

As we move into this season of waiting and longing this Advent, I would commend to you this prayer by Howard Thurman. May it bring you quiet, rest, and strength this season.

Open unto me — light for my darkness.
 Open unto me — courage for my fear.
 Open unto me — hope for my despair.
 Open unto me — peace for my turmoil.
 Open unto me — joy for my sorrow.
 Open unto me — strength for my weakness.
 Open unto me — wisdom for my confusion.
 Open unto me — forgiveness for my sins.
 Open unto me — love for my hates.
 Open unto me — thy Self for my self.
 Lord, Lord, open unto me!
 Amen.

For the Feast Day of St. Nicholas, December 6

In the midst of this year that has brought so many changes to our life, as a church and as a society, I hope that we will find time this Christmas to do what we always do this time of year: turn our hearts toward the meaning of the season. In Sunday school we are reflecting on the way the Gospel stories teach us to see the birth of Jesus and beginning of his ministry, and in worship we will be leaning into the way Advent leads us into hope, peace, joy, and love as we await the coming of Christ. So, for this newsletter, I thought it might be fun to explore the meaning of another familiar Christmas character: namely, Santa Claus, Old St. Nick, St. Nicholas.*

The original St. Nicholas was an early Christian leader who was bishop of Myra in fourth-century Turkey. For centuries, the church has celebrated his feast day on December 6, and a vast variety of stories come down to us about his life and ministry. It is reported that Nicholas suffered for the faith, being exiled and imprisoned during persecution under the Roman Emperor Diocletian. Once Christianity was legalized under the Emperor Constantine, Nicholas was released and attended the council of Nicaea, where he supported the proceedings that gave us our Nicene Creed. Legend has it that Nicholas was such an ardent supporter of faith in the divinity of Jesus, a controversial opinion at the time, that he came to blows with another bishop in debate, slapping him in the face! As a result, Nicholas was arrested (again) and placed in solitary confinement. This is, perhaps, a cautionary tale for us about the importance of affirming the incarnation this Christmas season, yet with ardent civility.

Little is known about the historical life of Nicholas, except that he entrusted himself to Jesus at an early age and, when his parents died during an epidemic, he gave all his inheritance to the poor. Flowing out of his well-known compassion, tradition tells us that while serving as bishop, Nicholas learned of three girls who were going to be sold into slavery by their father, who had fallen into poverty as a result of life-crushing debt. Moved to use the church's

wealth to ransom the lives of these children, Nicholas tossed three bags of gold into the family's home through the chimney, which landed in the girls' shoes that were drying by the fireplace. In addition to marking the traditional use of stockings to decorate our mantles, we recall this ancient Christmas gift as a striking reminder that today 1.2 million children are trafficked each year in the global sex trade. St. Nicholas is a patron saint for these children as well as for all who would seek to help them.

Another story tells how Nicholas intervened on behalf of prisoners on death row. Learning that the ruler of his city had condemned three innocent men to death, Nicholas went immediately to the field of execution, where he found a large crowd and the three men on their knees, arms bound, with the executioner's blade about to strike. Nicholas broke through the crowd, snatched the sword by the blade from the executioner's hands and threw it to the ground, ordering that the captives be set free. The ruler of the city later confessed his sin and sought forgiveness from Nicholas, who absolved him, but only after the ruler had undergone a period of penitence. Criminal justice reform remains a pressing issue for the church in our society today. A recent report from Reuters documented that from 2008 to 2019, almost 5,000 inmates died in US prisons without being convicted of the charges for which they were held. St. Nicholas is an ally to us in facing this challenge.

There will likely be discussion this Advent and Christmas about the true meaning of the season. I hope these reflections on the life and witness of St. Nicholas give us something to aspire to in our own walk of faith, that this season we might seek the example of the saints who show us how to live God's love for others as we await the birth of Christ in our world.

**Note: This commentary has been adapted from resources provided by Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals (Zondervan, 2010), the St. Nicholas Center (stnicholascenter.org), and Reuters (<https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/usa-jails-deaths/>).*



CSC DELIVERY

The next delivery for our Church Street Café supplies from Midwest Food Bank will be on Wednesday, December 9th, at 11:30 a.m. We are always in need of volunteers to help unload and put items away. Please remember to wear your mask.



NEW ADDRESS
Kerry and Carol Antoniewicz
 1569 Highway 139
 Dandridge, TN 37725

First Presbyterian Church
 721 Church St.
 Jefferson City, TN 37760

BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE



Christmas can be a painful time for some, especially this year. The constant refrain on the radio and television, in shopping malls and churches, about the happiness of the season, about getting together with family and friends, reminds many people of what they have lost or never have had. It may be the first Christmas without a loved one who has recently died; it may be a time that has always been difficult. The anguish of broken relationships, the insecurity of unemployment, the weariness of ill health, the pain of isolation—all these can make us feel very alone in the midst of the celebrating and spending. We need the space and time to acknowledge our sadness and concern; we need to know that we are not alone. For these reasons, we will offer a “Blue Christmas” Service, a service to acknowledge sorrow and sadness during this season of joy. Recognizing that grief does not respect differences of denomination, but afflicts us all, this year's service will be a joint endeavor, led by the pastors of First Presbyterian Church, First United Methodist Church, and First Baptist Church. **The service will be emailed on Monday, December 21st at sundown.** Come out and join us in sharing and hearing prayers, scripture, and music, affirming that God's presence is with those who mourn and those who struggle—and that God's Word comes to shine light in our darkness. Even if you are not mourning a loss this season, please be encouraged to attend out of solidarity with others, for, as the apostle Paul put it, we as the community of faith are called to “weep with those who weep.” Everyone, regardless of religious background (or lack of it), is welcome. (This is a revised version of an article provided by the Northwest Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and is used with permission.)

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE



Our Annual Christmas Eve Candlelight Service is on Thursday, December 24th. Details to be determined, please watch your weekly bulletins and email announcements.



A PERFECT GIFT THIS ADVENT SEASON

Hello everyone. As we approach Christmas, we will again have a special offering dedicated to supporting those who have helped to spread the good news of Christ. This offering will be collected on Sunday, December 20th. Following is a brief message to help explain this special offering. Please consider assisting with this offering to help those who have dedicated their lives to helping the spiritual needs of others.

“Each year during the Advent and Christmas season, we turn our eyes to Bethlehem and celebrate the wondrous gift of Jesus Christ, our Savior. God has blessed the Church with incredible leadership in every time and place, but those leaders often need to be supported by their communities as well. By giving to the Christmas Joy Offering, you honor God's gift of Jesus Christ by providing assistance to current and retired church workers in their time of need and developing our future leaders at Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color.”

Since we will not be meeting in person for Worship during the advent season, you may give to this offering by sending a check to the church office or using our paypal link on the church website. If you have any questions, please call the church office.

PRAYER CONCERNS

FAMILY and FRIENDS OF:

Tom White, Lea Akers' dad, who passed away

SPECIAL CONCERNS:

Arlene Peck Kenneth Winslow Denny Pryor
 Bill and JoAnne Vest Sara Piper Mev Musick
 Lynn and Judy Watkins David Skeen
 All members of the military and their families, especially those stationed overseas.

ILL AND RECOVERING:

Melissa Needs, various health concerns
 Campbell Maben, friend of the Zirkles, who is resuming chemotherapy
 Lynn McCoy, friend of many, who is receiving chemotherapy
 Shawn Frost, Janice Wintermute's cousin, who is undergoing chemo for stage 4 pancreatic cancer
 Ed Dixon, friend of Andy & Jessica Acuff, who has brain cancer

IN RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES:

LIFECARE MORRISTOWN: Elsie Sorey (# 209)
 SIGNATURE HEALTHCARE: Paulette Bozeman,
 Pat Patton (# 307)
 JEFFERSON PARK: John Moser

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS (November 18, 2020)

- As you are now aware, the Session decided to return to virtual gatherings for worship through the end of December. In order to increase connection during this time, we will livestream our services on Sunday mornings by Facebook live, which you can access on our church's Facebook page, and we will introduce a weekly Wednesday-night time to gather for fellowship and bible study by Zoom. An invitation to this Zoom meeting will be sent out by email to the church mailing list each week, so please let us know if you are not receiving our emails and would like to ensure you receive an invitation.
- Session received the resignation of Rick Pinkerton as Ruling Elder. Rick has decided to take a step back from service at this time for personal reasons, and we prayed the Lord's blessing upon him as we continue walking with Rick as companions on his journey.
- Looking ahead to next year, Session called our annual meetings of the congregation and corporation for January 20, 2021 (more details about how we will gather for this will be forthcoming); set a date for ordination and installation of new elders for January 17, 2021; and approved the communion schedule for the coming year.

CREATION CARE FUNDRAISER



Do you need to do some socially distanced Christmas shopping? Do you need these gifts delivered straight to your door? This year, Creation Care has partnered with Serrv, giving you this very opportunity, while also supporting your Creation Care subcommittee.

Dedicated to fighting poverty through fair trade since 1949, Serrv International works with nearly 8,000 artisans and farmers in 24 countries to bring you beautiful handcrafts and delicious food products. Serrv is committed to providing fair wages, sustainable income, safe working conditions, education, and equality to the artisans and farmers they work with.

Now through Christmas, if you buy handmade gifts, home decor, and food products using the unique web link below, 20% of your purchase will be donated to Creation Care. (Please note, you must use the web link: <https://www.serrv.org/?a=FPCJC> for Creation Care to earn funds from your purchase. **You should see an orange banner at the top of the home page that reads "20% of your online order today will be donated to First Presbyterian Church"**)

Feel free to shop anytime you'd like, but if you need an extra incentive to shop at Serrv, they are offering a few Fall 2020 specials!

December 5-6: Free ground shipping (Promo Code: SESNOWMAN20)

You'll do a world of good by supporting Creation Care's Serrv & Earn fundraiser. Please contact Jessica Evans (evansjessicaa@gmail.com or 828-260-0788) with any questions you may have. Thank you!

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 Presbytery Meeting Jarret Moser	2 Virtual Mission Com. 11:15 a.m. Virtual Worship Mtg. 5:30 p.m. Zoom Fellowship & Bible Study 6:30 p.m. Evan Kirkpatrick	3	4	5
	6 Communion Zoom Sunday School 9:30-10:30 a.m. Facebook Live Worship Service 10:45-11:45 a.m. Second Sunday in Advent	7	8 Church Street Café 5:00-6:30 p.m.	9 Church Street Café Truck Delivery 11:30 a.m. Zoom Fellowship & Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	10	11
13 Zoom Sunday School 9:30-10:30 a.m. Facebook Live Worship Service 10:45-11:45 a.m. Third Sunday in Advent Children's Christmas Sunday John Neal & Deborah Scarlett	14 Bill Vest, Sr.	15 Virtual Session 6:30 p.m.	16 Zoom Fellowship & Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	17	18 Libby Moser	19
20 Zoom Sunday School 9:30-10:30 a.m. Facebook Live Worship Service 10:45-11:45 a.m. Fourth Sunday in Advent Larry Musick George & Gail Twine	21 Blue Christmas Service --- OFFICE CLOSED --- Rich & Connie Harlan	22 --- OFFICE CLOSED ---	23 Zoom Fellowship & Bible Study 6:30 p.m. --- HEATHER ---	24 Christmas Eve Service 5:00 p.m. OFFICE CLOSED --- OUT ---	25 	26
27 Zoom Sunday School 9:30-10:30 a.m. Facebook Live Worship Service 10:45-11:45 a.m.	28	29 Debby Rinehart	30 Zoom Fellowship & Bible Study 6:30 p.m. HEATHER OUT	31 Vicki Garbacik		



FINANCE REPORT MONTHLY INCOME

NOVEMBER TOTAL \$10,497.00
 (\$17,761.00 is needed monthly to meet budget)

YTD ACTUAL INCOME YEAR-TO-DATE (YTD) INCOME/EXPENSES

	ACTUAL	PRORATED	YTD BUDGET
INCOME	\$202,351.03*	\$194,247.03**	\$171,421.28
EXPENSES	\$161,876.79***		\$179,647.66

ACTUAL INCOME OVER EXPENSES: \$40,474.24
 YTD PRORATED INCOME OVER EXPENSES: \$32,370.24

*This number includes memorials and stimulus donations designated to our general budget. ** Some members pay their entire yearly pledges in January. This number has been adjusted to reflect what actual giving through October would be, if completed yearly pledges, were divided out monthly. ***Expenses are lower than expected, due to the pandemic. If you have questions, please contact Heather.