

DECEMBER 2023

People of Grace

A monthly newsletter for First Presbyterian Church

FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

FORWARD IN FAITH

Season of Advent



On the weekend following Thanksgiving, I was a bit startled to encounter the red-clad Salvation Army bellringer greeting me at the front doors of the grocery store.

And I was rendered speechless when he yelled out a hearty, “Merry Christmas!” I did not know what to say.

Part of me wanted to respond, “*Hey, I’m a Presbyterian! We do things decently in order. We’re not even out of November yet, give me some time to prepare!*”

Of course, Christmas items started appearing on store shelves weeks ago. And “Black Friday” promotes what for some is a Yuletide tradition of spending money we don’t have to buy things we don’t need.

Yet in our Christian tradition of Advent, we need time to prepare for Christmas, the coming of a Savior. Nothing could be more antithetical to the excessive consumerism of the season.

Advent means “coming” or “arrival,” and so it also must involve patience and waiting, preparing for that arrival. Historically, the season of Advent was modeled after Lent, the six weeks of penitence and preparation for Easter.

During Advent, we celebrate Christ’s coming into the world. On the first Sunday of Advent, we traditionally focus on our expectant hope that Christ is coming again. As in Lent, the four weeks of Advent offer opportunities for communal discernment and personal examination.

Worship during Advent includes some special traditions, including the weekly lighting of the Advent wreath, which is the Christianization of an ancient practice: people lit fires to mark the turning of the light into winter’s season and to pray for the return of the light. For us, these candles are signs of the growing light of Christ who is coming again in all fullness into the darkness of our world. Until the dawning of that Great Day, we watch and wait in Holy Spirit for Christ’s coming into the darkness of our world, lighting candles of hope, peace, joy, and love; and remembering the promises of God with prayer.

The Light is coming! Blessings on your preparations!

Pastor Matt

In This Issue

Advent & Christmas
Schedule

Finance Report

Men’s Breakfast

Christmas Food Basket
Project 2023

Longest Night Service

First Presbyterian Church is an inclusive community of faith called to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ for all people, and to join God in the building of a just, peaceful, and compassionate world.

ADVENT & CHRISTMAS AT FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Dec 3	10:30am	First Sunday of Advent Worship
	4:00pm	Advent Workshop
Dec 10	10:30am	Second Sunday of Advent Worship
Dec 16	9:00am	Christmas Food Basket Assembly
Dec 17	10:30am	Third Sunday of Advent Worship with Special Music
Dec 21	6:00pm	Longest Night Service
Dec 24	10:30am	Fourth Sunday of Advent & Christmas Pageant
	6:00pm	Christmas Eve Candlelight Service
Dec 31	10:30am	First Sunday of Christmas Worship
Jan 7	10:30am	Epiphany Sunday Worship with Lunch Following

Financial Update

Month of November
Income: \$26,584.93
Expenses: \$40,329.25
Balance: **-\$13,744.32**

Thank you to everyone who has submitted a financial pledge for 2024. If you have not yet done so, please turn yours in to the office ASAP so we can plan the coming year's ministry.

Newsletter Transitions

The print *People of Grace* newsletter is taking a hiatus due to the increased cost of printing and mailing. You can look forward to a more robust Presbynotes email in the new year, which we hope will continue excellent communication in a way that demonstrates good stewardship of our resources.

A special thank you goes to Patrick Wallace for his work to produce the newsletter over the past year!



2023 Christmas Baskets

Each year for many decades, our church has heard the call to fill homes in our community with food during the week before Christmas. Our goal is to provide a Christmas basket with food to help sustain families for the two weeks when children are not in school. We partner with the family resource centers of our city and county elementary schools to determine the list of recipients.



Sponsor a Basket

We hope to serve 75 families this year, a number that will require around \$7,500. A \$100 donation will purchase an entire Christmas basket, but gifts in any amount are welcome to help us reach our goal.

Make checks payable to First Presbyterian Church with "Christmas baskets" in the memo section. If you use a pew envelope, indicate "Christmas baskets" on the envelope.

Help Assemble the Baskets

We will gather in the Fellowship Hall on Saturday, December 16 at 9:00am to put together the Christmas Baskets. This is a great opportunity for families to serve together!



Make Deliveries

After church on Sunday, December 17, you are invited to help us make deliveries to the homes of our Christmas Basket recipients. Our Scout Troop will be here to help load up your vehicle. We will do our best to group deliveries by neighborhood.



Men's Breakfast

The Men's breakfast group will be taking the month of December off and returning to the Fellowship Hall on Jan. 6 for another hearty meal and good conversation. On Nov. 18, 14 men enjoyed a stack of pancakes and sausage and heard an inspiring devotional from Bill Helwig. Typically, we meet at 8 a.m. on the first Saturday of each month but will announce a different day in advance where there are calendar conflicts. If you have not been to one of our breakfasts, come and check it out. All ages are invited so bring your sons and grandsons! We have a great time together!

Youth Retreat

Our youth group had a great time at this year's Presbytery of Western Kentucky Fall Youth Retreat at Camp Loucon. Our contingent was the largest of the group which included youth from Madisonville, Henderson, Paducah, and elsewhere in the presbytery. This year's focus was on mental health and the keynote speaker was Rich Evans of Madisonville.



Longest Night Service

Amid a season of cheer and joy, the griefs and burdens that so many of us carry often go unnamed. Our Longest Night Service will make space for honoring these very real parts of our lives through prayer, candlelight, and special music. Join us on December, 21st at 6pm in the Sanctuary.

December 2023

Week 1

3 Outreach and Evangelism Committee, 9:00
3 Worship Committee, 11:30
3 Advent Workshop, 4:00
6 Book Study, 10:00
6 Coffee Cup Theology, 1:00
6 Prayer Group, 2:00
8 PrimeTimers Trip
9 Christmas Pageant Practice

Week 2

10 Christian Education Committee, 11:30
10 Finance Committee, 11:30
10 Youth Group, 4:00 (MS) 5:00 (HS)
12 Session, 6:00
13 Book Group, 10:00
13 Coffee Cup Theology, 1:00
13 Prayer Group, 2:00
15 Youth Lock-In
16 Christmas Pageant Practice

Week 3

17 Choir Special Music, during morning worship
18 Matthew 25, 12:00
20 Book Group, 10:00
20 Coffee Cup Theology, 1:00
20 Prayer Group, 2:00
21 Longest Night Service, 6:00
23 Pageant Practice

Week 4

24 Christmas Pageant, during morning worship
24 Christmas Eve Service, 6:00



December Birthdays

3 Cash Jones
3 Karen Callis
7 Maggie Triplett
7 David Leishman
8 Caroline Payne
9 David Douglas
11 Lloyd Wehrung
12 Russ Wilkey
13 Chris Bates
14 Lori Triplett
15 Diane Bowers
17 Susan Hawes
17 Brett Davis
19 Tina Temple
21 Bryan Smith
22 Anne Baker Leazanby
24 Max Smith
31 Jeff Moles

Anniversaries

12 David & Margaret Douglas
28 Chris & Debbie Bowley
31 Mark & Julie Moore



Christmas Pageant

Led by our kids and youth, all of us attending worship on Sunday morning, December 24, will have an opportunity to tell the story that is behind this season. The story involves shepherds, angels, a young couple, some wise people, and a very special baby whose birth would change the world forever.

Rehearsal Schedule

Sunday, December 10 at 9:30am - Fellowship Hall
 Saturday, December 16 at 10:00am- Sanctuary
 Sunday, December 17 at 9:30am - Fellowship Hall
 Saturday, December 23 at 10:00am - Sanctuary
 Sunday, December 24 at 9:30am - Sanctuary

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