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THE penn street LETTER

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The official monthly newsletter of First Presbyterian Church, Fort Worth

12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS MISSION BOX PROJECT



During the twelve days of Christmas (December 25-January 5), celebrate the ministries and partnerships of our congregation by collecting items that correspond to several mission programs that we support. As you gather the items, pray for the ministry and the gifts offered in service to the world. Place them in the provided gift boxes and return them to the church on Epiphany Sunday, January 6. Just as the wise men bring gifts to Jesus, we bring our gifts of service and outreach.

This year we are highlighting the six ministries of Community Crossroads (Food, Clothing, Dental Clinic, Worship on Wednesdays, Formula and Diapers, and English as a Second Language); our two mission coworker ministries in Cuba and Haiti; a couple of our outreach ministries on the FPC campus (Room in the Inn, Homeless Connect); and our partnerships with Kids HOPE USA mentoring ministry and the Sack Lunch Chuck Wagon for day laborers at the Fort Worth Stock Show and Rodeo through Tarrant Churches Together.

Pick up your 12 Days of Christmas Boxes outside of the Great Hall and Sanctuary on December 16, 23 and 24 and return them to those same tables on Sunday, January 6. Instructions are inside each box. For questions, contact Amy Parker or Robyn Michalove.

PENN STREET ARTS CONCERT SERIES

Afternoon Organ Concerts

Wednesdays, December 5, 12, 19, 2018

12:30 p.m. (30 minute concert after the noon Advent service) in the Sanctuary.
Complimentary lunch served following the concert.

Featured Organists:

- December 5 - Adam Pajan, Instructor of Organ at the University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK
- December 12 - Beverly Howard, Professor Emeritus of California Baptist University, Riverside, CA
- December 19 - Jillian Gardner, Organ & Chandler Fadero, Violin, Master of Music Candidates, Baylor University, Waco, TX



Penn Street Arts Festival

Saturday, February 16, 2019

Art Show & Concert - FPC Sanctuary
(co-hosted with Fellowship Committee)

5 - 6:30 p.m. - Visual Art Show - West Concourse
6:30 - 7:30 p.m. - Jazz & Organ Concert - Sanctuary

Bring your Paintings, Pottery, Watercolors, Sketches, Sculptures

Submit artwork by signing up on our website at fpcfw.org/artsfestival2019. Deadline to sign up is January 31.

SAVE THE DATES

PW WOMEN'S RETREAT

Saturday, February 23, 2019

PW of FPC invite you to a day of fun and relaxation titled "Care for Others As You Care For Yourself". Come and learn to relax and reconnect with yourself spiritually, mentally and physically. The event will be held in the Great Hall.

KIRKIN' OF THE TARTANS

Sunday, February 3, 2019

Don't miss this annual service, celebrating the Presbyterian Church's Scottish heritage. The service will be held in the Sanctuary at 11 a.m. with lunch to follow at noon in the Great Hall.

DRILL AND HYGIENE TRIP TO GUATEMALA

January 26 - February 2, 2019

Cost of \$1,400 includes air, lodging, food and drill/hygiene help from LWI's in-country team. Part of the expense is subsidized by the Mission Committee. Five places are open to FPC members. Contact Robyn Michalove for details before December 6.



THE ADVENT ISSUE

In this issue, learn about the many ways to remember, reflect, and celebrate at FPC during the season of Advent that begins Sunday, December 2.



THE ADVENT ISSUE

This issue includes the many ways to observe the season of Advent at FPC, beginning Sunday, December 2.

PASTORS' LETTER



Those who know me will roll your eyes at the coming sentence. Sometimes we need to slow down, because slowing down prepares us for what is next.

I know, I know. That seems hollow advice coming from me. Like many of you, I am energized by the quickened pace, thrilled at the lengthy task list, invigorated by the speed of getting somewhere fast. My blood runs hot and fast. Hurry up, we're burning daylight. I am among the unlikeliest to recommend that you slow down.

So, I recommend that you slow down because I need to hear it myself, and thus the Church needs to say it, over and over and over again.

If the Church whispers this advice year round, the Church yells it during Advent. Diana Butler Bass penned a mind-tickler recently in which she discussed the "war on Christmas." We hear lots about recent shifts in nomenclature and practice, about "Happy Holidays" supplanting "Merry Christmas," about non-Christian objection to Christmas symbols in public spaces, etc. Bass points out that no matter one's opinions about nativity scenes on courthouse lawns, the more important war is not on Christmas. It is on Advent. Advent, she points out, is somber. The night lengthens. The world awaits. There is a muted sense of hope and expectation. Christians recollect God's ancient promise to Israel for a kingdom where lion and lamb will lie down together. The ministers preach from stark biblical texts about the poor and oppressed being lifted up while the rich and powerful are cast down, about society being leveled and oppression ceasing.

Advent is a time to slow down and remember, to remember how the Hebrews waited for the Messiah, how they waited, and they waited some more, and when night got darker, they waited even longer. Advent is the slowdown time for Christians to remember, too, that Jesus was born of Mary, that he preached the good news of the coming kingdom of God, a kingdom he ushered onto earth but not yet, not completely. Advent is a season for us to slow down and to remember that Christ will return again in the kingdom's culmination.

Thus, we live in between. We live every day as if it is God's time to make all things right. Then again, every day we partner with God in mind, body, and soul lest this day is not the day. These spiritual truths cannot be conjured or manipulated, and they certainly may not be rushed.

A friend fell ill coincidentally amidst an ice storm several years ago. The ambulance arrived at her home. Enroute to the hospital the EMT confirmed her fears; "You are having a heart attack." Still, the driver did not flip the siren. Instead

the ambulance followed all traffic rules, stopping at lights, waiting for others, driving slowly. My friend was frightened and confused. Shouldn't the lights be flashing, the siren wailing? Shouldn't the ambulance whisk through all intersections and the world stand still to aid her safe passage to the Emergency Room? (Turns out, amidst ice storms ambulances follow the rules lest they wreck themselves or cause others to crash.) "You are going to be fine," the EMT assured his patient. "We will get there soon enough. My job now is to keep you safe."

That is Advent. Our hearts pounding, we are tempted to rush by the excitement of it all, by the lights and the siren song of a commercialized Christmas. Retailers discount the Halloween candy then decorate for Christmas. Television advertisements shift to wintry images of Santa Claus and happy family homecomings. Turkey sales skyrocket. And all this before Thanksgiving!

Indeed the culture has stolen our religious holiday, and if you think the war is on Christmas you might give Diana Butler Bass a thought or two. The deeper war is waged against the basic idea that sometimes, we need to slow down.

And that is why we do not sing Christmas hymns before Christmas. It also explains our progressive decorating scheme through our building. One week, garland. The next week, poinsettias. The following week, Christmas trees, etc. Advent and Christmas belong to the Church. We can hardly decry the cultural war on either if we are providing the ammunition.

Our Hebrew spiritual ancestors awaited the Messiah, and they prepared. We celebrate the Messiah's birth. And we faithfully await his return. So we must prepare. Sometimes we need to slow down, because slowing down prepares us for what is next.

Blessings,

ORDER POINSETTIAS FOR CHRISTMAS

In Honor & Memory of Loved Ones

This Christmas, the FPC Worship & Music Committee will be placing live poinsettia plants in worship spaces from December 14-30. You may purchase a plant in honor or memory of loved ones using a form located in the church office and turning it in, with a check made out to First Presbyterian Church and "Poinsettias" marked in the memo line. Cost is \$20 per plant. Forms are due in the church office by December 10. Plants may be taken home after worship on December 30. Those not picked up will be given to homebound members. Thank you!

JOYS & CONCERNS

Following are the joys and concerns shared as of November 19, 2018 (due to printing deadlines). To respect the privacy of those listed, names are included only when the individuals grant their permission.

Our loving sympathy to...

Michael and **Kim Yarwood** on the death of her brother, Jeffrey Ward on September 21.

Jack and Trish Melcher on the death of her mother, Susie Kuhn, on October 7. Other surviving FPC family: **Payton and Noble Melcher**.

Vernon and Bronwyn Rew on the death of her brother, Kyle Purdy, on October 11. Other surviving family: **Nick Rew** and Lauren Power; and **Emily Rew**.

Ted and Jane Chapman on the death of her mother, Frances Kelley, on October 26. Other surviving FPC family: **Judd and Beth Jenkins; Blake and Kim Gore; Matt and Allison Chapman; Mary Jean, Tess, Judd, and Libby Jenkins; Nicki and Walker Gore;** and Abigail and Juliana Chapman.

Gary and Janet Melton on the death of her mother, Katherine Moody, on November 3. Other surviving FPC family: **Chris Melton**.

Family and friends of **Roy Buie** who died November 16. Surviving FPC family: wife, **Ouita Buie**.

Our loving thoughts and prayers are with...

Bob Wilson, Brent McCartney, Jerry Brownlee, David Nation, Paula Robertson, and Judy Gasch, who are recovering from surgery or injury. **Marilyn Love, Roger Parsons, Jane Watson, Rush Hart, Marilyn Wilson, Vera Kendall, Phyllis Propes, Emma Coley, Marjorie Lewis, Corinna Nation, Lisa Shiner, Marge Shiner, Elizabeth Bean, Frances Blake, Nancy Nelson, and Dalia Scott**, who are dealing with illness or undergoing treatment.

Prayers for peace in our world, for the safety of Nathan Gunter (**Russell and Vivian Norment's** nephew) who is stationed in Korea. Also for the safety of **Diego A. Saldivar**, who is serving in the US Navy; **Diego** is the son of **Becky and Rene Saldivar**.



SANCTUARY REDEDICATION



On Sunday, November 18, two services were held at 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. to celebrate and rededicate our beautiful sanctuary. It was the culmination of months of planning and hard work. The Litany of Dedication included dedicating the newly designed pulpit, the Lord's Table, the Baptismal Font and Paschal Candle, the Lectern and Bible, and the Sanctuary.

The Chancel and Fellowship Choirs combined their voices to sing two wonderful anthems, one which was composed specifically for the occasion. The organ was in full force and sound as well. A photographer was on hand to take a photo of the entire congregation from the balcony. Copies of these photos will be made available to all members.

Also present at the services were members of the general contracting firm of Steele and Freeman, the architects of Hahnfeld, Hoffer and Stanford, the sound consultants of Idibri and Electro Acoustics, and the Sanctuary Improvement committee, who were all recognized for their work. A reception was held after each service in the Great Hall, complete with roast beef and glazed pork loin. Candid and group photos during the reception will also be available to order in the next few weeks.

All in all, it was a day to give thanks that we are "Overwhelmed by Blessing"!

YEAR-END GIVING

Please keep the following guidelines in mind when planning your year-end giving to First Presbyterian.

You must deliver or mail (and postmark) checks on or by December 31, 2018, to claim a charitable contribution deduction for 2018. Although checks in the offering on the first Sunday in 2019 can be recorded to fulfill a 2018 pledge to the church, they will not qualify for an IRS charitable contribution deduction for 2018, even if the check is predated to 2018 or actually written in 2018. However, checks that are written, mailed, and postmarked in 2018 will be deductible, even though they were not received by the church until 2019. To ensure the deductibility of your church contributions under current IRS guidelines, please do not file your 2018 income tax return until you have received a written acknowledgement of your contributions from the church. Some of your contributions may not be tax deductible if you file your return before receiving a written acknowledgement of your contributions.

Note about Online Gifts: Online gifts will be credited according to the date and time the online gift is submitted.

Choir Musical Offerings

Choirs Lead 11 a.m. Worship on December 9

The Chancel and Fellowship Choirs together will offer a musical sermon for the Christmas season. Selections will be:

Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence
Ave Maria
Gloria
All Praise to Thee
I Saw Three Ships

Edward Bairstow
Franz Biebl
Jeffrey Rickard
Elaine Hagenberg
arr. Mack Wilbelg



2019 Men's Retreat

January 18-20, 2019

Registration is now open for the 2019 Men's Retreat, coming up January 18-20 at the Hilton Garden Inn in Denton. Register at fpcfw.org/mensretreat. For best pricing, sign up by December 15. For more information, contact Patty O'Brien in the church office.

Advent Taizé Worship

Sunday, December 16 at 6:30 p.m.

Join us for this monthly worship service in the manner of the Taizé community in France, specifically celebrating the Advent season and Christmas. The service includes prayer, simple music, and scripture, and will be held in the Chapel.

Candlelight Labyrinth

Sunday, December 2 from 6-7:30 p.m.

Observe Advent at a candlelight labyrinth walk at FPC's outdoor labyrinth. Each of us becomes a pilgrim journeying to the center as the light fades to darkness. Then, we await together the advent of the Light of the World. Members of the Labyrinth Guild will be on hand to assist you. Come and go as you please.



Walk to the Nativity this Advent Season

Sunday, December 9 from 5:30-7:30 p.m.

Follow the star to the manger! After being assigned to a guide with a group of 10-15 others, you will walk a path lit by luminarias and stop along the way to visit Mary and Joseph journeying to Bethlehem, the Innkeeper, and the Holy Family. Live animals will complete this beautiful nativity experience. Finish with hot chocolate and cookies outside the Great Hall. Please park in the lots across from the Sanctuary and Great Hall. Come to the tent in front of the Sanctuary doors where you will meet your guide. This free event is open to all; bring your family and friends!



Angels Aware! Musical

Sunday, December 16 at 5:30 p.m.

Angels Aware! is a dramatic Christmas Musical, which will be presented by the Children's WHAM program participants and the Church School Kindergarten and Elementary Grades. We have approximately 48 angels preparing to tell us the story of Jesus' birth from the perspective of the angels. Join Gabriel, Michael, Moses, Isaiah and a host of Heralds, Cherubim and Seraphim in the Great Hall for this special gift of time and talent by our children!

2019 Pledges



If you have not yet turned in your pledge card, following Generosity Sunday on October 28, you may do so in the following ways:

ONLINE: Visit fpcfw.org/give and submit the form.

BY MAIL: Complete the pledge card you received in the mail and return it using the provided envelope. Extra cards are available in the Narthex outside the Sanctuary and at the Welcome Desk outside the Great Hall.

AT CHURCH: Bring your completed pledge card to church on Sunday and place in the offering plate at worship or drop by the church during regular business hours (M-F, 8:30 a.m. - 5 p.m.)

Christmas Luncheon

Sunday, December 2 at 11 a.m. and 12 p.m.

The Wellness Committee is sponsoring this luncheon for all. It will be held in the Great Hall. The theme is: *A Lighter Christmas Dinner* and will also include a cooking demonstration by Heath Brosi, our new Hospitality Director.

The menu includes: Strawberry Salad with vinaigrette, Grilled Chicken, Mashed Sweet Potatoes and Apple Cobbler.

This is a free event!

Room in the Inn

December 3 - February 25, 2019



The winter season of Room in the Inn begins in the gym. Each Monday, we welcome 14 homeless men for an evening of hospitality and respite. Volunteer to play games, eat dinner, engage in conversation, and greet our guests. Serve from 5-7 p.m. (or anytime in between). Please contact Deneice Allen in the church office at dallen@fpcfw.org or 817.335.1231 in advance.

Beacons' Christmas Party

Wednesday December 5 at 5 p.m.

Join the Beacons in the FPC Youth Center (across from the gym) as we celebrate the season with good food and music. The music for the evening will be brought to us by Sara and John Demore. They have joined us before and we are excited to have them join us once again! Please bring a favorite holiday season side dish or dessert to share. The main dish will be provided.

Party for the Blind

Thursday, December 6 from 5:30 - 7:30 p.m.

This is an annual youth and families mission project, held in the Great Hall. Every year, people in Tarrant county who are blind and their caregivers are invited to celebrate the Christmas season with a full Christmas dinner, musical performance by our youth music program, a gift exchange, and more. The Youth Choir will sing and then lead caroling, the Middle School Bells will play and then lead caroling. Church members are needed to drive guests to and from the party, and youth and parent volunteers are needed to set-up the event at 5:30 p.m., serve the meal at 6 p.m., facilitate the gift exchange and clean-up time, finishing by 7:30 p.m. If you can help, please call Jayne McFarland at 817.335.1231.

Christmas Toy Store

Saturday, December 8 from 8 a.m. - 3 p.m.

The annual Christmas Toy Store for families with children 5th grade and younger is coming up! Parents sign up (for a small fee) and shop at the store. The store offers the parents both dignity and choice in selecting gifts for their children. Here's how to help: **SHOP.** Did you pick a star to shop? Please bring your unwrapped gifts back to the manger scene receptacle by December 2. **GIVE.** Give gift cards and check donations (memo line: Christmas Toy Store 2018). Other church members will shop for you. **VOLUNTEER.** Help set up the store on Friday, December 7 or at the store on Saturday, December 8 in shifts. We especially need Spanish speakers on Saturday!

College & Young Adult Christmas Gathering

Sunday, December 16 from 5 - 7 p.m.

The Christmas season is a good time to get together and celebrate friends and family. The Young Adult Winter Gathering gives us a chance to enjoy dinner, a gift exchange, and watch the Children's Christmas program at 6 p.m.

Youth Christmas Parties

Sunday, December 16

Youth are invited to come to our annual White Elephant Christmas Parties this day, which happen during the normal Youth Group times listed below. As is tradition, spend \$10 max on the gift and please use recycled wrapping paper.

4:30 - 5:30 p.m. Middle School Christmas Party

5:30 - 6:00 p.m. Youth Dinner

6:00 - 7:00 p.m. High School Christmas Party

Youth Progressive Dinner

Friday, December 21 from 5:45 - 10:30 p.m.

Youth are invited to this fun traveling meal experience! Youth are to meet on the bus at church at 5:45 p.m. and we will plan to return around 10:30 p.m. Because this is a popular event and seats on the bus are limited, youth must RSVP to Josh for this by Thursday, December 13, and a notarized medical release form is required too because it involves charter bus transportation.

See pages 4-5 for a DECEMBER ADVENT & CHRISTMAS Calendar

DECEMBER ADVENT & CHRISTMAS CALENDAR



SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

The month of December is one bursting at the seams with opportunities for connection, celebration, and worship at First Presbyterian Church. From once-a-year special services, which are part of your family traditions, to new and fun parties with church friends, there's something for everyone. But don't let this full calendar add to the season easily overwhelmed with to-do's and checklists. We hope FPC will be a place for respite, reflection, and renewal this season. A time to remember the familiar yet powerful story of God's love for us in the gift of Jesus' birth. We can't wait to celebrate with you. Details on these events and more can be found on the other pages of this newsletter.

1
FPC Team Jingle Bell Race 4 p.m.

<p>2 First Sunday of Advent Morning Worship at 8, 9, and 11 a.m. All Congregation Luncheon 11 a.m. & 12 p.m. Candlelight Labyrinth, 6-7:30 p.m.</p>	<p>3 Room in the Inn begins 5-7 p.m.</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>5 Midday Prayer Service, 12 p.m. Organ Concert, 12:30 p.m. Beacons Christmas Party, 5 p.m.</p>	<p>6 Christmas Party for the Blind, 5:30-7:30 p.m.</p>	<p>7</p>	<p>8 Christmas Toy Store, 8 a.m.-3 p.m.</p>
<p>9 Second Sunday of Advent Morning Worship at 8, 9, and 11 a.m. Choral Sermon 11 a.m. Follow the Star 5:30 - 7:30 p.m.</p>	<p>10</p>	<p>11 Presbyterian Women Celebration of Christmas, 10:30 a.m. EEC Christmas Program, 6 p.m.</p>	<p>12 Midday Prayer Service, 12 p.m. Organ Concert, 12:30 p.m.</p>	<p>13</p>	<p>14</p>	<p>15</p>
<p>16 Third Sunday of Advent Morning Worship at 8, 9, and 11 a.m. YA Christmas Gathering, 5-7 p.m. 12 Days of Christmas boxes Angels Aware Musical, 5:30 p.m. Advent Taize Service, 6:30 p.m. Youth Christmas Parties, 4:30 - 7 p.m.</p>	<p>17</p>	<p>18</p>	<p>19 Midday Prayer Service, 12 p.m. Organ Concert, 12:30 p.m.</p>	<p>20</p>	<p>21 Youth Group Progressive Christmas Dinner, 5:45-10:30 p.m.</p>	<p>22</p>
<p>23 Fourth Sunday of Advent Morning Worship at 8, 9, and 11 a.m. 12 Days of Christmas boxes</p>	<p>24 Christmas Eve Worship in the Sanctuary, 12 noon Family Service, 5 p.m. Candlelight Service, 7 p.m. Communion & Candlelight Service, 9 p.m.</p>	<p>25 Christmas Day <i>Merry Christmas!</i> Church Offices and Early Education Center Closed</p>	<p>26 Church Offices and Early Education Center Closed</p>	<p>27</p>	<p>28</p>	<p>29 Youth Group Departs for Ski Trip (through January 2)</p>

30
Morning Worship at 8, 9, and 11 a.m.

31

WORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Monday, December 24

12 noon	Worship in the Sanctuary
5 p.m.	Service for families with children (Great Hall)
7 p.m.	Service with candlelight (Sanctuary)
9 p.m.	Service with communion & candlelight (Sanctuary)

Christmas Eve