



The Newsletter

First Presbyterian Church
Tullahoma, Tennessee

December 2024/January 2025
Volume 53, Issue 10

Plans for Advent, Christmas, and Beyond

Hanging of the Greens will occur during the worship service on **December 1, the First Sunday of Advent.**

Presbyterian Women's Christmas Luncheon is on **December 2 at noon** in Fellowship Hall. *(More information in the Presbyterian Women's article on page 6)*

Christmas Parade – Friday, December 6 at 7:00 p.m. – First Presbyterian Church will have a float in the Tullahoma Christmas parade.

Advent Festival and Holiday Tasting on December 8– The Mission and Christian Education Committees invite the congregation to a time of food and fellowship following the worship service on December 8. Bring your favorite holiday dish to share – appetizers, soups, casseroles, salads, treats – you pick! After lunch there will be Advent/Christmas – themed activities as well as an opportunity for Alternative Giving. *(More information in the Mission Committee Report on page 9)*

Kingdom Kids Christmas Program – The Story of Christmas – December 11 at 5:30 p.m. – *(More details on page 7)*

Bell ringing for the Salvation Army Kettle Drive – FPC's assignment this year is on **Saturday, December 14, from 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. at Walmart.** *(More information on p.2)*

Christmas Basket food donations - Please plan to donate to our Christmas Food "Basket" Event on Saturday, December 21, and volunteer to work with us to meet and assist those in need in our community *(More details in the Mission Committee Report on page 9 and on the inserts in the Sunday bulletins).*

Christmas Eve Service at 6:00 p.m. – The wonder of God's love remains steadfast during this challenging season. We will celebrate the birth of Jesus with a worship service, including communion, and candle lighting during the singing of *Silent Night.* *(More information on page 2)*

"The Gifts of the Magi" in January – for those who signed up in December to participate - January 6 is the Twelfth Day of Christmas, the traditional date on which the Magi arrived giving gifts to the Christ child. Therefore, January seems the perfect time to participate in an activity called "The Gifts of the Magi." During the weeks of January participants will take time each day to remember their recipient in prayer and surprise them with small gifts and acts of kindness and encouragement. *(More details and a sign-up slip on page 11)*

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Christmas Joy Offering is received during December

When Jesus was born among us, he came as a helpless baby destined to bring joy, peace, and salvation to his people. This child, God’s Word made flesh – fully human and fully God – became one of us. One with us. One among us. In all our vulnerabilities, struggles and triumphs, Jesus became one of us – leading us, knowing us, connecting us to himself and to each other, and offering us his gift of eternal life.

The perfect gift.

Through the Christmas Joy Offering, one of four PC(USA) Special Offerings, we reflect God’s perfect gift to us in Jesus with generous support of leaders among us – past, present, and future.

We honor and celebrate 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. Our gifts restore hope and stability through the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions.

We honor and celebrate emerging leaders like students in Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color, to grow and build lives of faith, honing talents and skills to serve God, the Church, and the world for years to come.

We ask that you read the inserts provided in the Sunday bulletins about individuals whose lives have been enriched by the Christmas Joy Offering. Please

prayerfully consider giving generously. If we all do a little, it adds up to a lot!

When making your gift, you may use the special Joy Offering envelope, mark a pew envelope “Joy Offering,” or write a check to FPC and designate it “Joy Offering.” We will be receiving the Joy Offering throughout December.



Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion Service is very meaningful



A very special highlight of the Christmas season is the Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion Service. It is a time when we and those of our family who are home for the holidays can worship together. In addition to the beauty of the sanctuary with the Chrismon

tree, the lighting of the Christ Candle, and the singing of *Silent Night* in the candlelit room, the celebration of Holy Communion is especially meaningful on that occasion. Whether I am privileged to assist in serving communion or am a recipient, I know I am bound together by the Holy Spirit with family, church family, and “a great cloud of witnesses” in radical ways that

continue to change me. Celebrating Holy Communion is not an empty rote ritual. The Holy Spirit whispers, “This is the joyful feast of the people of God.”

I invite you to come to this joyful feast at 6:00 p.m. on Christmas Eve., if at all possible.

Martha Bradley

Ring Bells for Salvation Army Kettle Drive

First Presbyterian Church is signed up to ring the bells on **Saturday, December 14, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at Walmart.** Don Jones is coordinating the project for the Mission Committee. We need volunteers to help with this project.

Everyone has their own reason for getting involved in this

symbol of the season. The Salvation Army is one source of assistance in the Tullahoma Community year round. Their motto is “The Salvation Army meets human need wherever whenever, however we can.” You can go to their website for examples of the kinds of assistance

they provide – a very impressive list.

If you can give an hour of your time on December 14, please sign up for a time slot by signing the list on the lectern in the narthex or by talking to Don Jones.

First Presbyterian Church (PCUSA)
P. O. Box 847
Tullahoma, TN 37388

Vision statement: Worshipping God,
growing together, serving others,
welcoming all

Sunday school – 9:00 a.m.

Worship at 10:30 a.m.

Church Office: 204 E. Grundy

Phone: 931 455-9328

FAX: 931 455-9306

E-mail addresses

Stephen: sgyates1970@gmail.com

Martha: m2bradley@lighttube.net

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Church Web site:

www.fpctullahoma.org

Youth Website:

www.pyc-tullahoma.com

Preschool Office: 931 455-1515

Preschool Email:

learningplace@lighttube.net

Preschool Website:

www.learningplacetullahoma.org

Church Staff

Pastor: Stephen Yates

Minister to Children: Katie Prasser

Minister to Youth: Bethany Sterling

Secretary: Martha Bradley

Organist: David Hiebert

Music Director: Robert Wright

Parish Associate for Pastoral Care:

Michael Bradley

Learning Place Preschool Director:

Bethany Sterling

Custodian: Shannon Prasser

Members of Session

Charlotte Broyles

Melissa Hall

Alan Harris

Charles Harvey

Joyce Hiebert

Sydney Hoehl

Bob Huffines

J. Ray Joellenbeck

Jessica Smith

Bethany Sterling, Clerk

Brad Sturgill

Robert Wright



Dear Church Family,

The Adult Sunday School class that meets in the Fellowship Hall has been reading Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* since November 24. We are actually using a study guide that comes with the complete text and then study questions.

Like a lot of people, I am a huge fan of Dickens' beloved story. Several years ago Audrey bought me a really nice illustrated version of the story. It's one of my favorite books in my collection now.

One of the passages I love the best from the story occurs during Scrooge's visit with the Ghost of Christmas Past. It's the scene where his fiancée calls off their engagement because she is convinced he no longer loves her. Somewhere along the way, according to the fiancée, Scrooge fell in love with money. Or as she finally says to Scrooge: "You fear the world too much. All your hopes have merged into the hope of being beyond the chance of its sordid reproach. I have seen your nobler aspirations fall off one by one, until the master passion, Gain, engrosses you."

In his marvelous book *Forgetting Ourselves on Purpose: Vocation and the Ethics of Ambition*, Brain Mahan says we all carry within us a "shadow government" of compassion and idealism. Meaning, as we get older and life experiences take their inevitable toll on us, we lose the sense of idealism and compassion that was so easy to have when younger. But, Mahan argues, that idealism hasn't been totally destroyed or overrun. Rather, it's simply been "exiled" into the deepest parts of ourselves. The trick, claims Mahan, is to recover that sense of idealism and compassion.

Well, that surely explains why I love Christmas so much. Because for me, Christmas allows me to recover that sense of idealism and compassion that life just naturally has a way of nibbling away bit-by-bit. "At Christmas time" wrote Frederick Buechner, "it is hard even for the unbeliever not to believe in something, if not everything. Peace on earth, good will to [people]...For a moment or two, the darkness of discernment, cynicism, doubt, draw back at least a little, and all the usual worldly witcheries lose something of their power to charm."

Well, may everyone have such a Christmas this year! May all the worldly witcheries (and there are many!) draw back, if only for a moment or two, and allow you to recover that sense of idealism and compassion you had when younger. And then hold onto that idealism and compassion fiercely. For changing the world, it seems to me, first starts with a dream above all else.

Your Pastor,

Stephen

Minute with Mike by Michael Bradley, Parish Associate for Pastoral Care

Christmas Is Coming

Can you believe it! Christmas is coming soon. Just a few more days and the holiday season will be in full swing. It hardly seems possible; why, the memories and images from last year are still so fresh and clear in my mind. All the visitors, all the laughter, all the meals, the presents, the entire family sitting together in church on Christmas Eve—yet, it is that time again. At least, it is that time again for many of us. Christmas is not universal.

As an occasion for merchandising Christmas is almost universal. Even in nations where Christians are only a minority of the population, the business of Christmas is important. Many years ago our daughter had a pen-pal in Japan; he was a Buddhist, but he celebrated Christmas as a time of fun and gift-giving. Bethlehem is not a town in which the majority of the population is Christian, but Christmas is important to their economy because of the number of visitors who come there at that time. In our town Christmas decorations crowd the store shelves alongside Autumn merchandise. Even before Thanksgiving some houses have wreaths and lights on display.

Oddly, Christmas is not universally observed even in our churches.

Since 1968 whenever Christmas fell on a Sunday, I traveled to lead the worship service at a church. As I drove, sometimes a round-trip of 250 miles, I would pass many churches that were closed; they were taking Christmas as a “day off.”

There are some church groups that do not observe Christmas at all because, they say, there is no evidence in the Bible that Christ was born on December 25. They are right. However, we do not celebrate a day; we commemorate an event.

Christmas reminds us that God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son that whoever believed in Him would have everlasting life.

The celebration of Christmas is coming in just a few days, but for Christians every day should be a celebration of what God has done. There should be a perpetual Christmas in our heart.

The Word became flesh, and dwelled among us.

Merry Christmas!



The Cross in the Manger

If there is no cross in the manger,
there is no Christmas.
If the Babe doesn't become the Adult,
there is no Bethlehem star.
If there is no commitment in us,
there are no Wise Men searching.
If we offer no cup of cold water,
there is no gold,
no frankincense,
no myrrh.
If there is no praising God's name,
there are no angels singing.
If there is no spirit of alleluia,
there are no shepherds watching.
If there is no standing up,
no speaking out, no risk,
there is no Herod,
no flight to Egypt.
If there is no room in our inn,
then “Merry Christmas” mocks
the Christ Child,
and the Holy Family
is just a holiday card,
and God will loathe
our feasts and festivals.

For if there is no reconciliation,
we cannot call Christ
“Prince of Peace.”
If there is no goodwill toward others,
it can all be packed away in boxes
for another year.
If there is no forgiveness in us,
there is no cause for celebration.
If we can't go now unto Golgotha,
there is no Christmas in us.
If Christmas is not **now**,
if Christ is not born
into the everyday present,
then what is all the **noise** about?

Ann Weems,
Kneeling in Bethlehem

Offering from the Office by Martha Bradley, Church Secretary

Here's the magical imagination of a child! It's my 4-year-old granddaughter, who spent much time in her early years in a restaurant in Fayetteville, owned by my son and his wife.

"Order, please," she said, with a pretend notepad and marker in her hands.

"I'll have the fried catfish, please, since that is a specialty of your restaurant."

She went to her pretend kitchen and returned with a plate of plastic food.

"Yummy," I said, pretending to eat. "This is absolutely the best catfish I've ever had."

"PATCAKE" (the name my grandchildren call me), she said, rolling her eyes, that is not catfish!"

"Oh . . . what is it?"

At that point she launched into her story. "Well, you can't eat catfish because we don't have any catfish. The restaurant got really busy today. Everyone wanted catfish. So we fixed lots of catfish. Piles and piles of catfish, as tall as the sky. Then a giant, giant monster came. He ate up all the catfish. Then the restaurant caught on fire and the monster ran away."

Then the little storyteller said matter-of-factly as she walked away, "And that's why Jesus had to move in with us."

"Wait, what?" I said, stunned by this sudden twist of plot. "Jesus had to move in with us?"

"Yes," she replied. Then she cleared my dishes and went back to her play kitchen.

Incarnational theology in the magical words of a child! Isn't "Jesus moved in with us" just a different way of saying: "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14)?"

When your catfish is eaten by monsters, when your restaurant burns down, when your life get turned upside down, Jesus is there. When we face hardship, injustice, division, grief, loss, and uncertainty, Jesus is there.

As we move closer to Christmas and the celebration of Jesus' birth, we can find comfort in the mystery of the incarnation – that God chose to come down to this messy, chaotic, broken, and wounded world to live with us.

I love the beauty and implications of the different translations of John 1:14.

- "The Word became flesh and made his home among us." (CEB)
- "And the Word became flesh and lived among us." (NRSV)
- "The Word became a human being." (NIRV)
- "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. (KJV)
- "The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood. (MSG)
- "That's why Jesus had to move in with us." (Granddaughter Version)

No matter which translation means the most to you, the truth remains: Jesus has moved into this world, into our neighborhood, and into our homes.

The news cycle has been hard to bear. It's tempting to keep our heads down, to turn off the television, and to turn on the holiday cheer. Social media drives stories of trauma and tragedy into our minds, and it's more difficult than ever to sort lies we should ignore from truths we cannot evade. Our hearts are burdened by violence we witness in nations far away and in neighborhoods close to

home. We grieve the suffering, but are reminded of our hope in a baby born in Bethlehem.

"This is no time for a child to be born," writes the poet Madeleine L'Engle, "with the earth betrayed by war and hate." L'Engle wrote those Christmas words in 1973 after the Vietnam War formally ended and the Watergate scandal was unfolding around President Richard Nixon. What might she write today with wars raging, polarized political parties, climate change wreaking havoc on God's good creation? This is not a time for a child to be born. And yet, the poem ends, "Love still takes the risk of birth." "The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into our neighborhood. (The Message)

We often treat Christmas as an end. But Christmas is new hope, not an end. It is a time to focus outwards as well as inward. We celebrate Jesus' first advent, with an eye towards his second, the way God is actively at work redeeming and renewing our world. God has a purpose for us, and a vision. We are not helpless in the face of tragedy. We are God's instruments in the world, here to recognize sadness and create joy. We are here to reach our hands toward our neighbors and share the light we carry. The baby we celebrate this Christmas is our Savior. God with us through the struggle, God with us in despair, God with us in the work for justice and peace. A new day is coming. Love risks being born. Christmas is just the beginning because "Jesus moved in with us."



Here's what's happening!

Presbyterian Women

PLEASE NOTE: December 11, 10:00 a.m., in the Fellowship Hall will be a **special Circle meeting**. We want you to tell us about you! Typically, PW does not meet in December other than our annual Christmas luncheon, but several have asked to have a time of sharing about our lives in order to get to know one another better. After a light lunch we will again make laundry detergent for the Christmas Baskets project to complete the task of making 150 two-cup bags. Seventy-seven bags were completed after the November meeting.

Presbyterian Women's Annual December Christmas Luncheon will be held Monday, December 2, at 12:00. Stephen Yates will share folklore on the 12 Days of Christmas. Great food from Crazy Daisies again for only \$12.00! Please make reservations with Dot Gilfillan no later than Sunday, November 24, Her Cell is 931-580-8354 or home 931-455-5549; you may leave a message.

January Horizon Bible study will feature Water Justice. We will meet in the Fellowship Hall, Wednesday, January 8, at 10:00 a.m. Water is so essential, and its presence and absence so impactful that both Scripture and contemporary events reflect multidimensional effects on human life. Scripture: Genesis 1:2, 6-7,9; 2:10; 3:17-19; 4:12; 5-6; 6-9; 7:17-24; 9:8-17; 12:10; 26:1; 42:5; 46

Church Women United

Church Women United will meet Tuesday, January 7, at 12:00

at Catholic Charities, 103 SE Atlantic Street. A representative from the Tullahoma Police Department will be featured speaker regarding women's safety. A light lunch will be served.

Men's Breakfast

The next Men's Breakfast will be December 8. Gathering time is 8:00 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall. Breakfast is provided. All men are welcome.

January Men's Breakfast TBD.



Parish Joys/Concerns

Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus. Philippians 2:4-5

Please keep the following in your prayers:

Jean Carter
Laville and Polly Dove (Mary Grigsby's and Ken Diehl's brother and sister-in-law)
Betty Gault
Jo Hattersley
Elaine Huffines
Sandy McKinney
Vanessa McKinney
Dennis Scharf
Drew Sterling

Please remember in your prayers

these who are unable to attend worship regularly:

Kitty Ball (living in Buford, GA)
Patra Escue (home)
Connie Flath (NHC)
Sue Harvey (home)
Hilde Joellenbeck (home)

Sympathy – We express our Christian love and sympathy to John Hawk on the death in October of his sister in Alabama.



December

5 - Audrey Yates
11 - Kitty Ball
14 - Shanna Brooks
15 - Charlotte Broyles
Joyce Hiebert
David Cox
16 - Mickey Hall
17 - Natalie Keough
20 - Amy Hinds
24 - Hilde Joellenbeck
27 - David Hiebert
Suzy Coe
29 - Chris Coe
Lenyx Fletcher

January

1 - Anna Wood
5 - Debbie Brown
8 - John Hawk
17 - Elaine Huffines
Jim Watson
Ron Parker
21 - Sydney Hoehl
23 - Andie Hall
24 - Luke Yates
25 - Sandy Shankle
28 - Arayla Smith
30 - Stephen Yates
31 - Mary Jane Christopher

If you have a birthday in December or January and your name is not on the list, please call the church office and let us know. We would like to add your name to the birthday calendar.

Around and About FPC

Children's Ministry

'Tis the season, and what a busy one it is! We have lots going on in December and hope to have all the kids here to enjoy it. Please make sure to take note of the dates below to make sure you don't miss out on the seasonal fun!

Looking Ahead

- **December 1:** Hanging of the Greens service – A special tradition where children and youth help decorate the sanctuary while learning about the meaning behind the decorations. Children need to be at the church by 8:45 A.M. to practice before worship at 10:30. There will be a light snack between practice and worship.
- **December 1:** Christmas Program practice. We will have lunch and play practice following the Hanging of the Greens service. We will finish practice at 1:00 P.M.
- **December 4:** Kingdom Kids from 5:00 P.M. to 6:30 P.M. Full dress rehearsal for "The Story of Christmas"
- **December 6:** Christmas Parade!! The Parade starts at 7 P.M. The kids will need to be there before that. More information and details will come the first week of December.
- **December 8:** 3rd through 5th graders will help during worship service. Stay afterward for our Advent Festival and Holiday Tasting.
- **December 11:** Kingdom Kids Christmas Program: "The Christmas Story". Children need to arrive at the church by 4:00 P.M. The Program will start at 5:30 P.M.
- **December 15:** Children will sing during the worship service. Please arrive by 9:45 A.M. to practice beforehand.
- **December 18:** Christmas Party during Kingdom Kids. We will have a sign-up sheet for food. We will be asking each family to bring something to share for the party.
- **December 24:** Christmas Eve service at 6:00 P.M.
- **December 25, 2024 and January 1, 2025:** No Kingdom Kids – Christmas Break.
- **January 5, 2025:** Monthly Sunday School at 9:00 A.M. for children aged 3 years through 5th grade in the Children's Gathering Room. We will be learning about David.
- **January 8:** Kingdom Kids from 5:00 P.M. to 6:00 P.M., followed by The Salon at 6:00 P.M.
- **January 12:** 3rd through 5th graders will help during worship service.
- **February 2:** Monthly Sunday School at 9:00 A.M. for children aged 3 years through 5th grade in the Children's Gathering Room. We will be learning about Solomon.
- **February 5:** Kingdom Kids from 5:00 P.M. to 6:00 P.M., followed by The Salon at 6:00 P.M.
- **February 9:** 3rd through 5th graders will help during worship service.

Katie Prasser, Children's Minister
katherineprasser@gmail.com
 931-841-8078



The Story of Christmas presented by FPC's Kingdom Kids Program

Join us on Wednesday, December 11, at 5:30 p.m. as the children of our Kingdom Kids program present *The Story of Christmas*.

This year, we are drawing inspiration from the *Deep Blue Bible Storybook Christmas*, a special edition of the curriculum we use in Kingdom Kids. The book features eight nativity stories retold for children, and throughout our program, we'll share five of them: *Gabriel's Message* (Luke 1:26-38) *Joseph's Story* (Matthew 1:18-25) *Jesus is Born* (Luke 2:1-7) *Joyous News* (Luke 2:8-20) *Follow the Star* (Matthew 2:1-12)

Each story invites you to experience the wonder of the people and events that shaped history. Throughout the program, you'll hear scripture, short songs that complement the stories, a prayer litany, and performances of two traditional Christmas hymns, as well as a contemporary Christmas song written especially for children.

The children have worked hard over the past several weeks to learn their parts and songs, and they are eager to share *The Story of Christmas* with you. Following the program, we invite you to join us for a light reception to celebrate the season.

We hope you will join us on **December 11** to celebrate the birth of our Savior through the voices and talents of these amazing kids.

The Salon, A Rave for the Soul

Thank you to Brad Sturgill for sharing his understanding of our selected Bible verses at The Salon: A Rave for the Soul as well as for those who have been participating in this new worshiping opportunity.

We welcome any feedback. We hope you will join us on **December 4** and again on **January 8** at 6:00 p.m. for our next two meetings of The Salon.



FPC on Facebook

Have you “liked” the church Facebook page? FPC Tullahoma does a lot; however, we aren’t always the most vocal about what we do.

The church’s Facebook page is an easy way to show off our church to our neighbors without ever leaving the comfort of our homes. If you are on Facebook, whether regularly or occasionally, we encourage you to “like” the church’s Facebook page.

Through our periodic posts as well as your “likes” on these individual posts, visitors see our church is active and appreciated. You’re welcome to go a step further and share the posts to your Facebook page.

If you have an event or activity that relates to the church and you want to make an even bigger impact to our publicity, feel free to send Bethany Sterling a few

pictures of the event as well as a brief synopsis and she will add it to the Facebook page. The information needs to be timely rather than a week or more in the past. If you have an upcoming event, that information can be posted on the Facebook page as well.

You can send the information to bethanybsterling@gmail.com or to 931-247-8170. Thanks for your help in promoting our church.

Advent Study

The Adult discussion class that meets at 9:00 on Sunday mornings will be doing an Advent study on Charles Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol*.

Dickens’ classic tale of Ebenezer Scrooge is a wonderful story of redemption and hope—perfect for a study in Advent. The discussion guide incorporates the story itself with study of Scripture and thought-provoking discussion starters.

The class began our study on November 24; however, we will continue our study past the period of Advent. We’d love to have you join our class!

Learning Place Preschool

The Learning Place Preschool Christmas program is Thursday, December 19, at 11:00. We invite our church family to come see the Pre-Kindergartners present the nativity story. Seating begins at 10:45 and is first come, first seated. It is our intention to have the program live-streamed and recorded through our church website.

Good Samaritan Ministry

During the month of October the Ministry office was open for 23 days.

Health: Food, Personal hygiene items, and Medication

Food Pantry & Dignity Campaign - We provided Food for 107 families (165A/82C). Dignity Campaign *All families may *choose a couple of dignity items* each month.

Medication – 0 families.

Essentials: Financial Assistance

Utility Assistance – 25 families (35A/30C).

Rental Assistance – 9 families (11A/5C).

*11 Families failed to appear for their Financial Assistance Appointment *

Other:

Homeless – 5 families

Project Baby Boom –assisted 5 families

Gifts – 14 families given *clothes, coats, shoes, household goods or furniture.*

Pet Food – 49 families were given dog/cat food.

Approximately 160 Tullahoma families in need received a Thanksgiving Food Basket.

Good Sam request for Dec./Jan.

Standard food request: canned fruits, canned vegetables, dry spaghetti, pasta sauce, soup, soda crackers, cereal, peanut butter, canned tuna, and canned chicken.

Special food request: soup, canned beef stew or Chef Boyardee ravioli

Dignity request: tooth paste

Cindy Kinney, Director

Session Committee Reports

Mission Committee – J. Ray Joellenbeck and Brad Sturgill

December Holiday Events –

The mission committee is offering our congregation a fellowship event as well as a giving event this December to get you in the holiday spirit.

Holiday Tasting and Advent

Festival: The Mission Committee and Christian Education Committee are teaming up to host a combined Holiday Tasting and Advent Festival on **December 8**.

Join your church family immediately after church in the Williams Family Center for lunch and Advent-related activities. The congregation is asked to bring your favorite holiday treat –this can be savory or sweet. Bring your favorite casserole, appetizer, wintertime soup, finger food, candy, cake, pie, etc. – if you like it, your church friends will also like it. Please bring food items cooked and plated. The mission committee will be providing holiday inspired drinks.

There will be an Advent litany during lunch followed by time for everyone to participate in a number of Advent/Christmas-themed activities.

After you're done eating, you can shop for a special Christmas gift for someone you know - that has everything they need – by shopping our **Alternative Giving** opportunity. You can honor a family member or friend with a gift and help a local charitable organization at the same time by providing a donation in their honor.

We'll also be continuing the Alternative Giving opportunity on Sunday December 15. The Alternative Giving displays will be moved into the Fellowship Hall.

Christmas“Basket” Shopping:

The Mission Committee will be holding our annual Christmas “Basket” Shopping Event Saturday, **December 21**. We'll be inviting folks from our community to come to our church to “shop” for what food they want and will use. The Mission Committee switched to the shopping experience last year to provide the guests more dignity and waste less food (Folks only take what they want and will use). Last year provided lots of information about the types of items that people like and prefer, so pay close attention to this year's updated list of basket items below.

We rely on the congregation to purchase most of the food, and we will also need volunteers on the day of the event to meet folks at the door, assist them in gathering food items, monitor tables of food items, hand out Christmas hams, and take bags to vehicles.

The Mission Committee requests that the congregation bring their food donation to the William Family Center during the following times:

Sunday, December 15: before or after the worship service until 6:00 p.m.

Monday, December 16 12:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m.

Tuesday, December 17 12:00 p.m. until 6:00 p.m.

Please make sure that your donated food items are not expired.

The youth will be helping by setting up our store on Wednesday, December 18.

This year the Mission Committee will be providing both the hams and the fresh fruit.

Items for Basket

2 cans corn
2 cans green beans
1 can pork and beans
2 cans soup
1 can peaches
1 jar applesauce
1 jar peanut butter
1 can yams
box of instant rice
stuffing mix
box of mac and cheese
small bottle cooking oil
box instant potatoes
2-pound box Bisquick or cornmeal
cranberry sauce
bag hard candy/stick candy
cookies, baked goods
box of Saltines, Ritz, etc.
special treat of your choice
cranberry, apple, or grape juice
other items appropriate for a festive dinner

Several small cans of fruits and vegetables may be preferable to one large can. Add toiletries such as toothpaste, soap, Kleenex, toilet tissue, etc. if you wish.

Laundry detergent is also provided from mission funds with the help of Presbyterian Women.

Important and/or useful information based on last year's data:

- Many shoppers were looking for healthy options, so consider purchasing some low sodium or low sugar items.
- Chicken Noodle Soup is not popular due to its prevalence at Good Sam throughout the year.
- Cranberry Juice was the most popular of the juices.
- Dial and Dove soap were preferred over Ivory and Zest.
- Crest toothpaste was preferred over Colgate.
- Shampoo and blankets were popular.

Finance and Personnel Committee – Alan Harris

This month's contribution to the newsletter will focus on the duties and responsibilities of our Disbursing Treasurer, Don Jones. I have included Don's snapshot of the duties he handles on behalf of our church. In his words, Don tells me he is the guy "who writes the checks". This is Stewardship in action.

Disbursing Treasurer

- Pay all bills associated with the operations of the church. This includes taxes, insurance, and recurring maintenance contract payments (pest control, HVAC maintenance)
- Manage payroll of church and Learning Place employees
- Receive summary report of total receipts from our Receiving Treasurer
- Receive reports of on-line transactions from Receiving Treasurer as they come in

- Process vouchers from committee chairpersons and reimburse members for expenses, allocating expenses to the appropriate subaccounts

As you might guess, Don and Clark Lawrence work closely together, along with Ted Elsasser and Ken Patterson, to ensure all financial matters concerning the church and church properties are covered promptly and professionally.

It should surprise no one when I tell you we need to have on hand skilled and dedicated backup people, whether it be another church member or contracted service.

In other news, you may recall the Presbyterian Board of Pensions (BOP) issued a notice to abandon their existing healthcare coverage and offered several options for church ministers and their families.

The open enrollment began in October. Stephen completed his evaluation, recommended an option that provides equivalent coverage, and our committee approved his proposal.

Accordingly, Stephen and Audrey made their selections during the open enrollment and are ready to transition to new coverages beginning in January. Of course, we will make these adjustments to Stephen's terms of call for next year.

Finally, look for a proposed budget for next year to be available very soon.

If you have any questions or recommendations/concerns, please see me, call me, or text me.

Alan Harris

Property Committee – Bob Huffines

The recent weeks were somewhat uneventful.

We await Anchor Construction (Jon Gault) to make repairs to damage created in the March windstorm.

We met with Drew Johnson (Easy Living Construction) on November 14 to review the replacing of ceiling tiles in the Music and A/V rooms, replacing the two Washington Street entrance doors, and replacing

latching mechanism on the Lincoln Street double entrance doors. Drew stated that he would begin replacing the double entrance doors week of November 18.

The replacing of windows in the Educational wing and Phoenix house may be a reality. Quotes were received from Satisfaction Windows (local source), Window World (Murfreesboro) and Larry Ferrell (local). Information will be

presented at our next Session Meeting for approval.

Stephen and an outside contractor replaced all three Sanctuary cameras. This should improve our on-line reception.

Any member of the Property Committee may be contacted to entertain recommendations for improvements to our facility. All suggestions are appreciated!!

Respectfully,
Bob Huffines



***“Gifts of the Magi”
coming in January!***

January 6 is the Twelfth Day of Christmas, the traditional date on which the Magi arrived giving gifts to the Christ child. Therefore, January seems the perfect time to participate in an activity called “The Gifts of the Magi.” We did this activity a couple of years ago, and it has been suggested as a fun activity to do again. So, we will see if there is enough interest to do so.

As a participant in “The Gifts of the Magi,” you will be given the name of a First Presbyterian Church “family” (remembering that a “family” can mean a household of one or many). Another participating family will receive your name. To be both a giver and a recipient you must sign up to participate.

During the weeks of January you will take time each day to remember your assigned “family” in prayer. You may surprise them during the month with small gifts or acts of kindness. Some examples: drop off some cookies; write a note of encouragement; take them a casserole or a pot of soup that they can turn into supper after a busy day; meet for a cup of coffee or tea; have lunch together; offer to babysit while they do some shopping; give them a small gift; give a donation to a charitable cause in their name. It really is the thought that counts. Use your imagination for what is suitable for the “family” you have. Another “family” will be doing the same for you!

You may reveal your identity from the very beginning or you can do it as a “secret pal,” though keeping your identity secret will be much more difficult if you choose to do some of the suggested activities!

Those wishing to participate will need to sign-up by December 15, so we can give participants the name of the “family” that will be the recipient of their “Gifts” and will allow us to get the activity going at the beginning of January.

“The Gifts of the Magi” promises to be a way of getting to know members of the church family, appreciating and encouraging them, and of brightening January days for both givers and receivers. This activity will extend the message of Christmas throughout the month.

We invite you to participate! Simply sign up using this form and put the tear-off in the offering plate, email Martha Bradley at m2bradley@lighttube.net, or call the church office (931 455-9328) and leave a message.

I/We want to participate in “The Gifts of the Magi” activity in January 2025.

NAME _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Email _____

Use the gift!

At Christmas, God sent his Son to live among us. But he doesn't want us to be passive recipients of that precious gift. Consider these challenges for the season — and for the new year ahead:

“He became what we are that we might become what he is.”

—Athanasius (4th century)

“When Christ entered our world, he didn't come to brighten our Decembers but to transform our lives.”

—Rich Miller

“Christmas began in the heart of God. It is complete only when it reaches the heart of man. Why wait for a call when you have a command?”

—Robert Hughes

What your heart clamors to do

We often speak of pastors as having a divine “calling.” God gives them a strong sense of purpose for a specific holy role, like how Old Testament prophets were called to bring messages to God’s people. But what about the rest of us? Is teaching, practicing medicine, being a plumber, writing or another non-church job also a “call”?

Martin Luther and others have said we should seek work that benefits others and for which God has given us talent. We should also treat any good work we do as a calling — be it cleaning a house or school, mending a broken leg or torn garment, or (as Luther mentioned a *father* doing — in the 1500s!) changing a baby’s diaper.

Dorothy Sayers wrote that “work is not primarily a thing one does to live, but the thing one lives to do,” and that “we should clamor to be engaged in work that [is] worth doing, and in which we [can] take pride.” What work does your heart clamor to do? In other words, what is *your* divine call?



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