

First Presbyterian Church *Tidings*

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
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December 2017

“AS GOOD AS DONE”

Upon the birth of the one who'd become known as John the Baptist, his father, Zechariah, praised God. Zechariah broke his nine-month inability to speak with these words: “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them. He has raised up a mighty savior for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old” (*Luke 1:68-70, NRSV*).

Notice how Zechariah describes God's actions as if they had already happened! In *Good News of Great Joy*, John Piper writes, “Nine months earlier, Zechariah could not believe his wife would have a child. Now, filled with the Holy Spirit, he is so confident of God's redeeming work in the coming Messiah that he puts it in the past tense. For the mind of faith, a promised act of God is as good as done.”

A Holiness Invasion

“Advent” means “coming,” of course, and the promise of Advent is that what is coming is an unimaginable invasion. The mythology of our age has to do with flying saucers and invasions from outer space, and that is unimaginable enough. But what is upon us now is even more so — a close encounter not of the third kind but of a different kind altogether. An invasion of holiness. That is what Advent is about.

—Frederick Buechner, *The Clown in the Belfry*



Church Events

- Dec 3rd - Congregational Meeting after the Service
- Dec 6th - Worship Committee Meeting 10 a.m.
- Dec 7th – Evangelism Meeting 3:30 p.m.; Combined Session Meeting (Elders & Deacons) 5:30 p.m.
- Dec 10th – Unwrapped items due for Empty Stocking Program; Hometown Christmas Celebration Luncheon after Service
- Dec 15th – *Tidings* Articles Due 4 p.m.
- Dec 17th – Children's Party after the Service; Deacon's Meeting after the Service
- Dec 24th – Christmas Joy Offering; **Christmas Eve Candlelight Service 5:00 p.m.**
- Dec 25th – Office Closed
- Dec. 31st – Evangelism Meeting after the Service

FOR TO US
GIVEN
A SON IS



Your Mission group will not meet this month, but will be busy. First, we will again participate in Polk County's "Empty Stocking" program. Last year the program served 581 children from 237 families; we served one of those families with four children. This year we have agreed to help two families totaling four

children: a girl aged 14 in one family, and in the other family a girl aged 16 and two boys aged 13 and 5. Specific items needed for these children can be found on the poster board in the Narthex. All unwrapped items are due December 10th, as we must deliver our family's gifts to the Livingston Interagency Council by the 11th. Please check out the possibilities on the 3rd and return them on the 10th.

December 24th is the Christmas Joy Special

Offering, based upon 2 *Corinthians* 9:15. The theme will be, "Out of Gratitude We Give." The funds donated have two purposes: 1) to support past and present church leaders by making donations to the Board of Pensions; and 2) by preparing the way for future leaders with funds going to three institutions, one being the Presbyterian Pan American School.

Thanks for all of your past support this year to the various Mission projects and special offerings. As quoted

from 1 *Peter* 4:10, "as each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another..." You have, and I pray we all will continue to do so!

Chuck Davidson, Chair

Thanks
be to God
for his
incredible
gift!
2 *Corinthians*
9:15



Mission Chair Chuck Davidson giving directions prior to the filling of shoeboxes for children and seamen on November 12th.



Music News

"It came to pass in those days.... (*Mark* 1:9)

Oh how we long for "those days:" memories held dear of loved ones past, and childhood days that seemed so simple through the eyes of a child. Join the choir and soloist on Christmas Eve as we hear again "The Glorious Story of Christmas." Just like we remember it in "those days," and just like it will continue to be told to our children and grandchildren until He comes again. The story of Christmas never ceases to amaze us, to enthrall us and to bring us comfort in the words that Jesus said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." (*Heb.* 13:5)

We also encourage you not to miss the Sunday worship services in December because you will be greatly blessed as the children begin each worship service in the lighting of the Advent Candle.

The Music Department wishes you and your family a Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year.

Better yet, in 2018 join the choir.

Rejoice,
Karlene Barker, Music Program Director

A Living Bible

*"You are the light of the world.."
Matthew 5:14*

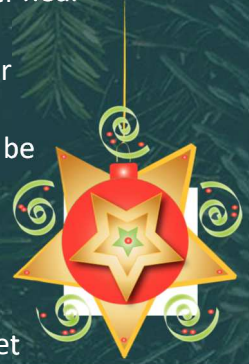
Someone has said, "You are the only Bible someone out there may ever read." That is an incredible responsibility, but certainly consistent with the above verse. All of our lives are an open book to Christians and non-Christians alike. What is the Gospel according to my life? St. Augustine said, "Share the Gospel with all you know and if necessary use words." That statement does not just apply to a person's actions; it also applies to one's attitude. You can be a magnet with a Godly positive attitude or you can be a repellent with a miserable negative attitude. Most people will not notice the strength of your character when you are on top of the mountain and things are going very well with blessings abounding. The microscope is upon us when we face the deep valleys. They will watch how we handle those situations more closely. A watching world is not as impressed about what we say we believe as they are with the difference in how we handle the tough situations that we go through that are similar to theirs. It is said that your actions speak so loud I cannot hear what you are saying; but I think that a more substantive concept is that the attitude you display when you are going through the pain of life speaks so loud that I can now see the reality of what you believe.

Blessings, Pastor Joe MacDonald

Spirit of Xmas Be

By Tommy Fluker

Don't force it, let it come, easy, easy now
Coming on a star perforated night
Piercing pristine air
Timeless, stillness never ending
Perceived alone in the universe
It comes with gentle caress, warmth flowing
Soul seeking apex, Your God so ever near
Filled with love's glowing mantle
Restive thoughts need ne'er appear
Angelic voices, ringing clear
Wafted through void, perceived to be
Love encompass, malice none
Memories past, more to come
Crackling coals, flicker of flame
Spiral of smoke, skyward seeking
Pungent, though sweet, pleasing yet
Myriad lights, dancing fro
Kaleidoscope to senses swirl
Filled with Him, let never veer
Spirit same, shall ever be



It's with a heavy heart that I must tender my resignation as bell ringer for First Presbyterian Church after all these many years, my heart made even heavier by the prospect of making ends meet on the funds provided by the miniscule Bell Ringer Retirement Fund.

I must say, having fallen for the 2nd time in recent months, trying to clear that raised slab under the bell tower greatly hastened this decision. Me not willing to see if my relatively ancient bones could survive another fall. Fortunately for me, two late arrivals witnessed this event and rushed to my aid. Otherwise I might have lain there until the service was over. Just kidding, Joan would have come looking for me when I didn't return after a reasonable amount of time.

Let's see where was I.. Oh yes, seriously, there's this gratifying feeling you get ringing a church bell that's hard to describe. Maybe it's knowing you've got the attention of everyone for miles around or that you've summoned God's people to church.

There is a person who has filled in for me over the years when I was unavailable. That person has gladly accepted the position. Her name is Sheri Grounds. The transition will be smooth and painless. Well, maybe not so painless when Sheri discovers the salary that goes with the position.

Tommy Fluker

The Giver

Many Christian families struggle with what role — if any — Santa Claus should play in their Christmas celebrations. No matter what you decide, it's fascinating to know the history of the real-life St. Nicholas. Born about 270 A.D., Nicholas was a bishop in Myra, or modern-day Turkey. In the year 325, he was part of the Council of Nicaea, which

produced the Nicene Creed.

Nicholas, known for his generosity, often gave away his money anonymously. According to tradition, he secretly provided dowries for the three daughters of a bankrupt merchant. Nicholas threw two bags of gold through open windows and placed the third in a stocking hanging by

the fireplace to dry. Thus began the Christmas tradition of placing gifts in stockings.

St. Nicholas is quoted as saying, "The giver of every good and perfect gift has called upon us to mimic God's giving, by grace, through faith, and this is not of ourselves."



Greatest Worth

He came a babe of lowly birth.
He was God's Son of greatest worth.
We, like the angels, sing with mirth
because God sent his Son to earth
to ransom us and claim our worth.
Praise God this babe of lowly birth!

—MaryAnn Sundby

Nominating Committee Report

A congregational meeting will be held on Sunday, Dec. 3rd, to act upon recommendations for new church officers from the current Nominating Committee chaired by Chuck Davidson.

	Deacons	Elders
Class of 2020	Leah Vogely Shona Heredia Tabatha Cooper	Chuck Davidson Robert Green Jo Pavey
Class of 2019	Margie Tolls	

All have agreed to serve if accepted by the congregation, with the class of 2020 serving three years and the class of 2019 serving two.

+Christian Symbol+



Branch (Tree) of Jesse

Isaiah used the image of a new tree growing from what appears dead to foretell God's redemption of Israel: "A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit" (Isaiah 11:1, NIV). During Advent, this prophecy assures us of the coming of the Messiah, descended from King David, and thus his father, Jesse.

?? Bible Quiz ? ?

After Mary learned she was pregnant with God's Son, what relative — also miraculously pregnant — did she go visit?

- A. Esther
- B. Elizabeth
- C. Anne
- D. Anna



Answer: B (See Luke 1:39-41.)



*On your feet now----applaud God!
Bring a gift of laughter, and sing yourselves into
his presence.*

*Know this: God is God, and God, God. He made
us: we didn't make him. We're his people, his
well-tended sheep.*

Enter with the password: "Thank you!"

Make yourselves at home, talking praise.

Thank him. Worship him.

*For God is sheer beauty, all-generous in love,
loyal always and ever.*

The front area of the 190 property has been mowed and cleaned up, including the removal of broken gate and trash that had been dumped on the property.

Some maintenance items: replaced reverse osmosis filters, repaired fascia board on the Activities Building, put security door plate on the kitchen closet door, and had the buildings exterminated.

If you get a chance, go look at the Irises on the Southeast corner of the Activities Building; one of the plants is trying to bloom.

Thank God! Pray to him by name!

*Tell everyone you meet what he has done! Sing
him songs, belt out hymns, translate his wonders
into music!*

Honor his holy name with Hallelujahs.

-Psalms 105:1-3

MERRY CHRISTMAS & HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Glenn Drumm, Chair



Meetings for the Evangelism Team for December will be Thursday, Dec. 7th, at 3:30 p.m., and Sunday, Dec. 31st, after the service. Both meetings will be held in Room 2 of the Fellowship Hall. Please come with words of wisdom for Evangelism in 2018. Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisors, they succeed. (*Proverbs 15:22.*)

I have enjoyed and greatly benefitted from being Evangelism Chairman in 2017. We tried to add some new and different things. Presbyterians are known for being reserved and not evangelistic, but Evangelism is something our Lord commanded us to do. We have never believed that ours is the only way and that we will be the only ones in heaven.

I visited a church in California where they had shepherds, and that is what I hope to be in 2018. Shepherds just do whatever needs doing. I know we already have so many shepherds in our congregation and many are angels. Shepherds have no meetings, no publicity, no written rules (depending on the Bible), just quiet action and lots of prayers.

November Trade Days had the theme, "God Loves You," and was intended for inspiration for our volunteers and all those we contacted. The highlighted charity was "Center of Hope," sponsored by thirteen churches, so far with a goal of breaking the cycle of hunger, poverty, and hopelessness in Polk County. The Center offers a hand up, not just a hand out.

Pray for our Evangelism Team in 2018, our city, our county, our country, and our world. We pray that more will come to know our Lord.

Nina Dobyms, Chair

Celebrate!



DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- Miriam Preston, 12/07
- Marjorie Tolls, 12/12
- David Sessums, 12/14
- Harry Bristol, 12/29
- Georgina Drumm, 12/30
- Ruth Dominy, 12/31



- Ben & Barbara Morris, 12/29



Fellowship Committee

This month's Fellowship Luncheon will be a "Hometown Christmas Celebration." Please bring your favorite Christmas dish, whether it's a side, dessert, casserole, or any other item. The church will provide ham, tea, and rolls. We hope to see you there!

Karen Palmer, Chair



Our Sunday Services

Adult Bible Study – 9:00 a.m.
Worship -10:00 a.m.
Children's Celebration
(for children ages 5 & older) 10:00 a.m.
Nursery available for children
ages infant through 4