am - Fellowship 11:00 am Worship	4	5	6 10:30 am - WBS 12:00 - AA 6:00 pm NA 6:00 pm—Choir	7 6:30 pm - MBS 7:00 pm—Al-Anon 8:00 pm - AA	8- Office Closed 12:00 PM AA	9
10 – 9:30 am - Sun Sch 10:15 am - Fellowship 11:00 am Worship	11	12 10:30 am—GCM	13 10:30 - WBS 12:00 - AA 6:00 pm NA 6:00 pm—Choir	14 6:30 pm - MBS 7:00 pm - Al-Anon 8:00 pm - AA	15- Office Closed 12:00 PM AA	16 9-12 NA
17 - 5 Cents a Meal collection /Joy Gift Collection 9:30 am - Sun Sch 10:15 am - Fellowship 11:00 am Worship 12:30 pm Session 3:00 pm Diaconate	18	19	20 12:00—AA 6:00 pm NA 6:00 pm—Choir	21 6:30 pm - MBS 7:00 pm - Al-Anon 8:00 pm - AA	22 - Office Closed 12:00 PM AA 	23
24 9:30 am - Sun Sch 10:15 am - Fellowship 11:00 am—Worship 5:00 pm— Christmas Eve Candle Light svc	25-Office Closed 	26-Office Closed	27 12:00—AA 6:00 pm NA 6:00 pm—Choir	28 6:30 pm - MBS 7:00 pm - Al-Anon 8:00 pm - AA	29 - Office Closed 12:00 PM AA	30
31 9:30 am - Sun Sch 10:15 am - Fellowship 11:00 am—Worship	January 1 - Office closed 	January 2	January 3 12:00—AA 6:00 pm NA 6:00 pm—Choir	January 4 6:30 pm - MBS 7:00 pm - Al-Anon 8:00 pm - AA	January 5 - Office Closed 12:00 PM AA	January 6

- 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 Martha Thompson\*
- 19 Donna Carter



## DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

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

We want to recognize everyone. If we don't have your birthday listed, please call the office and let us know.

\* In Memory



Since our last Newsletter, our Session on November 19th, discussed:

1. Rev. Coleman opened the meeting with prayer.
2. News of the congregation was shared.
3. Minutes of the October 16th Stated Session Meeting were approved.
4. Presbytery Meeting Report – November 16, 2023, FPC Lynchburg (Don Cherry – Commissioner)
5. Membership Roll –
  - a. A review of the membership roll is currently underway.
  - b. Janet Adams went to be with the Lord on November 15th.
  - c. Approved request to transfer membership of Cynthia Coleman to FPC Altavista.
6. PNC Report – Motion by COM at the November Presbytery meeting to shorten the time required for ordination to one year for John McCarthy was approved. Provided he meets all of the other requirements for ordination, he will be eligible for ordination in November 2024.
7. Local Missions
  - a. Our Operation Christmas Child (OCC) shoeboxes drive packing party was held on Sunday, November 12th after the Worship Service. A total of 40 boxes were packed and an additional 6-10 boxes were contributed online meeting our goal of 50 boxes.
  - b. Matthew and Teresa Lee are pregnant with a baby due in May. Teresa's parents are planning to be with them in Cameroon for the birth. They are scheduled to return to the US for furlough in June.
8. Property – The church front doors have been restored.
9. Budget & Finance – Financial reports for October 2023 were reviewed.
10. Pledges received to date are 47% of the 2024 Budget.
11. Worship –
  - a. Next communion date is Sunday, December 17, 2023.
  - b. This year's Christmas cantata will be Sunday, December 3rd during the morning worship time.
  - c. The Christmas Eve Candlelight service will be held at 5:00 pm on Sunday, December 24th.
12. Rev. Coleman closed the meeting with prayer.

**Choir** - Each Wednesday at 6 pm.

**Greeting Card Ministry** - Tuesday, December 12 at 10:30.

**Women's Bible study** - Wednesday (6th and 13th) at 10:30 am

**Men's Bible Study** - each Thursday (7, 14, & 21) at 6:30 pm

**Deacons and Elders** - Sunday, December 17 - Combined meeting at 1pm.

First Presbyterian Church  
800 North Main Street  
South Boston, VA 24592