

*First Presbyterian Church
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DECEMBER 2021 LINK

FROM THE PASTOR

Advent is a glorious time of the church year – the beginning of a new year and, in our tradition, with great emphasis on that "glory" of God that is hard to define. Who is this child born on Christmas Day? Why did that star shine so much brighter than other stars? Where do we go today to recapture the glory of that first Christmas?

"O Come, All Ye Faithful," and you will see as you gather during December worship.

Advent is a time of waiting and expectation – we wait for the day when once again we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ; we wait for the promised day when the risen, ascended Christ, full of glory, returns with all the angels surrounding him.

Many meanings color our feelings about Advent. Of all those colors and meanings, the one that always will stand out for me is the HOPE embodied in Advent blessings.

A wise writer who wrote many words about Advent and the double meaning of anticipation it embodies also said this:

"I am convinced that one of the main purposes of the incarnation of Jesus was to provide hope. While most people today want to talk about the death of Jesus and the Atonement of sins, the early Church celebrated the Resurrection and the hope it embodied. It was a proclamation of a truth that rang throughout the Old Testament, that endings are not always endings but are opportunities for God to bring new beginnings. The Resurrection proclaimed that truth even about humanity's greatest fear, death itself." (Dennis Bratcher)

Please join with me in this Advent Season as we anticipate the birth of the baby Jesus and lean forward into the hope that is ours as we know Christ will come again to make all things new.

Joyful to be walking on this journey with you,

Joan

MUSIC NOTES

Greetings dear members and friends of First Presbyterian Church.

This Advent/Christmas season we will have many wonderful things going on in the church for all ages. I would like to highlight specific things your music department is doing to enhance the season for you!

This Advent you will notice a change in the pew racks—the hymnals have changed colors! But more than that, they have changed altogether to a new edition. This edition is not actually so "new" as it was actually published in 2013, but it is new to us in this place. I encourage you to pick it up, flip through it, and even look in the index for your favorites. You will find that many of the "oldies" that were removed from the blue hymnal have found their way back in this edition, and some of the texts that were altered in the former hymnal have been restored to their original translation. Also in this hymnal are several new hymns and songs that I think you will enjoy. The front pages have the order of service from The Book of Common Worship for the Lord's Day, Eucharist (Communion), Baptism, Reaffirmation of the Baptismal Covenant, and services for Daily Prayer throughout the day. The service music section has been greatly expanded offering many options. Also of note in this edition is the addition of 'hymn notes' at the bottom of the page of each hymn giving interesting facts and history of the tune and/or text.

On two consecutive Tuesdays in December, the 7th and the 14th, we will be offering noonday Organ Recitals followed by light lunch in Stratton Chapel. The recitals will begin at 12:05 and last about 25-30 minutes—a perfect 'midday treat'. The first program will consist of all Bach, performed by Dr. Franco Gurman, Organist for St. Mary's Basilica. The second program will be a varied program (including a couple of Christmas favorites!) performed by myself on our wonderful pipe organ.

The annual "Caroling on the Steps" will be held on Friday, December 17, at 5:00 p.m. We will gather on the porch/steps at the front of the church and sing favorite Christmas carols and enjoy hot chocolate. Fun for all ages and a great gift to the community from our church. (Pray for cool weather!)

The last musical special event before Christmas Eve will be Lessons and Carols on Sunday, December 19 at 5:30 p.m. This is the traditional set of Scripture lessons followed by carols of the season. What a joy to gather and sing so many Christmas carols together, lifting our voices in great joy and wonder! There will be a couple of great additions to the service provided by some of our choristers and the handbell choir.

I hope that you will make a special effort to treat yourself to one or more of these special music events described above, and of course I encourage and invite everyone to come and join together for Christmas Eve service at 5:30 p.m. on the 24th! What a glorious thing it would be to have a large crowd to commemorate the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ in 2021!

Blessings to you all for a most joy-filled Advent and Christmas Season.

Vincent Bache, III

Director of Music and Organist

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION COMMITTEE

What a wonderful season for us all to be considering our priorities for this new year! Because I had already left the sanctuary for children's time, I later watched on video our congregation's members bring forward their pledges on November 21. What a joyful sight! With our offers of financial gifts and tithes still arriving by mail, the recent Thanksgiving Holidays, and the beginning of Advent, our hearts are filled with gratitude. It is a season that may cause us to evaluate the stewardship of all that God has entrusted to us, no gift less important than our time.

We are blessed with families in our congregation who in their homes have set aside time with their children and spouses to explore the Bible, pray, and discuss how we as Christians should navigate our lives. Most members are also faithfully involved in the ongoing activities of the church. Are we individually doing what we are called to do? Are we as a church, providing what is needed for Christian Education? If our church education and fellowship programs are falling short of what is needed, we ask for you to offer your suggestions for improvement. Please call Joan, me, or any elder with your ideas or offer of help.

Please take advantage of the training and fellowship opportunities at First Presbyterian and perhaps resolve to increase your participation in the life of the church. To be all that we can be for our families, communities, and ourselves, we need every person to exercise his or her gifts and talents. As God has given Himself generously, let us give ourselves to one another.

The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work. 2 Corinthians 9:6-8

Sunday school starts at 9:15 or a little later, the Tuesday Bible study begins at 11:00, and the Wednesday one at 6:00.

Helen Smith, chairman
Christian Education Committee

PLAYSCHOOL

It's hard to believe that November is over and December is already here! We had so much fun this past month learning about Thanksgiving, families, and turkeys!

As we move into the month of December, we will be learning about Christmas and all that it entails! From the birth of Jesus to Santa and everything up until the New Year! We will help spread the joy of Christmas by being holiday angels to a family (more info about this coming soon).

May you all have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year filled with friends and family!

Aretha Davis
Playschool Director

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

The Presbyterian Women's Annual Christmas Coffee will be held on December 1 in the Parlor from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. At that time, donations will be accepted to help with our Senior Citizen's Christmas Project. Refreshments will be furnished by the PW Board.

Rebekah Circle will meet at 10 a.m., on Wednesday, December 8, in the Parlor. Dana Dent will be presenting Lesson 4 of our Bible study, *Into the Light, Finding Hope through Prayers of Lament*.

Mark those calendars for our January PW Luncheon on Wednesday, January 19. The Rebekah Circle will host this luncheon, serving delicious soups. The Rev. Dr. Lynn Miller will be our guest speaker. More to follow on that later.

February will be our annual fundraiser. Once again we will be selling Rotel chicken spaghetti casseroles. Specifics will be announced later, but the deadline for ordering will be February 1, with the pick up on February 14!

We appreciate your participation in all these PW activities and God bless you.

Merry Christmas to all!
Phyllis Mashburn, Moderator

TOYS FOR TOTS: DEADLINE IS DECEMBER 3

The Marine Toys for Tots Program has been delivering a message of hope to less fortunate youngsters since 1947. Over 97 percent of your donation goes directly to the mission of providing toys, books, and other gifts to less fortunate children. We have a collection box in the church office and one in the church. You may bring your *new, unwrapped* toys anytime between now and December 3. By donating Christmas gifts to needy children in our community, you help spread a message of hope to those less fortunate.

INSTALLATION/ORDINATION OF NEW OFFICERS

New officers will be installed and ordained on Sunday, December 12. Please plan to participate in this worship service. On October 10, the congregation elected new officers to serve in the term beginning January 2022. They are Elders Stratton Bull and Cara Moody, returning for a second term; and Bobby Meason and George Bates, returning after a break from service on the Session. Deacons are Everette Ratcliffe, returning for a second term; and Kristen Abney and Hubert Smith, new to the Board of Deacons.

LUNCHEON DECEMBER 12

Deacons will work with others in the congregation to prepare a festive luncheon after 10:30 worship in Fellowship Hall on Sunday, December 12. Deacons will provide more information in the weeks ahead about how you can help to make this a special time!

WONDERFUL WEDNESDAYS

This month, our Wednesday evenings will begin at 6 p.m. Join Joan Gandy for a conversational study in the library. Choir rehearsal is upstairs in the Sanctuary. Randy Smith now plays ball games with the children of all ages in the gym. We will not have meals this month. Suppers will start again in January.

COOKIE EXCHANGE FUNDRAISER

Join us on Saturday, December 18, from 11a.m.-1 p.m. for a cookie exchange. Bring 2 dozen cookies and for \$20, the church will provide a container for you to fill with homemade cookies to take with you and enjoy for the holiday. The proceeds of this fundraiser will go to the FPC Food and Medicine ministry.

COMING TO YOU SOON: PRAYER PARTNERS

Names of all members and friends of the congregation are being matched at random for prayers. The idea is that every day every person will pray and will be a recipient of prayer. Each person will be linked with at least one other for whom to pray.

Information about the process will be sent out with all the pairing information once the process is complete. You may reveal your identity to the one for whom you pray or you may keep it confidential. The important thing is to pray!

The Deacons will meet Thursday, December 9, at 5:30 p.m. in the church library.

The next Session Meeting is Monday, December 13, at 5:30 p.m. in the church library.

The Men's Prayer Breakfast will meet Tuesday, December 14, at 7 a.m. in Fellowship Hall.

Holiday Schedule: The church offices and the Playschool will be closed Friday, December 24 and Monday, December 27, for a holiday break. Merry Christmas! We will also be closed Friday, December 31, for New Year's. Happy New Year!

Open Gates AA Meeting meets every Wednesday at 12 noon in the basement meeting room in Stratton Chapel.

Boy Scout Troop 157 meets at 7 p.m. Mondays in Fellowship Hall.

The Pastor's Bible Study meets on Tuesdays, at 11 a.m. in Stratton Chapel. You may bring your Bibles or use the ones provided in the chapel.

Online Giving: For your convenience you now can give online through PayPal. You do not have to have a PayPal account. Just click the Online Donate button on our Give webpage at <https://www.fpcnatchez.org/give>. This is a great way to meet your regular commitments to the church or to make a special gift. Thank you for your faithfulness.

To have a copy of our prayer list emailed to you, please contact the church office. Hard copies are also available in the church office if you would like to stop and pick one up.

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

December 2 **Claire Calhoun**

December 9 **Todd Mooney**

December 12 **Ginny Borum**
 Burne Sharp

December 13 **Wayne Murphy**

December 14 **Lee Jones**

December 17 **Wessye Heard**

December 19 **Howard Jones**

December 20 **Rusty Jenkins**
 Lane Rehms

December 23 **Judy Moody**

December 30 **Daye Dearing**

ORDER YOUR POINSETTIAS NOW

...in memory of or in honor of loved ones.

The cost is \$25 and we will place the order for you.

Just fill out this form and turn it into the church office, along with your check (labeled "poinsettias"). **Deadline: December 9**

TOTAL NUMBER of plants _____

In MEMORY OF

1. _____

Given By: _____

2. _____

Given By: _____

In HONOR OF

1. _____

Given By: _____

2. _____

Given By: _____

CHURCH STAFF

The Rev. Dr. Joan W. Gandy, Pastor
Mr. Vincent Bache III, Director of Music and Organist
Deon Buford, Sexton
Aretha Davis, Playschool Director
Pam McNeil, Office Administrator
Mary Ann Peoples, Financial Secretary

Officers of the Church

ELDERS:

Class of 2021: Chuck Borum, Stratton Bull, Cara Moody, Anne Willett
Class of 2022: Marc Doyle, Rosemary Hall, Danna Mooney, Helen Smith
Class of 2023: Lane Feltus, Hal Hicks, Mary Lessley, Catherine Ratcliffe

DEACONS:

Class of 2021: Spencer Holder, Everette Ratcliffe, Frances Meason
Class of 2022: Sandra Burkes, Rusty Jenkins, Sarah Smith
Class of 2023: Ken Price, Ryan Sharp, Gwen Washington

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2021 FPC Christmas Activities

Wednesday, December 1—9:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m.,
PW Christmas Coffee in the Parlor

Tuesday, December 7—12:05 p.m., Concert in the
Sanctuary; light soup-sandwich lunch in Stratton Chapel

Sunday, December 12 – 11:30 a.m., Luncheon in
Fellowship Hall

Tuesday, December 14—12:05 p.m Concert in the
Sanctuary; light soup-sandwich lunch in Stratton Chapel

Friday, December 17—5 p.m., Caroling on the Steps—the
church will be open and decorated for Christmas

Saturday, December 18—11 a.m.-1 p.m. Cookie Exchange
in Stratton Chapel/Parlor. Bring 2 dozen cookies to share.
Then for \$20, you may fill the box provided by the church
with homemade cookies. Proceeds go to FPC's Food and
Medicine Ministry.

Sunday, December 19—5:30 p.m. Lessons and Carols,
Sanctuary

Friday, December 24—5:30 p.m. Christmas Eve worship in
the Sanctuary