

December 2019



First Pres. Press

Celebrating Christmas is such a powerful magnet in our culture that, even as a pastor for whom this isn't his first Advent rodeo, I am taken aback by the Advent scripture readings each year. It's not until December 22nd that we even mention the birth of Jesus. Everything up until then is about getting ready for a very grown-up Jesus to arrive.

Advent isn't about Christmas...unless we see Christmas being about everything. The birth of Jesus like the birth of any baby was felt all over that household in Bethlehem. But the birth of Jesus of Nazareth we recognize now is the birth of God as a human into the household of the entire cosmos! Jesus is the sign that God has never been absent from us, never separated from us (though we often separate ourselves from God through our inattention, self-improvement projects, and just plain meanness!).

These readings from Matthew's gospel tell us to not ignore anything as we look for God's presence coming into our lives. Read these passages and ask that the Spirit make you open to all things in life which are pointing us to the presence of Jesus the Christ.

Peace,
Pastor Garrett

Advent Sunday readings
Dec. 1, Matthew 24:36-44
Dec. 8, Matthew 3:1-12
Dec. 15, Matthew 11:2-11
Dec. 22, Matthew 1:18-25 (finally!)

We will host our **Family Candlelight service at 7:00 p.m. on Christmas Eve, Tuesday December 24th.** Family and Friends are welcome to join us!



Sunday December 8 is our annual Hanging of the Greens event from 3-6 p.m. It is an afternoon of joyful decorating, frosting cookies, doing crafts, eating popcorn, doing mission work, sharing a pizza dinner and singing carols in the freshly decorated sanctuary.

Cookie bakers needed for Hanging of the Greens!

Please bring your baked cookies to the kitchen Sunday, December 8. These cookies are given to the Samaritan Center. Please let Leigh Anne know if you can make 3 dozen sugar cut out cookies! Thanks!!

ORDER YOUR POINSETTIA FOR CHRISTMAS NOW!

This year the poinsettias are \$10.00. They are available in white or red. **Please include your payment with the tear off.** You may place this tear-off in the offering plate at church. *Your poinsettia may be taken home after the 7:00 p.m. Family Candlelight Service on Christmas Eve.*
Orders are due by 12/1,!!!



The Junior High Class is collecting items to fill 100 hygiene kits for people who are displaced from their homes due to natural disasters. This is part of PCUSA's Presbyterian Disaster Assistance ministry. Items needed are: **bar of soap in wrapper, toothbrush in package, nail clipper, 16 x 28 hand towel, wash cloth, wide tooth comb and 10 bandaids.** Items are needed for December 8's Hanging of the Greens event.



The Angel Tree Program

The Angel Tree program will run this year **till Sunday Dec. 15th.** This program is a Salvation Army program to sponsor a needy person in our local area for Christmas. You can sponsor a needy person by either buying or making a gift for that person. Tags with the first names of needy people will be found on the Christmas tree that will be set up in the fellowship hall. When taking a tag from the tree please sign the log next to the tree (see instructions on back of tag). Your signature indicates that you are sponsoring the person whose name is on the tag. If you haven't participated in this program in the past, please consider participating this year to help make Christmas a little brighter for someone in need.



The women of LFPC and invited guests gathered for breakfast, fellowship and the learning of SOAP, a method for personal Bible study on November 9. Journals were given for women to implement this method to study John 15 together. The women will gather in a couple of months to discuss the success of using SOAP to study God's Word. If you would like to learn more about SOAP, contact Leigh Anne or Tracie.



Choir

LFPC Choir meets on **Thursdays at 7.00 pm.** New, returning, and former members are cordially invited to join voices.



“There is a Time.....” was the theme for our WE on November 3. We gathered for conversation and a muffin breakfast, then studied Ecclesiastes 3 as a church. Great discussion ensued followed by a card game entitled “There is a Time.” Joyful learning, worshipping and caring with all generations makes these events extremely special! The next WE is in January!

From the Deacons

Over the next few months, the deacons will be taking turns writing a short paragraph for our newsletters describing why they agreed to be a deacon. I hope that you’ll read these stories, meditate on the journeys, and prayerfully consider the opportunity to serve our church family when called by God to serve.

Why I Said “YES”! (Leigh Anne Herd’s testimony)

Two years ago, I was in the hospital for an infected gall bladder that needed to be removed. Because of complications, I was in the hospital for many days and recovery from the surgery was long. Several members of the church prepared meals for our family which was so very appreciated, not just the meal, but in feeling loved and cared for. It led me to a desire to serve others in our church who are going through a challenging time, grief, or transition with a simple meal or two, in order that they too would know the love and care of our church family. Linda Newell was feeling the same call and together we said “YES” to becoming deacons so that we could begin the kitchen ministry we have today. Karen Fay joined our team and we have had help from Nancy Putman, Linda Graves, Karen Judge and others. Saying “YES” to God’s call gives me joy and purpose. Saying “YES” to God is an honor and a privilege. Saying “YES” to God is simply saying “YES”!

MANUSCRIPT STUDY

Manuscript study is an interactive way to study Scripture. Scripture is taken apart, observed and studied, then applied to our lives today. If you enjoy writing notes as you study, using colored pencils and markers, and delving deeply into the language of Scripture, then this type of study is for you. It is my favorite way to study the Bible and I am excited to start a Manuscript Study group in our church. We meet on the 1st/3rd Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m. at the Herd’s Home and the 2nd/4th Thursday at 1:00 p.m. at the Newell’s Home. Please let me know if you are interested, email me at laherdo2@gmail.com.- Leigh Anne

Elsie O’Neil/Woman’s Association

All Women are INVITED. We are more than a ladies group. We are a number of individuals who assemble together once a month, & have developed a unifying relationship. We bring our brown bagged lunches & share a delicious dessert. We discuss church business & our many church projects. We support each other in trials & joys. We also work together on a light Bible Study, which sometimes leads to deep & wonderful conversations.

We meet every month, on the third Thursday @ 12:30PM, in the library. So, mark your calendars for the fun!

In Christ, Coleen Clapper

Not Just For Men

by Pastor Garrett

This is a new series in our newsletter on men's spirituality. In all honesty I have no idea where this will go! My hope is that it will begin conversations among us (men and women), deep personal reflection, and be some grist for the process of growth and transformation

Several years ago a book with the provocative (and over-stated) title *Why Men Hate Going to Church* caused many in the church to take another look at the ages-long tension between masculinity and femininity (which is not the same thing as the tensions between men and women). By "ages-long" I mean from the very beginning of Genesis...our foundational reflection on how each one of us is made in God's image. This was just one of the many books, programs and movements that was calling attention to the deep need in the church and in all society for men to engage in more transformative, healthy, productive, authentic soul work as men.

New images of what a "real man" pop up as reactions against another contrasting image. As society became more settled, lifestyle more urban, and work less physical John Wayne and the Marlboro man touched an adventuresome side. The 1950s absent, distant bread-winner father (think Don Draper from *Madmen*) was countered by the characters on the TV series *Thirtysomething* trying to be involved dads with their children. Out of the sensitive man came the phrase "real men don't eat quiche". In each of these we were trying to say something true about what it means to be male. With no disrespect meant to woman and their real struggle in yesterday's and today's world (much of it caused by men), its not easy to be a man either.

That's the point. From the very beginning being male, being female, being human has been about the difficulty of growing into the image and likeness of God. Being created male and female is part of God's image who contains both the masculine and feminine. The messages we get from culture, media, and family will always be partial ones and reactionary. Only when we make space in our lives to listen to deeper messages of the soul, nature, scripture, Spirit, and community will we discover who we are and the shape of men's souls. Church doesn't need to make room for "real men". Together men need to do the hard work of transformation discovering the fullness of the strength, wisdom, service, love, and truth within us.

Reflection and conversation: (There is some value in husbands and wives having this conversation but the gold will be found in men talking and listening to one another.)

- What are the images of maleness that have most influenced you?
- Where do you find them helpful? Lacking?
- If you are parent, what image of maleness have you passed along to your children?

Further study:

Adam's Return, Richard Rohr

December Birthdays

1 – Erin Folley, Joleen Kittle, Ruthann Arras
5 – Joan Halsted
6 – John Pfeffer
10 – Emily Cirillo
12 – Colin McConnell
17 – Matthew Calnan
18 – Mary Calnan, Garrett Anderson
20 – Mary Lou Matthews, Chris Pfeffer
26 – Bill Newell
29 – Roz Perrine

(If anyone has been omitted from this list, please call the church office)

LFPC Food Pantry Shopping List:

Canned Vegetables, Canned Fruit in juice or water (not syrup), 100% juice

Protein rich foods 7 grams per serving: Beans, Canned meats, Canned fish, Peanut butter

Bottle Drive

We are still collecting returnable cans and bottles for the preschool. There is a bin downstairs outside of Fellowship Hall to place your donations. Please rinse the cans and bottles out first. Thanks!

December Mission Report



Blessings in a Backpack Update

As part of the partnering rotation for the month of December, we are asked to collect:

mac and cheese cups (any brand)

The rotation helps give us appreciation for the variety of foods they are trying to provide for the kids at Seymour Dual Language Academy in Syracuse. For more information or a refresher on the program see the direct link to the Liverpool chapter website: <https://blessingsinabackpackliverpoolny.org/>

Grey collection bins are labeled BIB in fellowship hall and the back of the sanctuary.

4Paws for Ability

We are collecting used shoes and sneakers in a bin at the back of the sanctuary to help raise funds for Teresa Neumann. Teresa is the granddaughter of a friend of Karen Judge. She was born with a congenital abnormality that causes her to have severe seizures. They are working with an organization called 4 Paws for Ability. (<https://4pawsforability.org/>) to raise the \$17,000 required for a service dog that would be trained to assist and respond to seizure events. Please bring in used shoes or sneakers, or make a direct contribution. From the main page select Donate. Include the name Teresa Neumann in the description field of the form on the second page.



Special Advent Offering for Chasefu Agriculture Storage Facility

Mission committee will be collecting a special Advent season offering in support of a request from our supported mission co-workers, Charles and Melissa Johnson, in Lundazi, Zambia. Charles continues his effort to construct a storage facility for crops and other agriculture supplies that is separate from the building used for teaching seminary students. This is to alleviate the current situation where maize stored on the front porch of the seminary students' hostel, and soybeans are dried in the sanctuary of the Chasefu Church. This building, when completed, will provide warehouse space for the storage of tools and equipment, farm inputs and harvested crops. The plan is to carve out a small area in one corner of the facility to use as a classroom space for agricultural science classes being taught at Chasefu Theological College.



The mission of Chasefu AIGA is to generate income to provide financial support for Chasefu Theological College as it educates young men and women to become pastors. It is their hope that this project will make a big step toward that mission by generating storage fees from local agro-dealers, local farmers and governmental agencies.

(cont'd on Page 6)

This Advent season, please consider a year-end mission offering to support the Johnsons. Please write checks to LFPC with 'Chasefu' or 'Advent Offering' in the memo line. We will collect through all Sundays in Advent



Samaritan Center Service Day - Tuesday December 31st

As a congregation, we next serve at the Samaritan Center on **Tuesday, December 31st**. The meal service hours for New Year's Eve will be served from 3:30-4:30 that day so volunteer service would be from 2:30pm to 5pm. Look for sign up sheet at the back of the sanctuary. Please sign up and make this part of your New Year's tradition to end the year in a spirit of service and love.

Samaritan Center is in need of volunteers to help serve meals throughout the week. More specifically, they are in need of volunteers on Tuesday mornings for the breakfast shift. If interested, visit the website at this link:

<https://www.samcenter.org/how-you-can-help/volunteer> or call Amy Rossi, Volunteer Coordinator (315) 472-0650 x 203

2020 Dedicated Mission Plan

At the November 3 mission committee meeting, we agreed to persist the budget request for dedicated mission support in 2020 for three mission areas: PCUSA Mission co-workers Charles and Melissa Johnson, Liverpool chapter of Blessings in a Backpack, and Vanderkamp.

We support the Johnsons, because we believe in maintaining an element of international outreach through our parent PC USA mission organization. It connects us to the broader global mission of spreading the love of Jesus Christ. We support Liverpool chapter of Blessings in a Backpack, because we believe in maintaining support for a local element of mission outreach. Together with partner churches in Liverpool, we are providing simple weekend meal options for children attending Seymour Dual Language Academy elementary school in Syracuse. We support the mission of Vanderkamp in their time of missional transformation.

For the dedicated mission, plan is same as 2019 with division as follows:

- \$1200 to Vanderkamp
- \$1200 to PC USA Mission Co-workers Charles and Melissa Johnson
- \$1200 to Blessings in a Backpack
- \$400 unallocated margin, to be decided during 2020.

This is dedicated \$ from your pledges to LFPC, not from special offerings.

Korea Peace Overture

The overture for peace in Korea was approved at the November 3 meeting of Cayuga-Syracuse Presbytery.

Matthew 25

The PC USA Presbyterian Mission has challenged congregations to unite under a common purpose for mission under a new program called Matthew 25. website:

What is a Matthew 25 church?

Matthew 25:31-46 calls all of us to actively engage in the world around us, so our faith



(cont'd on Page 7)

comes alive and we wake up to new possibilities. Convicted by this passage, both the 222nd and 223rd General Assemblies (2016 and 2018) exhorted the PC(USA) to act boldly and compassionately to serve people who are hungry, oppressed, imprisoned or poor.

How the vision unites all Presbyterians

By accepting the Matthew 25 invitation, you can help our denomination become a more relevant presence in the world. We recognize Christ's urgent call to be a church of action, where God's love, justice and mercy shine forth and are contagious. And we rejoice how our re-energized faith can unite all Presbyterians for a common and holy purpose: our common identity to do mission.

There are 3 core missions: **building congregational vitality, dismantling structural racism and eradicating systemic poverty**

There is a lot to unpack in those nine words.

At the November 2 Presbytery meeting, we were oriented to the goal by our resource presbyter Karen Chamis. She will be leading activities to network churches in Cayuga-Syracuse presbytery who express an interest. The mission committee discussed this at our November 3 meeting. We agreed no action for now, but generally for all of us to study up on the material. Of the three focus areas, one for eradicating systemic poverty is most directly linked to mission activities. However, we don't want to just relabel what we're currently doing for Blessings in a Backpack for example, which are really just 'band-aid' actions addressing a symptom of poverty, to suit this new rebranding.

Instead, if we do this, we want to challenge ourselves get after the deeper, systemic root causes. Addressing the other topics of building congregational vitality and dismantling structural racism are broader goals that involve whole church (not just mission).

An article for a cool recent example of a Matthew 25 initiative comes from a PCUSA church in Boise, ID, <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/story/church-presbytery-raise-money-to-wipe-out-medical-debt/>

The invitation and the request is for all of us to read through the materials and ask ourselves, in what way might we challenge ourselves to lead and become a Matthew 25 congregation? How might we, as the body of Christ at LFPC, redefine ourselves in mission as a Matthew 25 church, at our intersection of God and the World?

Respectfully submitted, Rob Santos

**The Church Office will be CLOSED on Wednesday December 25th for Christmas!
May you have a Blessed Holiday with your family!**



MERRY CHRISTMAS

THANK YOU

Thank you all for the prayers, food and cards during my recent surgery. We are blessed to have such a wonderful church family-From Lynda and Ed Fauler

The January 2020 Newsletter Deadline is Monday December 23rd by 12 noon. Please get all articles and pictures into the church office by 12/23. You may call Heather at 457-3161 or email lfirstpr@twcny.rr.com.