

# First Things First

December 2021/ January 2022

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## What is it about the Advent Season that tugs at our heart?

I know that most of the world calls this time of year “the Christmas Season”, yet we Christians know better. We know that on the first Sunday in Advent, (November 28<sup>th</sup> this year) the church calendar flips, and we begin a “New Year”. We are just so out of step with the commercialized, consumer-driven world. Let’s admit it: we are an awkward people.

First, we celebrate New Year’s Day an entire month before January 1. And then, we (mostly) don’t sing Christmas carols until it is Christmas Day. No matter what the radio stations might play.

Further, during this Advent Season, unlike our consumer-driven world, we do not get amnesia about the darkness of our world: families being forced out of their hometowns, immigrants fleeing oppressive regimes, children being targeted and murdered. In fact, we embrace this dark story. Each year, during Advent and Christmastide, we remind ourselves of a family back then.... which connects us to what all too frequently happens now to families in our own time.

We Christians don’t flinch from this darkness; we don’t deny this darkness; in fact, despite what our world does, we hold this darkness close because that is exactly where God chose to be born, where God’s LIGHT flickered on and began to shine. It makes no sense, but.... That is what God did and does.

God allows us to see that God is not done with our world YET- that is what **hope** is; next, as we honestly confess the role we play in consenting, tolerating and promoting the darkness of our world, we unexpectedly are gripped by God’s forgiving **peace**; as we become more honest, we see through the false promises of happiness and embrace our darkness which allows us to be surprised by God’s **joy**; it is then that we have a greater capacity to accept God’s **love** for us.

No, our Christmas story is not all happiness and presents; It is filled with unexpected twists and turns, disquieting visits and disturbing dreams which give us hope, peace, joy and love- the true gifts of Christmas.

This will be the last Christmas we will be together in this building which makes this Advent/ Christmas Season so much more poignant. I am glad that we are on this journey together- it is a journey that promises to give us the Christmas that we have always wanted.

### First Presbyterian Church of Waukesha

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Maybe it is the gift when the year turns, but during Advent, I tend to reflect on what has happened in the past, pray for guidance and strength to face what life holds and give thanks to God for my wife, my family, my friends and you all.

I am still astonished that God has called me to minister with and among you. Here is my Advent/Christmastide offering to you from the Reichelderfer archives. From the Letter of Taizé-December 1981 (slightly emended) .....

“According to an old Christian prayer, on Christmas night, while the magi bring gold, frankincense and myrrh to the newborn child, the shepherds offer but one gift: **their astonishment**. The Gospel is sensitive to this reality of astonishment and surprise which surrounds Christ birth. At the Annunciation, hearing the words, “Rejoice, most favored one” (Luke 1:28), Saint Luke writes that Mary “was startled”. Her shock and wonder will be changed into joy; Mary will soon break forth in song but first the confirmation of another believer, Elizabeth, is needed: “Blessed is she who believed!” (Luke 1:45). Then Mary’s joy overflows: “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, and my spirit exults in God my Savior.” Welcoming and confirming Mary, Elizabeth is surprised: “Why should this great thing happen to me, that my Lord’s mother should visit me?” (Luke 1:43) A fourth century Christian translates the first part of Elizabeth’s statement using these words: “What joy is given to me.”

Astonishment comes also to the shepherds. They had not expected a revelation from God. At the beginning of our age, they were often considered outsiders, without access to the knowledge of God. In the Gospel, they are the first to learn of Christ’s birth and its meaning. Their “great fear” (Luke 2:9) is the feeling of any who are surprised by the manifestation of God. They have not been prepared for this by their past or their way of life. But the angel says to them: “Do not be afraid, for behold, I announce to you good news of a great joy which will be for all people”. “With haste” (Luke 2:16) they make their way to Bethlehem and tell what God has made known to them; once again Saint Luke remarks: “All who heard were astonished.” (Luke 2:18) From fear, the shepherds pass through awe to joy: “They returned glorifying and praising God” (Luke 2:20)

In nearly all these texts, astonishment precedes and, at times, accompanies the discovery of great joy- the acknowledging of God’s design of love for humanity. Through Mary, Elizabeth and the shepherds, it is as if the Gospel were giving us our first glimpse of the Church: a people astonished by God.

Saint Luke tells us that the joy which has entered the world at the birth of Christ is for all people. (Luke 2:10) Saint Matthew will also show that Christ is present to every human through the mystery we celebrate at Epiphany: the magi do not belong to the chosen people yet come to pay the Christ Child homage (Matthew 2:1-12). Their arrival is consonant with the promise found in Psalm 98- “The ends of the earth see the salvation of our God.” Saint John will express this in his own way, “The Word was the real light, the light which comes into the world and shines in every person.” (John 1:9)

All have reason to be astonished at being called to live communion with Christ, to be reflections of Christ’s life, parables of sharing, workers of peace, bearers of reconciliation, because all know we lack the means to live a holy life. But God chose us and by offering our astonishment, we too will see our fears change into praise.”

Peace be with you all as we await how God will guide us into the future.  
I can't wait to see what will unfold.  
~Pastor Glen

### Prayers from a fellow Presbyterian in Marietta, GA...



To the Congregation,  
I am a member of  
First Presbyterian Church  
of Marietta. I wanted to  
send this card to tell  
you that I am praying  
for the citizens of  
Waukesha and your  
congregation at this  
time of tragedy in  
your state.  
I believe that God  
calls us to reach out to  
others in love every day  
not only when a  
tragedy happens. Max

God's loving arms  
support the congregation  
and may you all  
feel the prayers  
from all over the  
world.

Praying and  
knowing God is  
love and sending  
this card in love and  
hope with compassion.

Presbyterian Women  
First Presbyterian Church  
Marietta, Georgia

Denise Kobodinski



## Timing November 17, 2021 Rachel Yates

As we begin to huddle against the cold and snip down the dead flower heads from our gardens, I am so thankful for the leaves. The leaves that continue to fall even as I'm raking. The leaves that clog my gutters. The leaves that cling to the bottom of my shoes, so they can find their way indoors. Their colors astonish me and provoke joy, even though they are harbingers of the winter freeze.

They follow a pattern of the seasons that is predictable – at a time when we long for stability and normalcy. I know what to expect from my leaves and what their dropping portends. Not all of my garden is quite as cooperative.

Last spring, we splurged on some flowering plants from the store: a pot of hyacinths and a pot of tulips. When the plants stopped blooming, I took the pots outside and set them on the railing, intending to plant the bulbs later. Months passed, and I never got around to planting them. Or watering them. Or even putting them in the sunshine.

In September, I thought again about planting them, but the soil was a hard clod by then. I assumed naively that nothing could be alive – even if dormant – in those pots.

Last week, I picked up the pots to throw them away and, lo and behold, they are both budding. As the leaves are falling and the grass crunches with frost, my bulbs have chosen this time to emerge.

The pots are now back in my kitchen, receiving warmth and water. I have no idea whether I'll see blooms this year. I'm afraid to count on it.

Life has been too uncertain, too frail, too unpredictable. Expectations have been dashed. And yet, there they are...bold in their determination. So, I do my part in tending to them, hopeful but realistic.

I offer this blessing for them and for you:

As you poke out of the dryness that has left you parched,  
as you push aside the dry clods that have constrained you,  
may you emerge with abandon and confidence to embrace life, to grow tall,  
to display your vibrant colors. May all who encounter you pause, startled, wondering about  
your sense of timing and how  
even now, you can burst with life,  
even now, provoke joy



**DECEMBER 5**

9:30 AM **Worship**  
**Communion Sunday**  
Sanctuary

**DECEMBER 8**

6:30 PM **Combined Session/Deacons**  
**Meeting at First Pres\***

**DECEMBER 12**

9:30 AM **Worship**  
Sanctuary

**DECEMBER 19**

9:30 AM **Worship**  
Sanctuary

**DECEMBER 21**

9:00 AM **Women's Breakfast**  
**The Coop in Waukesha**

**DECEMBER 23**

8:00 AM **Men's Breakfast**  
**Dady-Oh's in Waukesha**

**DECEMBER 24**

**Office Closed**  
7:00 PM **Christmas Eve**  
Sanctuary



**DECEMBER 25**

**Christmas Day**  
No Worship at First Presbyterian

**DECEMBER 26**

9:30 AM **Worship**  
Sanctuary

**DECEMBER 31**

**Office Closed**



**JANUARY 1**

**New Year's Day**



**JANUARY 2**

9:30 AM **Worship**  
**Epiphany (observed)**  
**Communion Sunday**  
Sanctuary

**JANUARY 3**

6:00 PM **Session Meeting**

**JANUARY 8 (Tentatively scheduled for)**

10:00 AM **Removing the Greenery**

**JANUARY 9**

9:30 AM **Worship**  
**Baptism of the Lord**  
**Ordination/Installation of**  
**Elders and Deacons**

**JANUARY 16**

10:00 AM **Worship**  
**St. Matthias**  
**111 East Main Street, Waukesha**

**JANUARY 18**

9:00 AM **Women's Breakfast**  
**The Coop**

**JANUARY 20**

8:00 AM **Men's Breakfast**  
**Dady-Oh's**

**JANUARY 23**

9:30 AM **Worship**  
Sanctuary

**JANUARY 30**

9:30 AM **Worship**  
Sanctuary

## December Birthdays

12/8 Russ Volmar  
12/9 Therese Dorna  
12/21 Russell Volmar, III  
12/22 Charles Franzke  
12/26 Krista Dittrich  
12/29 Charlie Davies



## January Birthdays

1/13 Derek Noska  
1/19 Kaelyn Van Essen  
1/29 Karen Schmidt  
1/30 Linda Volmar  
1/30 Mackenzie Van Essen



## Session / Deacons' Meeting

The annual combined Session and Deacons meeting will be at 6:30PM on Wednesday, December 8 at First Pres.

## Advent Devotionals

There are Advent Devotionals booklets, "Devotions for Advent" available on the entry table. You can also go to [www.presbyterianmission.org](http://www.presbyterianmission.org); select; Home> Presbyterians Today> Advent and Christmas Devotional for 2021.

Please note office hours are Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, 8:00 AM to 12:30 PM. Office will be closed December 24 and December 31

Have something for the February 2022 newsletter? Please send it to [presby1@sbcglobal.net](mailto:presby1@sbcglobal.net) or drop it in Therese's mailbox by **Monday, January 24** to have it included. Any items received after the 24th will be included in the March newsletter.

## Christmas Joy Offering

The **Christmas Joy Offering** has been a cherished Presbyterian tradition since the 1930s. The Offering, running from **November 28th - December 19th**, distributes gifts equally to the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions and to Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color. The Assistance Program provides critical financial support to church workers and their families. Presbyterian-related schools and colleges provide education and leadership development while nurturing racial and ethnic heritage. This has been a Presbyterian commitment for nearly 140 years. Envelopes will be on the entry table.



CHRISTMAS JOY  
OFFERING  
BOARD OF ASSISTANCE



THE  
MILWAUKEE  
MANDOLIN  
ORCHESTRA

Since 1900

HOLIDAY CONCERTS

WITH AARON CARUSO, TENOR

DECEMBER 2<sup>nd</sup> THURSDAY 7PM

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

WAUKESHA, WI

DECEMBER 3<sup>rd</sup> FRIDAY 7PM

ST. MARK'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

MILWAUKEE, WI

## Christmas Eve Readers

As part of our Christmas Eve service of lessons and carols on **Friday, December 24 at 7:00 P.M.**, we are looking for several volunteers. If you would be willing to read one of the lessons, **please contact David Schultz via email: david@theschultzfamily.us or cell: (262)441-6109 by December 9** so he can get you your reading. Thank you!

## Christmas Eve Service



Join us on **Friday, December 24, at 7:00PM** for our traditional lessons and carols service, at the end of which we will sing "Silent Night" together by candlelight.

## Removing the Greenery

Just as the tree must come down in your home, so must the tree (and garland and poinsettias and wreaths and pew decorations) in the sanctuary. Please join us at 10:00 AM on **Saturday, January 8**, as we ready the church again for Ordinary Time.



## The Session at Work

In November the Session developed and approved the 2022 Budget. It is anticipated FPCW will own the building through the end of January and worship through the beginning of May. The budget reflected line items that would be a partial year and those that would be a full year. It is anticipated that giving will continue at its current level.

The Presbytery of Milwaukee asked FPCW to develop a Ministry Plan to address future plans for the church. It is our intent to remain a legal entity. Whether it continues as its current incorporation or forms a new one, there is a desire to remain part of the PCUSA and Presbytery of Milwaukee. This also include maintaining current worship styles, programs and committees. The building will be sold with other property being retained, turned over to the Presbyterian Historical Society or dispersed (sold or disposed).

The Session also discussed several items related to ongoing activities. Worship services continue to be in person and available on YouTube. FPCW will participate in Christmas Joy Offering. The building continues to remain in good shape due to ongoing care. The church continues to be in good financial shape which is reflected in the 2022 budget.

## The Deacons at Work

At our November meeting, the board of deacons voted to send charitable contributions to the following organizations who we believe have a significant impact in our community:

Salvation Army Waukesha Chapter	\$ 500
Hebron House of Hospitality	\$1000
The Hope Center	\$1000
Waukesha Food Pantry	\$ 500
Waukesha Free Clinic	\$ 500
Blessings in a Backpack	\$ 500
<u>Wisconsin Council of Churches</u>	<u>\$2000</u>
(specifically marked for Afghan Refugee resettlement in Wisconsin)	
Total Donation	\$ 6000

This is in addition to our monthly meal for Hebron House (Juno House), a meal at Hope House through Loaves and Fishes, participation in the annual mitten tree, and outreach to members and friends. Thank you for your generous giving throughout the year. Together, we do make a difference.

# 'Twas the Night Before Christmas



'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house  
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse;  
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,  
In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there;  
The children were nestled all snug in their beds;  
While visions of sugar-plums danced in their heads;  
And mamma in her 'kerchief, and I in my cap,  
Had just settled our brains for a long winter's nap,  
When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,  
I sprang from my bed to see what was the matter.  
Away to the window I flew like a flash,  
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.  
The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow,  
Gave a lustre of midday to objects below,  
When what to my wondering eyes did appear,  
But a miniature sleigh and eight tiny rein-deer,  
With a little old driver so lively and quick,  
I knew in a moment he must be St. Nick.  
More rapid than eagles his coursers they came,  
And he whistled, and shouted, and called them by name:  
"Now, Dasher! now, Dancer! now Prancer and Vixen!  
On, Comet! on, Cupid! on, Dunder and Blixen!  
To the top of the porch! to the top of the wall!  
Now dash away! dash away! dash away all!"  
As leaves that before the wild hurricane fly,  
When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky;  
So up to the housetop the coursers they flew  
With the sleigh full of toys, and St. Nicholas too—  
And then, in a twinkling, I heard on the roof  
The prancing and pawing of each little hoof.  
As I drew in my head, and was turning around,  
Down the chimney St. Nicholas came with a bound.  
He was dressed all in fur, from his head to his foot,  
And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot;  
A bundle of toys he had flung on his back,  
And he looked like a pedler just opening his pack.  
His eyes—how they twinkled! his dimples, how merry!  
His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry!  
His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow,  
And the beard on his chin was as white as the snow;  
The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth,  
And the smoke, it encircled his head like a wreath:  
He had a broad face and a little round belly  
That shook when he laughed, like a bowl full of jelly.  
He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf,  
And I laughed when I saw him, in spite of myself;  
A wink of his eye and a twist of his head  
Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread;  
He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work,  
And filled all the stockings; then turned with a jerk,  
And laying his finger aside of his nose,  
And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose;  
He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle,  
And away they all flew like the down of a thistle.  
But I heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of sight—  
Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good night!"

*~Clement Clark Moore*