

*For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders;
and he is named
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. - Isaiah 9:6*

Dear Friends in Christ,

In last month's edition of First Press I shared with you four ways to celebrate the holy day season without being totally exhausted by New Year's day:

- +set realistic expectations for the season;
- +make space for messy feelings like grief;
- +keep your self-care routine or begin a new one;
- +create your own traditions.

Here are a few more:

Give yourself permission to let it be a normal day. We've all fallen prey to what I like to call "Norman Rockwell Syndrome," which leads us to believe that unless the scene is picture-perfect, there is no real meaning or value. I personally love Norman Rockwell's art, but it is not entirely realistic for a majority of us. Even on our best day, someone in my family is bound to either have a stain on their shirt, a shoe lace untied, or lots of hair out of place (I bet you can guess who that is). NRS is particularly powerful during the holy day season. Whether on the front of Christmas cards or in store-front displays, we see nothing but smiles, perfectly wrapped presents, and, surprisingly, adults who look peaceful and calm as the kids tear through the presents and wreck the house in the meantime.

But the truth is, there is nothing that says Christmas Day or the holy day season has to be what retailers and artists make it out to be. The true meaning of Christmas - that God has become one of us - requires nothing more than a receptive and grateful heart. All the other 'stuff' is, well, just stuff. So if you find yourself struggling to figure out how to make Christmas 'special' this year, remember that giving thanks to God for the gift of Jesus Christ is more than an appropriate way to celebrate the Christmas miracle!

Don't feel guilty saying 'no.' I don't know a single person who has figured out how to do this well, myself included. But I do know what happens when we forget that 'no' is always an option that is available.

I had only been a pastor for about 5 months when it came time to preside for the first time over an Advent and Christmas celebration, and I wanted it to be just right. Even before the Thanksgiving turkey had fully cooled, I hit the ground running. If I wasn't decorating the house or baking several hours a night, I was visiting handfuls of church members and going to Christmas pageants and concerts for children in the church. There were wine and cheese parties on the weekends and fundraisers for every charity imaginable. Luckily, it was just me at that point in my life so I could be out of the house almost every night of the week. I had three good suits, and they were on rotation so that one or two would be at the cleaners while I wore the other one to the next event. And it was a spectacular season. That is, until I woke up Christmas Eve morning with a terrible fever and cough and could barely get out of bed.

(continued on page 3)

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ALEESHA GILL
NURSERY STAFF

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS:
TUESDAY THRU FRIDAY
9:00 A.M. TO 2:00 P.M.



Join us on December 18th during worship for our annual Pageant Sunday. This year, under the direction of Michele Elmer and Katie Burgoon Long, we will be presenting an adaptation of

A Capital C-H-R-S-T-M-A-S
by Gail Gaymer Martin.

This presentation will take us on a journey through the Christmas Story using the 9 letters which spell Christmas. The congregation will be joining us in singing some of our favorite carols.

If you have young children and this newsletter reaches you before Saturday the 17th we will be having a rehearsal at church at 10:30 AM, Saturday the 17th, with a pizza party to follow, please feel free to join us. All are welcome!



January 2	Liam MacDonald	January 20	Kathy Rucki
January 3	Eric Green	January 21	Patrick Shanahan
January 5	John Jeffries	January 25	Annika Jantzi
January 5	Jane Schweitzer	January 26	Blessed Enow
January 6	Marcia Bulger	January 26	Audrey Schweitzer
January 8	Phil Sprague	January 27	Peter Schmitt
January 10	Sherri Bergman	January 31	Tom Walker
January 12	Emily Russo	January 31	Laurel Pike
January 14	Anna Carbajal		

Here it was Christmas Eve, the night when we celebrate the true meaning of Christmas, and I was sick as can be. I nursed myself all day long on mint tea and Advil, and I was in pretty good shape for the first worship service of the evening. But by the end of the third service, I could barely get one foot in front of another. I had spent all season going and doing and it wore me right down to the bone. I had not set proper boundaries and thought, because of some NRS, that everything had to be just right or nothing would be right at all. And when it came time to worship the Newborn King, I almost fell asleep singing “Silent Night.”

Here is something else that is true: Christ is born among us. And he is born among us despite, and maybe in spite of, all the ways we run ourselves ragged at the holy days. Make a commitment to get to Christmas this year healthy and filled with joy for the great gift that is coming, even if that means saying ‘no’ to a few things along the way.

Finally, remember how much you are loved by God and by this community. Love is really at the heart of the Christmas story. Love that was so strong that it could only be expressed in the living and breathing One who took our form and walked among us.

It defies expectation. It resists categories and definition. There is no scientific way to explain it. But God became one of us in a manger in Bethlehem and our lives and the world have never been the same. By faith we see that Christ was not only on this earth several thousands of years ago, but is born and reborn each day when the great love of God is shared among his people. There is no greater command for us as his followers than to live in love. Each day we share that love with someone, Christ is born. Every day we chose to honor the dignity of all living things, Christ is born. When we resist the powers of evil that would have us constantly at each other’s throats, Christ is born. With our prayers and our worship, we acknowledge the Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, of whose rule over all things will never come to an end.

Come, let us adore him!



A Special Message from Pastor Andrew and Family

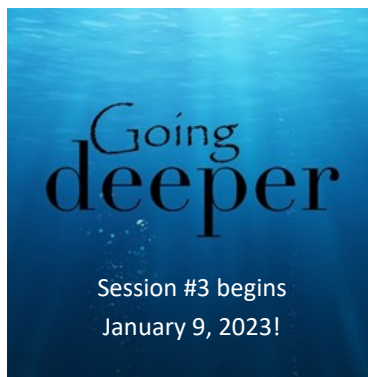


FPC Community and Friends,

You have blessed our family richly over these past 17 months as we moved to Watertown, took up the call at FPC, and as we have started building our life here among you. As we come close to Christmas, we know that it is a tradition for many to give gifts to their Pastor and his family, a wonderful expression of love and gratitude. This year, though, we ask that you consider making a gift to the church or to any philanthropic organization of your choice in our honor instead of giving us gifts directly. We are excited that the restoration of the church’s Steinway piano is underway and this would be a wonderful way to acknowledge the importance of music in our family and community. We also know that you are connected to a myriad of organizations that are changing lives near and far, all of which would bring us joy through your gifts.

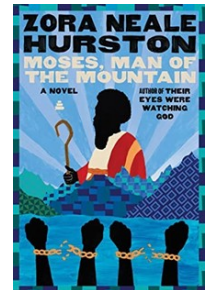
The truth is, we have all that we could ever need. The greatest gift you can give us is the assurance of your prayers and your presence which we look forward to having through many more holy day seasons to come!

The Long Family



The “Going Deeper” series has been a wonderful success for our community! In Session #1 and #2 we discussed, discerned, and prayed about what we believe about God and how the Bible helps us to encounter the living God of our faith. We shared great meals together and we’ve all been enriched by the experience! Session #3 promises much of the same!

Session #3 will focus on the ways that we incorporate the stories of our faith into our every day lives. In *Moses, Man of The Mountain*, Zora Neale Hurston retells and reshapes the biblical story of Moses as liberator of not just the Israelites but also of enslaved Africans in America. Through Hurston’s retelling, we see how the stories and characters of the Bible are still speaking to the world today.



Session #3 will meet:

- January 8 & 15, 2023: Large Group Discussion, 12pm, Fellowship Hall
- Week of January 22, 2023: Small group meetings.
- February 5, 2023: Large Group Discussion, 12pm, Fellowship Hall

There are three ways you can register for Session #3: contact the Church Office (315-782-1750) or Pastor Andrew (andrew.long1085@gmail.com), or use the Registration Form on the church website: www.watertownfirstpres.org.



We will enjoy exciting music at our 7:30 Christmas Eve service from brass quintet, organ, choir, and you, the Congregation!

The Molto Brass Quintet will start the festivities at 7:10 pm with a 20 minute prelude ranging from “Ding Dong! Merrily on High” to “Go Tell It on the Mountain!” We’ll add the pipe organ to the final two, “I Saw Three Ships” and The Sussex Carol. The Congregation will sing our beloved carols, “O Come, All Ye Faithful,” “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing,” “Angels We Have Heard on High,” and a Candlelight medley ending with “Silent Night.” The choir anthem will accompany the Women of Grace offering, and we will share communion as the Molto Brass provide sweet songs. When the candles are extinguished, we’ll close with “Joy to the World,” and a jolly, rousing organ and brass postlude. So come and soak up the music of this most blessed season, **starting at 7:10 pm, Saturday, Dec. 24 - Christmas Eve.**

Carl Bingle

Worship @ FPC This Christmas Eve!

We are excited to once again offer two different opportunities for worship on Christmas Eve. Come to one or come to both. Either way, come, let us adore him!



Children and Families Service ***4:30pm***

you are encouraged to wear your Christmas pj's or your most unique Christmas sweater!

The first service of Christmas Eve is designed specifically for children and their families. The service will follow the alphabet as we tell of the ABCs of Christmas! Children and all attendees will be given letters to share during worship, light sticks instead of candles, and other fun activities. There will be even be a prize for the best Christmas pjs and the most unique Christmas sweater! Childcare will be available, but children are encouraged to stay with their adults for worship - this is a service where kids can be kids!



Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion ***7:30pm***

The second service of Christmas Eve will be a traditional service of carols, brass and organ music with choir, holy communion, and candlelight. The service will end with a spectacular medley of Christmas carols by Molto Brass and Carl Bingle!



“Hope Has Come” ***a special service for Christmas Day*** **December 25** **10am**

Join Pastor Andrew on Christmas Day for a special service, “Hope Has Come.” Through story and song, encounter the story of Christmas in a special way. And stick around after for hot chocolate and cookies! Dress is casual and comfortable!

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Peace on Earth

KENNETH ANDREWS
Music Director & Conductor



Margaret Chalker
Soprano

December 18 at 3 pm
First Presbyterian Church
Watertown

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Memories of Ellie

by Linya Bell

It's my honor and joy to share with you the celebration of Eleanor's time with all the families in her life. I knew her as part of her church family and also her music family, as we first met in church choir and then sang for many years with the Northern Choral Society. Her stories were great, and her voice was wonderful – not a solo, but a choir voice, adding her alto depth to the beauty of sound. She talked often of the big trip she made with that group to England in the late 80's – before my time.

Her voice sang the songs of her love and pride for her family, as I'd drive her home following rehearsals and we'd converse in the car, sharing joys.

Her voice also rang through her writings! She was a long time member of a Jefferson County Writers group, and was well regarded for the twinkle in her eyes and the love in her heart that came through her poems. While her singing voice is not here, nor her conversations, her writings are still around in places. She wrote a poem following the tragedy of 9/11 that our organist Carl Bingle put to music. We have sung it at poignant moments of world events as a reminder of the greater things that are present. Today I offer you other words left us with other feelings. Here are 3; please hear the smile in Ellie's voice..

From Eleanor, August 1, 1993:

*Babies bring so many joys
Be they little girls or bouncing boys.
With goo's and coos and dimpled smiles
They woo us with their cunning wiles
The sternest heart melts to their charms,
How warm they feel cradled in your arms.
Their waving hands, shaped like stars
Soon have a grip on these hearts of ours.
We teach them their numbers and ABC's
And how to get down on their knees
And talk to their Father in heaven above
Who surrounds us all with enduring love.
Seeing life anew through their eyes
Sometimes brings a sweet surprise,
For we are reminded that God has told
We must be like them to enter His fold.
As babies, children, and then full grown
Ready to start on a path of their own,
They mark their progress with such pride
And feel a special joy inside.
All of this we wish for you
And we wish it, of course, times two!!*

Hugs

*Hugging is reciprocal, I'm sure you will agree,
'Cause when I'm hugging you,
you're also hugging me!
Heart to heart and holding on,
is as close as folks can get,
And I'm sure those who knock
just haven't tried it yet!*

Ellie's Last Poem to Us..

*To my Dear Relatives and Friends:
This is where our common journey ends.
You must stay and watch me walk
Down that long dark road,
But I trust that Jesus will
Help carry my load.
Since I no longer make my plea,
Please help me by singing this Hymn for me:
"Precious Lord Take My Hand"*

by Eleanor Fralick (8-8-13)

SHALLOW WELLS UPDATE

3,870 Shallow Wells were built in Malawi with American volunteer help in 2022. The shallow well season in Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia with the bonus of 16 in Mozambique is complete for 2022; however, the funding is not! We have received \$4,100 from 15 donors at 1st Pres. You can still be a part of that blessing by donating to First Presbyterian Church, 403 Washington Street, Watertown, NY 13601. Please Designate *for Shallow Wells*. \$450 provides for a well for an entire village. Even \$5 will make a difference. Thank you.

Don Klug



BIG GOD
BIG QUESTIONS

CONFIRMATION FOR A GROWING FAITH

The Christian Education Committee at FPC is pleased to announce that a Confirmation Class will be taking place starting in January 2023 for children ages 11-14. Using “Big God, Big Questions,” the first PC(USA) confirmation curriculum to be published in decades, confirmands will study the Bible, church history, and the workings of the local church in preparation to answer these following questions at their confirmation ceremony:

*Trusting in the gracious mercy of God, do you turn from the ways of sin
and renounce evil and its power in the world?
Who is your Lord and Savior?
Will you be Christ's faithful disciple obeying his word and showing his love?
Will you devote yourself to the church's teaching and fellowship,
to the breaking of bread and the prayers?*

Pastor Andrew will be teaching the confirmation class this year and will be working with the families involved to craft a class schedule that is convenient for all involved. Confirmands will also receive a Confirmation Mentor who is a member of the congregation who will support them throughout the process. The confirmation ceremony will take place during worship on Easter Sunday, April 9, 2023.

***Please contact Pastor Andrew by December 10 to reserve a spot in the class for your child:
(410) 916-1673 or andrew.long1085@gmail.com.***

The Open Table

*O taste and see that the Lord is good!—Psalm 34:8

Thank you, to everyone who has continued to appear monthly and help us serve our community with food. We have been doing this for almost 1 year. Wow!

We will NOT be serving on December 25.

We will be serving on January 1, 2023 and again on January 29th.

Menu for New Year's Day will be a breakfast casserole, a croissant and a piece of fruit. Menu for the 29th is still TBD.

Sign up sheets will be in Fellowship Hall. If you haven't joined our team before, start the New Year off right and come to church at 4:00 PM.



2022 Christmas Poinsettias

Beautiful poinsettias will grace our worship space for Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day this year! Dedications in honor or memory of loved ones will be by donation, with all proceeds going directly to the restoration of FPC's sanctuary Steinway piano. Submit your donation and information to the church office by December 20. (Please circle honor or memory.)

In honor/memory of _____

In honor/memory of _____

In honor/memory of _____

In honor/memory of _____

Given By: _____

Total: \$ _____

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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www.facebook.com/watertownfpc

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just visit our website at www.watertownfirstpres.org.

*The spirit of Christmas creates a mood in which
commonplace events become portals into divinity,
and everyday encounters place us on holy ground.
“Do you hear what I hear?” queries a carol. If we
train our ears, there is a song in the air - a baby’s cry,
a shepherd’s laugh, a wise man’s affirmation - and it
is the song of God within and around us.*

- Howard Thurman

