



HPC CONNECTIONS

DECEMBER 2017 NEWSLETTER | VOLUME 17, ISSUE 12

Merry Christmas! But Not Yet ...

I love Christmas! I love the decorations, the Christmas cookies, the carols, the Hallmark movies. And of course, I love celebrating the birth of our Lord, Jesus Christ. And now it's December. Time to get Christmas going in full swing, right? Everywhere we go we hear the music, we see the displays in stores and windows. But then we come to worship, some of us expecting to sing Christmas carols and to experience the Christmas joy. And we will. But first ...

There is Advent. If you are like me, and many others who did not grow up in a liturgical tradition, you might not quite "get" the whole Advent thing. You might be wondering what the hold up is on Christmas. You might even feel a little grumpy because we didn't sing Christmas carols in worship. Instead, we sang those slow, melancholy songs for Advent.

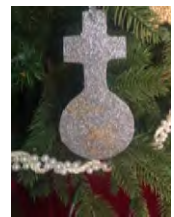
So, I think it's a good thing to refresh our minds about what Advent is and why we do it. Advent is a time for preparing for the coming of Christ. The Latin word *adventus* means "coming" or "visit." The Presbyterian Directory for Worship tells us that Advent is "a season to recollect the hope of the coming of Christ and to look forward to the Lord's coming again" (W-3-2002a). We spend the four weeks before Christmas reflecting on Christ's coming – what it means for us that he came to earth so long ago for the salvation of the world. And we also reflect on his second coming and what hope that brings for us. We say *Maranatha!* Which means *Come, Lord Jesus!*

You may have noticed and wondered about the tree and ornaments in the sanctuary. Instead of regular Christmas ornaments, we have what is called *Chrismon* ornaments, many of which are handmade. These have Christian symbols on them that have meaning in our faith.

The butterfly is a symbol of resurrection.

The orb and cross is a symbol of the earth with the cross of salvation above it.

The fish is an ancient Christian symbol that comes from the Greek word ITHUS. The letters are an acrostic for the Greek words for Jesus, Son of God, Savior.



The INRI is Greek for King of the Jews. It is inside a circle, symbolizing the Crown of Thorns.

It isn't easy to wait for things we long for. We are so anxious for it to happen! But if we rush to Christmas, we miss out on the spiritual journey that is so valuable for our faith. When we get to Christmas, most people will start taking it all down, putting it all away.

But not us. We will enjoy the carols and the decorations and the Christmas joy for the season. We will have done the preparations and spent some time reflecting on the true meaning of Christ's coming. We will, hopefully, have regained hope and renewal so that Christmas will be even more joyful than ever before.

Life can take us to dry deserts at times. Let us walk through the desert together this Advent and slowly see it blooming in the sanctuary and in our hearts until we are rejoicing in gladness; refreshed in our spirits once again.

Merry Christmas ... but not yet!

Peace & Grace,

Reverend Sharlyn



Care Team

Quote for the month: *Great wealth is not related to money. It is an attitude of satisfaction ("enough is enough") coupled with inner peace (an absence of churning) plus a day-by-day moment-by-moment walk with God.*

In a word, the secret is contentment.

Charles Swindoll

"My grace is sufficient for you." 2Corinthians 12:9

Baby Pantry Upcoming Dates: Friday, Dec 8th 10:00 a - 12:00 p; Saturday Dec 16th 10:00 a - 12:00 p; Fri Dec 22nd 10:00 a - 12:00 p.

Baby Needs: We are in need of kleenex, clothing sizes 3, 4, and 5T. Donations can be placed in the crib in the narthex. Financial donations can be placed in the offering plate with a notation on the envelope marked "Baby Pantry". Thank you so much for your continued support.



God Bless you all on your special day!

Emily Martin	Dec 2nd
Walt Brown	Dec 3rd
Max Muenzer	Dec 5th
Violet Bird	Dec 6th
Joseph Weiss	Dec 6th
Gordie Bradshaw	Dec 11th
Sierra Haneline	Dec 17th
Georgia Felch	Dec 23rd
Margaret House	Dec 23rd
Vicki Lyles	Dec 28th

Sunday December 3rd, we will have our Annual Fenton Ambassadors Concert at 7:00 p. Please come and invite your friends and family. The event is free. We will take a offering to go to local people who are in need this holiday season. Refreshments will also be served.



Christmas Eve - Candles, Carols & Communion

Join us on Sunday, December 24th at 7:00 p for our Christmas Eve Service. Bring your friends and family for this very special service.

Our Fellowship and Study Opportunities

Adult Sunday School - Sundays at 9:30 a in the Community Room. We are studying the Jewish background of Jesus, and looking at the archeological sites where Biblical events occurred. All adults and high school students are welcome to be part of this class and join the discussions.



Presbyterian Men's and Women's Advent Study - Wednesday's at 7:00 p. Men and Women will meet together during Advent to study the scriptures the meaning of Advent during December.

Children's Sunday School -10:30 a - 11:00 a in the Gathering Place. Children of all ages are welcome. Angel Vliet is the teacher. We will be learning about the Birth of Jesus.

Finance Team



October	Income	\$15,298.04	Expense	\$12,257.43
YTD	Income	\$113,122.75	Expense	\$116,929.81

October had five Sundays, our best rummage sale ever, and some quarterly trust payments.

Any contributions to be itemized on your taxes for 2017 must be received at the church by Dec 31st, or postmarked by that date if mailed.

Finance Team: Vicki Lyles, Carrie Duncanson, Laura Parker, Rev. Sharlyn Gates and Bob Killewald

D E C E M B E R C A L E N D E R O F E V E N T S

Regular Weekly Events

Sunday

9:30 a Adult Sunday School
10:30 a Fellowship & Coffee
10:30 a - 11:00 a Kids Sunday School
11:00 a Worship
12:15 p Prayer Ministry
3:00 pm AA

Monday

7:30 pm AA & Alanon

Tuesday thru Thursday

12:00 pm - 3:00 pm Friends with Needs

Wednesday

7:00 p Presbyterian Men's Bible Study with Randy Cook
7:00 p Presbyterian Women's Bible Study with Rev Sharlyn

Schedule of Additional Events

Dec 3rd	10:00 a Fellowship Team Meeting 7:00 p Fenton Ambassadors Concert
Dec 5th	9:30 Presbytery Meeting - Bay City Westminister Team Meetings Worship 6:30 p -7:30 p Christian Education 7:30 p - 8:30 p Personnel 7:00 p - 7:30 p Information Technology 7:00p - 8:00p
Dec 8th	10:00 a - 12:00 p Baby Pantry
Dec 12th	Team Meetings Finance 6:30 p - 7:30 p Care 6:30 p - 7:00 p Outreach 6:30 p - 7:30 p Property 7:30 p - 8:30 p
Dec 14th	7:00 p AYSO
Dec 15th	Newsletter Articles Due
Dec 16th	10:00 a - 12:00 p Baby Pantry
Dec 17th	Healthy Check up
Dec 19th	7:00 p Session Meeting
Dec 22nd	10:00 a - 12:00 p Baby Pantry
Dec 24th	8:00 p Candles, Carols & Communion
Dec 25th	Happy Birthday Jesus
Dec 26th	No Friends with Needs Office Closed
Dec 27th	No Friends with Needs Office Closed
Dec 28th	Office Closed
Dec 29th	Office Closed



Our Church Family Prayer Concerns & Joys

Joys and Concerns

- Strength, renewal, and healing for: Beverly Glass (Elizabeth Kici friend's daughter), Suzie Dorsey, Marty Rodriquez (Kathleen Howe - boyfriend of her future daughter-in-law's sister), William Woodard (Rev Fred Gates grandson), Richard Murphy (father-in-law of Mandie Banks), Dan Nash, William Graham (nephew of Vicki Lyles), Carlton Pernel (Gerry Jackson's friend), Ken Hecht, Norm Clement, Roy Howe (Kathleen Howe's brother-in-law), Hadleigh Banks, Celia Pettit, Paul Burnett (neighbor of Killewalds), and Cari Oldenburg (friend of Cathie Killewald).
- For the violence, racism, and killings to leave this place and replace it with peace, unity, compassion for others, and people's eyes become open to who Jesus is and his love.
- God's love and hope surround the people affected by all recent disasters. They are not forgotten.
- Remember to pray daily for this church and our pastor.
- Prayers for our members who are home bound or in care facilities.
- For our country and its leaders.
- Thankful to God that we are a free country and for the people who protect us.



Pray for Missionaries & Lake Huron Presbytery

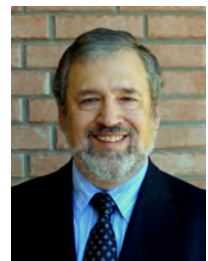
- The Reverend Cathy Chang and her family serving in the Philippines, Michael and Rachel Ludwig serving in Niger, Colby and Sarah Keefer and family in Ypsilanti (Athletes in Action), and Allen and Deedee Iobst and family in Spain.
- The Rev. Mark Morningstar, former Pastor of Sandusky on the passing of his mother, Norma Morningstar.
- Bruce Graham, husband of the Rev. Linda Graham, Pastor of Cass City-First and Cass City-Fraser who is scheduled to have surgery on November 27th.
- The Rev Jim Neumann, Pastor of Saginaw Second who is recovering from back surgery.
- Bruce Graham, husband of the Rev. Linda Graham, Pastor of Cass City-First and Cass City-Fraser who is scheduled to have surgery on November 27th.
- Michael Hosler, son of Elders Alan and Cheryl Hosler, Croswell-First who is recovering from open heart surgery and is doing well.
- Pam Brackbill and the Rev. Tom Brackbill, Pastor of Alma-First as they deal with all that encompasses Pam's diagnosis of Younger Onset Alzheimer's Disease. Pam is under the care of Masonic Pathways.



From the Lion's Den

We are in an odd season of the church year. The secular society is caught up in the season of "Hallowthankmas" as I once heard it described, that commercial blitz that starts around Labor Day and continues into the New Year with its popular mythology and quasi-religious observances of death, gratitude, and hope heavily seasoned with gluttony and greed. Meanwhile the church is engaged in the pre-Advent and Advent themes of judgment, the end of the age, and God's final victory in Christ.

Continued



From the Lion's Den - Continued

The two are an uneasy fit. On the one hand we are called to repentance by ancient prophets like Amos, Isaiah, and John the Baptist. On the other, we are encouraged to gratify our worst impulses for materialism and self-indulgence. The oft-cited and oft-abused shibboleth to put "Christ" back in "Christmas" is at least one expression of our awareness of this cultural dissonance.

However, there is one point in which our secular and sacred observances intersect, and it can be a fruitful connection in our lives and in the lives of our congregations. That is in our practice of expressing gratitude. Gratitude is the foundational response in the life of faith: God acts in grace and mercy toward us and we respond with lives of grateful service and obedience to God's will. Gratitude is also the foundation of our prayer lives. The medieval mystic Meister Eckhart once observed, "If the only prayer you say in your life is 'Thank You,' that would be enough." More recently, Anne Lamott wrote a short book on prayer titled, *Help, Thanks, Wow: The Three Essential Prayers*. When it comes to our secular society, Thanksgiving may actually be the most truly spiritual holiday we observe, even if it is so often narrowly focused on family and country, and is increasingly compromised by "Black Thursday" sales in the stores.

But gratitude is an important part of the lives of congregations as well. Churches that regularly and enthusiastically express appreciation not only build healthy relationships, they build positive energy. I have recently been writing about breaking the downward spiral of negativity in congregations, and practicing the discipline of gratitude is one effective way of combatting negativity. It is a discipline because it is so easy to overlook. No act of generosity or volunteer effort should go unrecognized. Public expressions of gratitude should be shown to church leaders - not only when they end their terms of service or retire or leave - but regularly throughout their service. How many of our pastoral prayers in worship give thanks for the elders, deacons, and other volunteers? How many churches regularly say "thank you" to those who give time, talent, and treasure. One important takeaway from last summer's stewardship workshop was the power of the thank you note. Steve Keizer encouraged pastoral leaders to make a habit of writing ten thank you notes a week.

We have much for which we can be thankful - to God, first of all, but also to the scores of people in our churches and communities who serve us every day. A ministry of gratitude undertaken as a sincere expression of appreciation will not only help break the cycle of negativity, but will also connect churches to their communities in powerful and transformational ways.

I too need to develop my discipline of gratitude. I am grateful to God and this presbytery for allowing me the privilege of serving you as Executive Presbyter, and for the many extraordinary gifts in service to our shared mission which I see every day around our presbytery. Thanks be to God for every one of you.

Faithfully,

Dan Saperstein, Executive Presbyter, dsaperstein@presbylh.org

POINSETTIA MEMORIALS

~Mary Kay Lyles ~ Jean Goss ~ Iva Pelkey ~ Matthew Montrewl ~ Alec Ash ~

~Leonard Ranger ~ Aaron & Margaret Ganshaw ~ Ron Howe ~

~ Jack & Jean Fundis ~ Gordon & Gladys Bradshaw ~ John Miller ~

~Bernice & Rudy Schettling ~ Jene Striggow ~ William & Mae Gates ~

~ Barbara Buckner ~ Jim DeHaven ~ Leon Parker ~ Judy Watkins ~

~ Bruce, Keith, Paul & Harriette Dryer ~



Fellowship Team

- **Fellowship Team** Meeting on Sunday December 3rd at 10:00 a in the back of the Fellowship Hall.
- Coffee & Snack Volunteers for:

Dec 3rd	Kevin Magnuson & Karen Haneline
Dec 10th	Dessalee Cook & Penny Schettling
Dec 17th	Diane Allen & _____
Dec 24th	No one at this time
Dec 31st	No one at this time



Please look at your calendar and see if you can fill one of these times for bringing a snack and helping with clean up.

Thank you! Margaret

To help those affected by the Hurricanes: For those who wish to support through PDA (Presbyterian Disaster Assistance) emergency and recovery efforts, go online at: <http://pda.pcusa.org> and select which one you want your money to go to.

If you prefer to mail a check, you may sent it to: Presbyterian Church (USA), PO Box 643700, Pittsburgh, PA 15264-3700.

For Hurricane Harvey DR000169, Irma designate DR000194, and for Puerto Rico designate DR0000194.

Please remember these people are still hurting and are still trying to rebuild their town.



Poinsettia announcement - You can take your Poinsettia plant home with you on December 31st or after. Thank you for making the sanctuary look so beautiful during Advent and Christmas.

Office Closed

The office will be closed for Christmas from December 26th through December 29th. If you have an emergency and need to speak to someone, please contact Rev. Sharlyn at 620.423.2671. We will reopen on Tuesday, January 2nd at 9:00 am.



TEAM MEETINGS FOR DECEMBER

The times indicated are approximate and may vary. If you would like to join a team or see what it is all about, just come at the selected time to the church and see the Team leader. We always need input and ideas.

Team Meeting for December 3rd

10:00 a Fellowship Team - back of Fellowship Hall

Team Meeting for December 5th

Worship 6:30 p - 7:30 p

Christian Education 7:30 p - 8:30 p

Personnel 7:00 p - 7:30 p

Information Technology 7:00p - 8:00p

Team Meeting for December 12th

Finance 6:30 p - 7:30 p

Care 6:30 p - 7:00 p

Outreach 6:30 p - 7:30 p

Property 7:30 p - 8:30 p

Session meets on December 19th.



Our 2017 Session

Class of 2017	Margaret Perry	Fellowship Team	(810) 735-7692
	Reisa Hamilton	Outreach Team	(248) 766-7719
	Karen Haneline	Care Team	(248) 894-3489
Class of 2018	Charlee Litten	Personnel Team	(810) 694-0095
	Ellen Paulson	Clerk	(248) 320-0375
	vacant	Technology Team (Walt Brown is temporarily leading)	
	Linda Burns	Worship Team	(586) 482-3091
Class of 2019	Bob Killewald	Finance Team	(248) 310-2410
	Randy Cook	Property Team	(248) 221-9044
	Charlene Clement	Christian Ed Team	(810) 869-2632

Minister: The Rev Dr Sharlyn DeHaven Gates (620) 423-2671