

Merry Christmas from the Staff
at First Presbyterian Church of
Palm Bay.

Find us on 



The CHIMES Newsletter

December 1, 2023



December is beginning, which means in my home, the Christmas decorations are already out! It has become a family

tradition to pack up the fall decorations on the day after Thanksgiving and set out all our Christmas items, including purchasing a Christmas tree. On Saturday, we decorate the tree according to an agreed-upon theme and also put up lights outside. If anyone is curious, this year's theme was "miscellaneous" tree, which meant we had a free-for-all on our more sentimental decorations and put them up with zero regard for matching or clashing.

My favorite decorations to put out are the nativity sets and Advent candle /wreath set. I like finding just the right spot for the shepherds so they can get a good view of baby Jesus, while still being close enough to the sheep to look like they are doing a good job. Sometimes I mix them in with the wise men figures so that I can see how Jesus breaks down divisions. Occasionally, I move the fluffy sheep that's not part of the set close to the Jesus figure so that it looks like he'll be warmer.

This year, for worship, I will be combining my love of wreaths and

Pastor's Thoughts

nativities by connecting the weeks of Advent with the people in the story of Jesus' birth. Zechariah and Elizabeth, Shepherds, Angels, Mary and Joseph will all get time to be a part of our preparation for the season of Christmas and of Christ's return one day.

As you make preparations for Christmas in your homes, I hope that the season and lessons of Advent can help make your celebrations that much more meaningful, as you connect to the story of the birth of Jesus and the promise of his return.

Advent Prayers for Each Week

Week 1: God of hope, you promised Zechariah and Elizabeth the fulfillment of a dream forgotten, and in the season of their expectation, filled their hearts with praise. Help this week to be one of dreams and anticipation, and help me to embrace the hope of your promises. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Week 2: God of peace, your angels had to quiet frightened hearts, combat doubt, and address questions of how your plans could come to fruition. Help me to ask what I need in order to find the peace of receiving comfort, assurance, and answers at your hand.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Week 3: God of joy, hearts leap in praise as you draw near. Help me to feel the joy of your presence in this season. Help me to reach out in faith in new directions, expecting that your work in me will bring about new life, new growth, and new sources of joy. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Week 4: God of love, your compassion and gentleness helps me to feel safe in your presence. Help me trust that your love is big enough to make it through all the obstacles in your way, strong enough to see me through all circumstances, and deep enough never to be exhausted. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Christmas Services

There will be a regular service of worship Sunday morning, December 24th. The focus of this service will be on the scriptures and message connected to the 4th Sunday of Advent.

There will be a Candlelight Service with Communion Sunday evening at 7 p.m. to celebrate Christmas Eve. Bring family and friends as we celebrate the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ!



Session Summary

The session met on November 21st. Matters discussed included the following:

- The Audit for 2022 was received. Thank you to Jim Corton and David Collins for all their work in reviewing the financial records and making sure all was correct. There were no comments or concerns raised. The Sunday School class is finishing their current class on Acts and will be choosing their next study at their pot-luck class on November 26th.
- Session reviewed initial information for the 2024 budget. When Stewardship Campaign information is available to fill in details for anticipated income, the budget will be reviewed in total.
- Session is moving forward with getting bids to trim the trees on the property. The branches that overhang the building need to be cut back, but a general trimming will increase the health, safety, and appearance of the trees on the property.
- Session voted to call a congregational meeting on Sunday, December 3rd for the purpose of electing officers.
 - Treasurer's Report for November:
 - Average Monthly Expenses: \$19,718.35
 - Actual Expenses in October: \$ 18,092.87
 - Contributions in October: \$ 20,427.89
 - Income year-to-date: \$ 183,750.93
 - Expenses year-to-date: \$ 181,897.29
 - Surplus year-to-date: \$ 1,853.64



Nominating Committee Report and Congregational Meeting

The Nominating Committee has finished its work for this year and there will be a Congregational Meeting following worship on Sunday, December 3rd for the purpose of electing officers. The slate of officers that will be presented is:

Elders: *Jack Dayton, Brian Clark, Anna Wood (2 year term)*

Deacons: *Ronnie Dayton, Terry Twardzik, Carolyn Teal (2 year term)*

Nominating Committee: *Judy Rutter, Carolyn Teal*

There is still one 3-year term slot open for both Elder and Deacon. Nominations from the floor will be considered at the Congregational Meeting. If you would be interested in serving on the board of Deacons or the Session, please talk with Pastor Debra.



Per Capita 2023

In the PC(USA) denomination, individual churches help support the mission of the larger denomination, including Presbyteries, Synods, and General Assembly. This is done through the per capita apportionment, an amount paid by each church based on its membership. The per capita rate for 2024 will be \$25.00 per active member, with \$9.80 going to GA, \$1.50 to Synod, and \$13.70 to Presbytery. The church pays this apportionment amount out of our general fund, but members may choose to offset their per capita amount if they so desire. At all the levels of church government, the Per Capita funds are used to pay for meeting expenses, salaries for staff positions, meeting and office space, and funds for committees to carry out constitutional and mission programs of the denomination. If you have any questions about what Per Capita is or how it is used, please talk with Pastor Debra.

End of the Year Giving

This is your annual reminder that to have your gifts to the church count for 2023 taxes, they must be received in the office or postmarked by December 31st. If you need an update on your pledge, please contact the office and someone will be in touch with you. Thank you for your faithfulness and generosity!

Information Updates for Directory

Have you had any of your contact information change in 2023? Did you get rid of a phone line? Switch to a new email address? Please let the church office know before the end of the year so that we can include your changes in the new directory, which will be printed in January. Forms are available in the office and the sanctuary.

Final Year of the Wandering Wisemen

Follow The Wandering Wisemen on Facebook for a daily picture of how Balthazar, Melchior, and Gaspar (and their faithful camel companion) respond to the Star appearing in the sky – this imaginative 40 days of journeying has moments of humor and hilarity, and in the final year of its existence, will be drawing on favorite moments of the last decade to bring hope and humor to the Advent season.



Christmas Events in the Palm Bay Community

Palm Bay Light Parade: Saturday, December 2nd from 6 to 9pm. Free event. Grab a spot on the 3-mile stretch of Malabar Road from Eastern Florida State College to City Hall. Dozens of brightly-lit floats, high school marching bands, cheer squads, motorized vehicles, and more!

15th Annual Family Christmas Extravaganza: Saturday, December 16th from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Fred Poppe Regional Park on Malabar Road. This event is a free community event featuring live entertainment, free popcorn, cotton candy, hot dogs and drinks. There are bounce houses, horse rides, face painting, giveaways, and more. It's a big event, so be prepared for crowds, but come and have fun! For more information, visit the Palm Bay City website or familychristmasextravaganza.com

Poinsettia Orders

We love decorating the worship space with poinsettias the Sunday before Christmas and Christmas Eve. These vibrant plants have been associated with Christmas since the 1500s, and in addition to helping celebrate Jesus' birth they symbolize good cheer and success, and are said to bring wishes of mirth and celebration.

This year, poinsettia orders will need to be placed by Sunday, December 10th. Each poinsettia will cost \$10. Plants can be picked up after the Christmas Eve service or in the office on Tuesday, December 26th. Order forms are available in Sunday bulletins and in the office.

Old-Fashioned Gingerbread Cake

Ingredients

- ½ cup unsalted butter, softened
- ½ cup white sugar
- 1 large egg
- 1 cup molasses (use golden, not blackstrap)
- 2 ½ cups all-purpose flour
- 3 teaspoons baking soda
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 2 teaspoons ground ginger
- 1 teaspoon ground cloves
- ½ teaspoon salt
- Optional: ½ teaspoon ground cardamom
- 1 cup hot water



Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Grease and flour a 9-inch square baking pan.
2. Beat butter in a large bowl with an electric mixer until creamy.
3. Add sugar and beat until light and fluffy, about 3 minutes. Mix in egg, then mix in molasses until smooth.
4. Sift flour, baking soda, cinnamon, ginger, cloves, and salt into a large bowl.
5. Gradually add dry ingredients to the molasses mixture, mixing after each addition until incorporated. Mix in water until smooth.
6. Pour cake batter into the prepared pan.
7. Bake in the preheated oven for 30 minutes. Insert a toothpick in the center of the cake; it should come out clean. If it does, remove cake from the oven; if not, bake 15 to 30 more minutes, checking often for doneness. (Cook times on this varied from 30 to 60 minutes, so start checking after 30 but don't be alarmed if it takes longer)
8. Allow gingerbread to cool in the pan before serving. Serve with whipped cream or your preferred icing.



Thank you to those who helped with decorating for Advent

Thank you to everyone who helped us prepare the sanctuary for Advent and Christmas! Putting up the Chrismon Tree is always an exciting venture, and it looks lovely! These white and gold ornaments contain symbols that reflect Jesus' identity and work as the Savior who is born to us at Christmas.

Wednesday in the Word Bible Study

Our Wednesday in the Word Bible Study has been discussing Evangelism – what it is, why it is difficult, and how we can go about both sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ and addressing the obstacles that get in the way of people hearing and responding to that news. In December, we will switch to a study that looks more closely at the weekly Advent themes as well as the people involved in the story of Jesus' birth. All are welcome to come as they are able on Wednesdays at noon – bring a lunch or snack if you wish!

Sunday School Class – Preparing for the New Year

The Sunday School Class has selected a new Bible Study to begin in January of 2024! If you have a resolution to draw closer to God or understand the Bible in a new way for the coming year, here is a prime opportunity to follow through on that resolution! The class meets most Sundays at 8:45 a.m. in the CE building library. Talk to Chris Cox about exact days and to get a copy of the book for the Study.

A 12-week study of Romans: The book of Romans was Paul's greatest literary achievement, a majestic letter in which the apostle expounds on crucial doctrines such as original sin, election, substitutionary atonement, the role of the law, and justification by faith alone. Plumbing the theological depths, Jared Wilson writes with a pastor's eye toward understanding and application as he explains the biblical text with clarity and passion, helping readers follow along as Paul recounts the history of salvation and illuminated the glories of the cross.



Drew & Jamie Woods
December 7

Danny & Pamela Paul
December 24

The Senior Luncheon

Senior Luncheon for November & December will be combined and will be held Thursday, December 14th, at 11:30 a.m. at Hemingway's Tavern, 1800 W. Hibiscus Blvd. #115, Melbourne. Please contact Marsha Carter at macarter1950@yahoo.com for more information. Last day for sign up will be December 10th.



Thank You to those who blessed us in worship in November

Elder of Month: **Sue D'Imperio**

Ushers: **Judy Rutter, Elvie Marshall, Ron Shane, Jack & Ronnie Dayton, Marsha Carter, Evelyn Cox, Mike Nardelli**

Flowers Donated By: **Anna Wood, Marylynn Yust, Mike Nardelli, Terry Twardzik**



Sue Clark
December 3

Nancy Cox
December 7

Kathleen Davis
December 8

Libby Knapp
December 11

Heidi Edwards
December 21

Georgia Shane
December 22

Gary Christensen
December 23

Robin Hershberger
December 23

Judy Rutter
December 25

Ronald Shane
December 25

Joan Doran
December 28

Errol Gardner
December 30

Evelyn Cox
January 1

Mike Allison
January 2



Word from the Herd

In lieu of sending Christmas Cards to all our friends in the Palm Bay Pres. Congregation, John and I have donated to Columbia Kids in your honor. Remember these are the programs Celia Keen's family has for some children in Columbia. They work through several churches there. Do each of you have a Merry Christmas and Blessed New Year. John & Monia Yust

Congratulations to Anna Wood for being the winner of the raffle for a hand-made quilt created by Connie Brazee! \$240 was raised in the raffle, which will be used to support the ministry of the



Gifts from the Heart Christmas Shop. Thank you to Connie for your creativity, and to all who purchased a ticket for your generosity!

Shoe Mission Update

Our Shoe Mission this year reached farther than ever before! 123 children from 12 different Palm Bay elementary schools received cards to purchase shoes and socks at Shoe Carnival in Hammock Landing. The store was also able to provide special coupon savings for a weekend so that the cards could stretch further. Thank you to all in the congregation who helped give schoolchildren another reason to smile and look forward to school!

November Missions

Thank you to all who participated in our November mission opportunities!

- Our Thanksgiving baskets groaned with the amount of food we were able to collect and purchase for families in the local area. We were able to help six this year! Thanks to diligence in watching for deals and the generosity of the congregation, more than \$1500 worth of groceries were purchased (\$960.09 spent with an additional \$543.26 saved), providing not just a Thanksgiving meal, but to also make sure each family had staple items for the pantry and fresh produce and dairy items.
- Thank you to all those who wrote Christmas cards for deployed military around the world! We collected the cards and mailed them to our partner United Soldiers and Sailors of America at the end of November. These cards will be a blessing to those far from home and family this holiday season.
- Our tag tree brought in many gifts to be taken to the Gifts from the Heart Christmas Shop! Those gifts have already been delivered and soon, families associated with more than 10 local organizations will be able to shop there for their children's toys. Not only were the gifts themselves collected, but the money raised from raffling off the quilt donated by Connie Brazee will also help support the work of Gifts From the Heart Christmas Shop.

Holiday Ministry Opportunities

There are a couple of special offering and holiday ministry opportunities left this year – please consider participating in one of the following Mission projects:

- **Christmas Basket Offering**-Sunday, December 3rd: We will be taking up an offering to fund our yearly Christmas Food Basket Mission. This mission helps provide a holiday meal for families in need. Shopping and assembly will be Saturday December 16th, and delivery/pickup will be the next day, Sunday December 17th. Sign-up sheets are in the sanctuary to help with this project – the shopping is particularly fun, and delivering gives you the opportunity to meet someone who is receiving help.
- **Christmas Joy Offering** – Sunday, December 10th: The Christmas Joy Offering has been a cherished Presbyterian tradition since the 1930s. The Offering distributes gifts equally to the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions and to Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color. Presbyterian-related schools and colleges provide education and leadership development while nurturing racial and ethnic heritage for over 140 years. The Assistance Program provides critical financial support to church workers and their families in all times of life and ministry: it helps pay student loans or help with debts for ministers who choose to serve smaller or poorer; the program steps in at times of emergency when fire or storm destroy homes and possessions; there are programs to help ministers adopt a child or purchase a computer for children transitioning to college. The Assistance Program also has a long tradition of supplementing income of retired missionaries or pastors who served faithfully in ministries that did not allow them to purchase a home or save for retirement and found themselves in need as they reached the end of their careers. This year, the Christmas Joy offering will be taken up on Sunday, December 11th.

December 2023




Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
3 10:00 am WORSHIP COMMUNION SUNDAY 1st SUNDAY OF ADVENT CONGREGATIONAL MEETING CHRISTMAS BASKET OFFERING	4 12:00 noon AL-ANON 6:00 pm AL-ANON— LADIES ONLY	5 10:30 am DAILY BREAD 6:00 pm CUB SCOUTS 7:00 pm BOY SCOUTS	6 12:00 noon BIBLE STUDY 7:00 pm BAND	7 6:15 pm NA	1 5:00 pm LIFELINE BIBLE STUDY	2
10 10:00 am WORSHIP WORSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING 2nd SUNDAY OF ADVENT	11 12:00 noon AL-ANON 6:00 pm AL-ANON— LADIES ONLY	12 11:30 am CHOIR PRACTICE 6:00 pm CUB SCOUTS 7:00 pm BOY SCOUTS	13 12:00 noon BIBLE STUDY 6:00 pm ADMIN 7:00 pm BAND	14 11:30 am SENIOR LUNCHEON 6:15 pm NA	15 5:00 pm LIFELINE BIBLE STUDY	9
17 10:00 am WORSHIP DEACONS' MEETING 3rd SUNDAY OF ADVENT CHRISTMAS JOY OFFER- ING	18 CHIMES DEADLINE 12:00 noon AL-ANON 6:00 pm AL-ANON— LADIES ONLY	19 11:30 am CHOIR PRACTICE 7:00 pm SESSION 6:00 pm CUB SCOUTS 7:00 pm BOY SCOUTS	20 12:00 noon BIBLE STUDY 7:00 pm BAND	21 6:15 pm NA	22 5:00 pm LIFELINE BIBLE STUDY	23
24 10:00 am WORSHIP 4th SUNDAY OF ADVENT 7:00 pm CANDLE LIGHT SERVICE	25 MERRY CHRISTMAS OFFICE CLOSED	26 11:30 am CHOIR PRACTICE 6:00 pm CUB SCOUTS 7:00 pm BOY SCOUTS	27 7:00 pm BAND	28 6:15 pm NA	29	30
31 10:00 am WORSHIP 5¢ A MEAL						

IN THE WORD

First Presbyterian Church of Palm Bay Weekly Devotional

<p>December 1 Read Ephesians 1:21 As you look around, what are the heights of status or achievement to which a human can aspire? They are as nothing to the place the God has placed Jesus when he seated him at his own right hand.</p>	<p>December 2 Read Ephesians 1:22-23 All of us who follow Christ have a place with him – we are connected to him as parts of a body are connected, with Jesus holding all things together and directing where it is we go and what it is we do.</p>	<p>December 3 Read Luke 1:5-7 The story of Jesus' birth begins with a childless couple, of good family, living blamelessly, doing all the right things. Their family name was expected to end, but their story is just beginning.</p>
<p>December 4 Read Luke 1:8-11 Going into the Holy of Holies was both an honor and a risk, an indication of righteousness and risk. As everyone outside is praying, it is the perfect environment for Zechariah to have a holy encounter.</p>	<p>December 5 Read Luke 11:11-13 An angel appears and starts talking to Zechariah, but he is too terrified to immediately respond – it is quite the shock to see an angel and hear your prayers are to be answered as part of God's great plan!</p>	<p>December 6 Read Luke 1:13-17 There is more here than simply answering a prayer – the child will be a prophet, preparing for the messiah's arrival. This will be a daunting calling and dangerous profession, yet one of great hope!</p>
<p>December 7 Read Luke 1:18-20 Of all the parts of the story for Zechariah to question, it is the possibility of having a child that he stumbles over – or is he just still hung up on the first part of the promise to think on the details?</p>	<p>December 8 Read Luke 1:21-22 The people are growing concerned that something has gone wrong, and when Zechariah comes out, he is unable to speak. Will they assume this is due to an encounter with the Lord or an act of judgment?</p>	<p>December 9 Read Luke 1:23-25 Zechariah and Elizabeth return home and begin to await the arrival of the promised child. Elizabeth in particular is happy that she will no longer be judged by the community for not having a child.</p>
<p>December 10 Read Luke 1:11-13 Poor Gabriel, he wants to bring good news to Zechariah and all of God's people but the reaction he gets is one of fear. Have you ever startled someone because you were so eager to share news with them?</p>	<p>December 11 Read Luke 1:18-20 If the initial fear weren't bad enough, now Gabriel must contend with doubt! His detail of sharing that he stands in the presence of God speaks to the trust God holds him in, and his trustworthiness.</p>	<p>December 12 Read Luke 1:26-30 Gabriel's second message is to Mary, and his greeting is more gentle this time. Her response is not fear, but confusion and silence. What is worse, fearing the messenger or feeling you're the wrong recipient?</p>
<p>December 13 Read Luke 1:34-36 Notice the different reaction of Gabriel to the response of Mary: is it because she questions how it will be accomplished rather than the veracity of the messenger? His answer uses other signs to reassure.</p>	<p>December 14 Read Luke 1:37-38 These two verses are used as an example of trust and obedience – Gabriel reassures that with God, all things are possible, and Mary chooses to believe and act in obedience to his plan.</p>	<p>December 15 Read Luke 2:8-9 New day, new people, same response: see angel, feel terror. Do you think it is the appearance of the angels (Seraphim are supposed to be snake-like)? Is it the glory of the Lord? Why are they scary?</p>

First Presbyterian Church of Palm Bay Weekly Devotional

<p>December 16 Read Luke 2:10-14 Ultimately, angels are the messengers of God, and on this day, they bring truly wonderful news – a savior has been born for the world and we can behold him! We are all blessed, and God is great.</p>	<p>December 17 Read Luke 1:39-40 The two women come together as both have the promises and plans of God literally growing inside them! How wonderful they have someone who can understand them as they have this experience!</p>	<p>December 18 Read Luke 1:41-45 Even as Elizabeth greets Mary, her baby reacts to the presence of Jesus and leaps within her. What a joyous (if uncomfortable) moment, to respond so readily to the presence of Jesus nearby!</p>
<p>December 19 Read Luke 1:46-55 Mary has clearly thought through not just her present circumstance of being pregnant, but of the implications her child will have on the world, it's present rulers and those who are powerless.</p>	<p>December 20 Read Luke 1:56 Mary and Elizabeth are together for three months, as Mary's pregnancy begins and Elizabeth's comes to an end. What do you think they talked, prayed, hoped and dreamed about during this time?</p>	<p>December 21 Read Luke 1:57-58 It is time for Elizabeth to deliver, and the community around her again intrudes on the story. They rejoice, believing her son to be one who can care for her, not knowing his future and fate.</p>
<p>December 22 Read Luke 1:59-63 The cluelessness of the neighbors continues as the baby is circumcised – they question Elizabeth's choice of name, looking to her husband to correct and overturn her assertion he is to be called John.</p>	<p>December 23 Read Luke 1:63-66 As Zechariah's mouth is opened, the people are amazed and fearful, wondering what it is that God was doing and what more would happen through this baby boy. They didn't know he was just the start.</p>	<p>December 24 Read Matthew 1:18-25 Joseph was a righteous and caring man, who was responsive to God's plan when it was revealed to him. He's more than a side character to Mary, his response to God to raise Jesus is just as faithful as hers.</p>
<p>December 25 Read Luke 2:1-20</p> 	<p>December 26 Read Luke 2:8-14 What an overwhelming night! What started out as a regular night of work became a front-row seat to God changing the world! What is your favorite detail of the shepherd's story and why?</p>	<p>December 27 Read Luke 2:15-16 When the angels are finished celebrating and praising the Lord, the shepherd recognize this is their chance to witness what is happening first-hand, and they choose to go seek out the baby.</p>
<p>December 28 Read Luke 2:17-20 The shepherds tell everyone what they saw and what is happening – they tell Mary and Joseph about the angels, and they tell the town of all the events they witnessed. They praise the Lord for all he has done!</p>	<p>December 29 Read Luke 2:19 There is one quiet person in the midst of the glory, praise, and witnessing – Mary. She “treasures” the words and “ponders” them. She has a high regard and respect for what the Lord is doing through her son.</p>	<p>December 30 Read Luke 2:21-24 It is time for their child to be circumcised and officially named. Mary and Joseph do what has been commanded of them, both by the Law with their sacrifice, and by God as they name their child Jesus.</p>
<p>December 31 Read Matthew 26:38-42 New Year's Eve is sometimes called “watch night” in the church – an evening where one keeps vigil or watch for the coming day, in anticipation of what God will do in the new year ahead.</p>	<p>January 1 Read 2 Corinthians 5:17 Happy New Year! What new hope do you have for the year 2024? Remembering that God can make all things new, how will you pray for the world in this new year? For your family, or yourself?</p>	<p>January 2 Read Isaiah 43:19 Sometimes, God is already at work and we don't have the eyes to see what he is doing. How can we adjust our vision and expectations of what God might do so that we can see what he is already up to?</p>