

A D V E N T 2020



EAST MAIN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

GROVE CITY PENNSYLVANIA

ADVENT TIME ACTIVITIES AT EAST MAIN

First Sunday of Advent – November 29, 2020
Second Sunday of Advent – December 6, 2020
Third Sunday of Advent – December 13, 2020
Fourth Sunday of Advent – December 20, 2020

Family Christmas Movies in the Sanctuary from 3-5 p.m.

Bring your family, bring your friends! East Main will be showing movies suitable for preschool and elementary age children (older kids are welcome too) during this Christmas season. The community is invited! We know there isn't much going on this season and we want to make it special for the families of Grove City. Please note, seating will meet social distancing requirements and a parent or guardian is required to stay and enjoy the movie with children in attendance.

Movies are on Saturdays, December 5, 19 and 26.

Christmas Outdoor Event, Saturday, December 12 from 4-6 p.m.

East Main is bringing the spirit of Christmas to Grove City in a different way this year! Instead of pageants or cantatas, we are presenting an outdoor Christmas event that brings elements of music, scenes from the story of Christ's birth, and interactive stations for kids. This event is for all ages and is open to the Grove City and surrounding communities. It is a walk/tour around the exterior of the East Main building with different scenes and stations to enjoy.

Christmas Eve Services

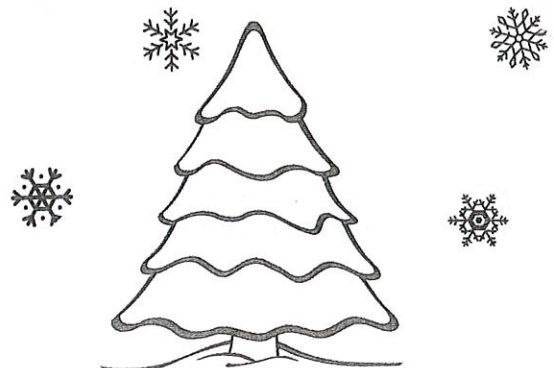
This year we will provide multiple Christmas Eve style services the week of Christmas. We desire to provide ample room for social distancing and are working out the details and times for these services. Please check our website for further details.

ADVENT OFFERING

The 2020 Advent Offering will go to Harvest Bridge, which in the Covid pandemic is facing so many obstacles to carrying out their mission.

We now annually alternate the Advent offering with the Christmas Mission Market. There will be no Christmas Mission Market this year.

Scripture quotes in this booklet are from the NIV.



ADVENT MEANS COMING

Advent begins four Sundays before Christmas.

The word Advent means coming and refers to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ at his birth, through his outpoured Spirit, and at his second coming.

At the beginning of each worship service during

Advent, candles are lit until by Christmas Day five candles are alight. Purple candles are used on the first two Sundays and the fourth Sunday.

The color purple represents royalty.

On the third Sunday a pink candle is lit to represent repentance and preparation.

On Christmas Day a white candle is lit for the birth of the Christ Child.

This Advent booklet is offered to the congregation to use in family worship.

It contains suggested songs, scripture readings and meditations for the four Sundays of Advent and Christmas Day.

May it bless you as you celebrate this Christmas season.

East Main Presbyterian Church,
Grove City, Pennsylvania



This book has been lovingly and prayerfully put together by Martha Raymond for East Main Presbyterian Church.



A COVID CHRISTMAS



Now, more than it's been for many years, it's time to go back to the real meaning of Christmas.

Believing Christians will still be able to celebrate God's gift, no matter where, with or without family and friends. But it will be harder for those whose ideas about Christmas are telling silly reindeer jokes and exchanging lavish, useless gifts. Keep this a season for celebrating the birth of a Savior.

As you gather around the dinner table (easier this year) how about singing a traditional Christmas carol one night instead of the same grace you've been saying for twenty years? Then explain some of the references you've sung about.

Get a lively discussion going about what the very first Christmas would have been like if there was a pandemic going on. Perhaps the innkeeper would tell Joseph to speak up, as he couldn't understand him with that mask on. Would the Wise Men have had to self-quarantine for two weeks before being allowed to see Herod? Would Mary and Joseph be allowed to cross the border, fleeing to Egypt with the Baby?

REMIND YOUR CHILDREN THAT GOD KNOWS EVERYTHING THAT'S HAPPENING AND CHOSE THE PERFECT TIME TO SEND HIS SON.

And think about the missionaries our church supports. Many of them celebrate every year without friends and relations. Some can't even display Christmas decorations or sing carols out loud for fear of reprisals. Your family could select one or more from the list in this Advent booklet and send a card or email to them if it won't put them in danger. Even a carefully worded friendly message in honor of the season would make them feel Christ's love and remind them of support from other Christians.

No pandemic in this world can keep out the Joy of God's Gift to us. That's eternal.

“Do not be afraid, for I..have called you by name; you are mine. When you go through deep waters and great trouble, I will be with you.” Isaiah 43:1-2 TLB



FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT NOVEMBER 29, 2020

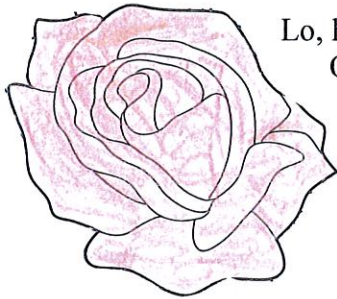
GOD GIVES US PROMISES THAT ARE KEPT

In preparation, light the first purple candle.
Pray for belief that all of God's promises will be kept.



Isaiah 11:1 – There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.

LO, HOW A ROSE



Lo, how a rose e'er blooming From tender stem has sprung.
Of Jesse's lineage coming As men of old have sung.
It came, a flow'ret bright, Amid the cold of winter,
When half spent was the night.

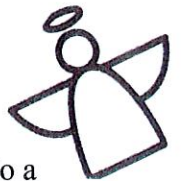
--Fifteenth century German carol

COME, THOU LONG-EXPECTED JESUS

Come, Thou long-expected Jesus, Born to set Thy people free;
From our fears and sins release us; Let us find our rest in Thee.
Israel's Strength and Consolation, Hope of all the earth Thou art;
Dear Desire of every nation, Joy of every longing heart.

Born Thy people to deliver, Born a child and yet a King.
Born to reign in us forever, Now Thy gracious kingdom bring.
By Thine own eternal Spirit Rule in all our hearts alone;
By Thine all-sufficient merit, Raise us to Thy glorious throne.

--Charles Wesley



Luke 1:26-38—In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendent of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."
"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God."

"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her.

Christmas is the celebration of the keeping of a promise...A saving promise.

--Michael Card

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"I know I promised we'd stop for ice cream on the way home, but.." "I know we promised we'd take you to Disney World this Christmas, but.."

Ever broken a promise? Can people trust your word? What excuses have you used to convince yourself it was necessary or perfectly okay to break a promise? Being human, we cannot see the near future and sometimes circumstances beyond our control change our plans. But our God, who always was and is and will be, has never made a promise he will not keep. Again and again his promises have not failed. God keeps his word.

The Old Testament is full of God's promises about his plans to restore our relationship with him with a coming Savior. Isaiah 11:1 (see above) was fulfilled because Jesus was from the line of Jesse, the father of King David. Isaiah 7:14 says, "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel." Yes, Mary was a virgin, her baby was a son, and he was called Immanuel. Micah 5:2 says, "You, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to me the one to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting." Yes, the Messiah was born in Bethlehem. Perhaps one particular Bible verse has become a promise to you from God. Trust him. God will always keep his promises.

Prayer – Dear Heavenly Father, we humans can't even know what will happen tomorrow, and at times we make foolish promises. I fail often to keep promises I make to others. Help me learn from you that keeping promises is important, and that all your promises will come true.

To Do This Week – Talk to your children about considering carefully before they make promises, and about our obligation to try to keep our word. Remind them that while humans often break their word, or are forced by unusual circumstances like Covid to change plans, God's promises are all trustworthy.

Psalm 145:13 – The Lord is faithful to all his promises and loving toward all he has made.

Free Gift





SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT DECEMBER 6, 2020

GOD GIVES US REASSURANCE THAT HE IS WITH US

Today, light last week's purple candle, and then light a second purple candle. Pray for God's reassurance to sustain us through troubling times.

Hebrews 10:23 – Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

ANGELS FROM THE REALMS OF GLORY

Angels, from the realms of glory, Wing your flight o'er all the earth;
Ye who sang creation's story, Now proclaim Messiah's birth:
Come and worship, come and worship, Worship Christ, the new-born King.

Saints before the altar bending, Watching long in hope and fear,
Suddenly the Lord, descending, In His temple shall appear:
Come and worship, come and worship, Worship Christ, the new-born King.

– James Montgomery

Matthew 1:18-25 – This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel”--which means, “God with us.”

When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

JOY TO THE WORLD



Joy to the world! The Lord is come; Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room, And heaven and nature sing,
And heaven and nature sing, And heaven, and heaven and nature sing.

No more let sins and sorrows grow, Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow Far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found, Far as the curse is found,
Far as, far as the curse is found.

- Isaac Watts

There's a lot of fear, worry, uncertainty and gloom in our world just now. God wants us to be reassured that he knows what's happening and has plans that will always bring us joy and eternal life. This is not some politician's empty promise.

When Joseph worried what to do about Mary, God sent his angel to give him reassurance that this was all part of his plan. The creator of the universe, who cared about us so much that he let his one and only son go to the cross in our place, gives us reassurance that we are loved. He raised Jesus from the dead and reassures us also of eternal life. Immanuel means God with Us!

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Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to an all-knowing God. - Corrie ten Boom

Prayer – Dear heavenly Father, as you reassured Joseph, reassure us when we are troubled about the events in our lives. You know the future. You will always be in control.

This week – Are you aware of someone who is fearful and discouraged? Let God use you to give that person God's reassurance. “Comfort ye my people.”



THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT DEC. 13, 2020



GOD'S GIFT IS FOR EVERY ONE OF US

In preparation, please light the two previous purple candles, then light the pink candle.

Pray for Christians all over the world who are celebrating the Gift of a Savior, sent by a God who does not see us as black or white, male or female, or citizens of any particular country.

HOW GREAT OUR JOY

While by the sheep we watched at night
Glad tidings brought an angel bright.
How great our joy, Great our joy
Joy, joy, joy. Joy, joy, joy.
Praise we the Lord in heaven so high.
Praise we the Lord in heaven on high.

This gift of God we'll cherish well
That ever joy our hearts shall fill.
How great our joy, Great our joy
Joy, joy, joy. Joy, joy, joy.
Praise we the Lord in heaven on high.
Praise we the Lord in heaven so high.

- German carol



HARK THE HERALD ANGELS SING

Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the new-born King:
Peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!"
Joyful, all ye nations rise, Join the triumph of the skies;
With th'angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the new-born King."

Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings, Risen with healing in His wings.
Mild He lays His glory by, Born that man no more may die,
Born to raise the sons of earth, Born to give them second birth.
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the new-born King."

- Charles Wesley



Luke 2:8-20 – And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to
men on whom his favor rests.”

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in a manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.



God's Gift of forgiveness and salvation is freely given to all believers. But if we refuse because we insist on doing things our own way, God will be true to his salvation plan. He is unchangeable and he does what he says he will do. He let his one and only begotten Son die in our place on that cross, so if we insist on trying to earn eternal life under our own terms, we condemn ourselves. C.S. Lewis said that in the end there are only two kinds of people: those who say to God, “Thy will be done,” and those to whom God says (sadly), “All right then, have it your way.”

Have you ever run into someone who refuses to take a gift you chose for them at Christmas? Maybe they insisted that they didn't deserve it, or they wouldn't accept it because they couldn't give as important a gift in return, or just because they didn't like something about you. Humbly accept God's gift and rejoice and worship as the shepherds did.

Prayer – Lord, let us come to the stable in humble adoration to accept the gift you chose to give.

This week – In our pride, God's generosity is hard for us to accept. This week, may we give freely what we can to others and humbly accept their gifts to us.



FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT DEC. 20, 2020

GOD'S GIFT IS FREELY GIVEN



In preparation, please light the previous three candles, and then light the last purple candle. Pray for understanding that God freely gave us payment for our sins with Christ's sacrifice. We need only acknowledge that we have sinned and that we believe that Jesus is the sinless Son of God who has fully paid the price of our ransom.

AS WITH GLADNESS, MEN OF OLD



As with gladness men of old Did the guiding star behold;
As with joy they hailed its light, Leading onward, beaming bright,
So, most gracious Lord, may we Evermore be led to Thee.

Holy Jesus, ev'ry day Keep us in the narrow way;
And, when earthly things are past, Bring our ransomed souls at last
Where they need no star to guide, Where no clouds Thy glory hide.

--William C. Dix



Matthew 2:1-12—After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.”

When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written:

“ ‘But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.’ ”

Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.”

After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

Will you forget to worship God this Christmas, to kneel down and adore the newborn Child? The shepherds left their sheep in the pastures and hurried to see the newborn Savior, in response to the angel's news. The wise men, though they came from another culture, had searched the scrolls diligently and recognized what was happening. They got a caravan organized and set out on that long journey to worship the infant King.

Will you listen to the angels and eagerly search the scriptures this year? Will you receive what they are telling you? With trembling and awe, will you accept God's Gift?

Will you keep Christmas in your heart during all the days and years to come? A Savior is born! Praise God! Praise him every hour. Tell of his loving kindness to a needy world. Praise ye the Lord!

Sing this as your prayer -

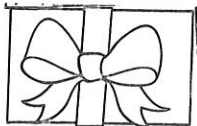
TO GOD BE THE GLORY

To God be the glory, great things He hath done,
So loved He the world that He gave us His Son,
Who yielded His life an atonement for sin,
And opened the Lifegate that all may go in.

--Fanny J. Crosby



This week – In joy and gladness, give freely what you can in response to God's amazing offer. There's no such thing as “only” a smile and a kind word. Those might be just the gifts someone desperately needs in this stressful time. Be God's instrument of encouragement. You may have to smile with your eyes only, if you are wearing a mask, but make that smile twinkle like a true Christmas star.



Share the joy



AND THE WISE STILL SEEK HIM



CHRISTMAS EVE/CHRISTMAS DAY



GOD'S GIFT MEANS ETERNAL LIFE

Isaiah 9:6 – For unto us a child is born...And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

On Christmas Eve/Christmas Day, light the four previous candles and then light the center white candle. Remember that God kept his promise and sent the gift of Jesus to take the burden of our sins. God always keeps his promises. That is certainly cause for rejoicing—so REJOICE!

Luke 2:1-7 – In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to his own town to register.

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.



I HEARD THE BELLS ON CHRISTMAS DAY

I heard the bells on Christmas Day Their old familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet the words repeat Of peace on earth, good will to men.

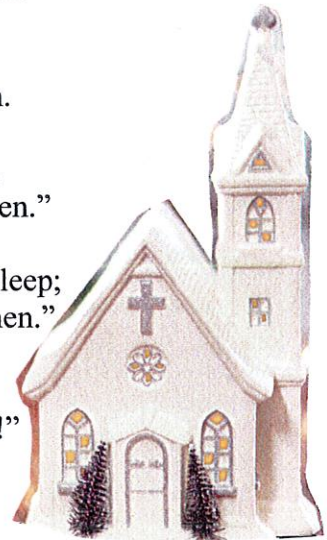
I thought how, as the day had come, The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along th'unbroken song Of peace on earth, good will to men.

And in despair I bowed my head: "There is no peace on earth," I said,
"For hate is strong, and mocks the song Of peace on earth, good will to men."

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep: "God is not dead: nor doth He sleep;
The wrong shall fail, the right prevail, With peace on earth, good will to men."

Til ringing, singing on its way, The world revolved from night to day,
A voice, a chime, a chant sublime, Of peace on earth, good will to men!"

-Henry W. Longfellow



John 3:16 - "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

THERE'S A SONG IN THE AIR

There's a song in the air! There's a star in the sky!
There's a mother's deep prayer, And a baby's low cry!
And the star rains its fire while the beautiful sing,
For the manger of Bethlehem cradles a King!

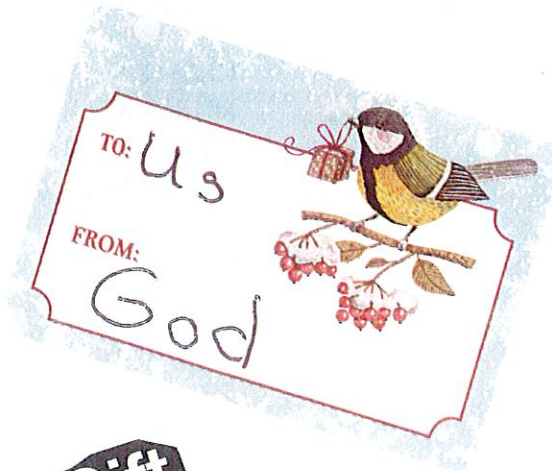
-Josiah G. Holland

"Loving God,
help us remember
the birth of Jesus,
that we may share
in the song of the angels,
the gladness of the shepherds,
and the worship of the wise men."

- Robert Louis Stevenson



This Christmas, in the name of Christ,
give the gift of helping someone
with no thought of being paid back.
Then you become truly
a child of our God who gave his Son
to us freely.



Free Gift

MISSIONARY POSTAL AND EMAIL ADDRESSES

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CAN YOU FILL IN THE BLANKS?

SILENT NIGHT, _ _ _ _ NIGHT.

JOY TO THE _ _ _ _ _.

AND PLACED HIM IN A _ _ _ _ _.

WARNED IN A DREAM NOT TO GO BACK TO _ _ _ _ _.

THE FIRST _ _ _ _ THE ANGELS DID SAY.

GOLD, FRANKINCENSE AND _ _ _ _ _.

THERE WERE _ _ _ _ _ LIVING OUT IN THE FIELDS.

O LITTLE TOWN OF _ _ _ _ _.

NO _ _ _ _ FOR THEM IN THE INN.

MARY AND JOSEPH FLED TO _ _ _ _ _ WITH BABY JESUS.



In Greenland it is traditional on Christmas night that the men look after the women, serving their food and coffee and stirring the meal for them. Greenland claims to be where Santa Claus goes for his summer holidays!

“Some gifts are big, others are small.
Gifts from the heart are the best
gifts of all.” - Anon.



