

E-Bulletin – November 29, 2020 – First Sunday of Advent

WE GATHER IN GOD'S NAME

PRE-SERVICE MUSIC

GREETINGS / NEWS OF OUR COMMON LIFE

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

CALL TO WORSHIP – Based on Psalm 80:1-3, CEB

Shepherd of Israel, like sheep, through the years you have led us.

In our time of distress, show yourself. Restore us, O God!

Make your face shine on us so that as you lead we can follow.

HYMN #187, verses 1 & 4 – “Savior, like a Shepherd Lead Us” – **Quartet**

Verse 1

Savior, like a shepherd lead us;
much we need your tender care.

In your pleasant pastures feed us;
for our use your fold prepare.

Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus,
you have bought us: we are yours.

Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus,
you have bought us: we are yours.

Verse 4

Early let us seek your favor;
early let us do your will.

Blessed Lord and only Savior,
with your love our spirits fill.

Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus,
you have loved us; love us still.

Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus,
you have loved us; love us still.

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CALL TO CONFESSION

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

God of sure and steadfast promises: in times of difficulty and pandemic,
we have not always believed in your goodness nor trusted your promises.

We have become discouraged and weary of isolation imposed by the
threat of disease and death. Forgive our lack of faith and our capricious
faithfulness. Strengthen our determination to not only to survive but to
thrive because of your grace, in the hope that soon we shall gather again
in your holy sanctuary to worship you with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

HYMN #583 – “Glory to God” – **Quartet**

Glory to God, glory to God, glory in the highest!

Glory to God, glory to God, alleluia, alleluia!

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WE PROCLAIM GOD'S WORD

CHILDREN'S MOMENT

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

FIRST SCRIPTURE READING – Isaiah 64:1-8

O that you would tear open the heavens and come down,
so that the mountains would quake at your presence—
as when fire kindles brushwood
and the fire causes water to boil—
to make your name known to your adversaries,
so that the nations might tremble at your presence!
When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect,
you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence.
From ages past no one has heard,
no ear has perceived,
no eye has seen any God besides you,
who works for those who wait for him.
You meet those who gladly do right,
those who remember you in your ways.
But you were angry, and we sinned;
because you hid yourself we transgressed.
We have all become like one who is unclean,
and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth.
We all fade like a leaf,
and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.
There is no one who calls on your name,
or attempts to take hold of you;
for you have hidden your face from us,
and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity.
Yet, O Lord, you are our Father;
we are the clay, and you are our potter;
we are all the work of your hand.

SECOND SCRIPTURE READING – 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind—just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you—so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

SERMON – “To the Stars Through Difficulties”

WE RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

OFFERING MUSIC – “Of the Father’s Love Begotten” – **Quartet**

arr. Paul Wohlgenuth. Published by Hope Publishing Co.
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PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE and THE LORD’S PRAYER

WE DEPART IN PEACE

CHARGE and BENEDICTION

CHORAL RESPONSE – selection from “Of the Father’s Love Begotten” – **Quartet**

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POSTLUDE – “Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus” – Richard Proulx

Participating Today: Neil Weatherhogg, Patrick Yancey

Liturgist: Janet Weatherhogg

Quartet: Jessica Crowder, soprano
Marya Feldt, alto
Steve Crouch, tenor
Elliot Lauxman, bass

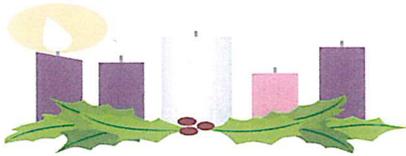
Director of Music: Kevin Kellim

Organist: Dr. Cynthia Neufeld Smith

Videographers: Dan Pauls, Sean Zears

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THIS WEEK AT FPC



Sunday, November 29

First Sunday of Advent

Rev. Dr. Neil Weatherhogg is preaching

9:30 a.m. Children's SS, Zoom Mtg

10:30 a.m. Worship Service, live streaming online

Monday, November 30

Sandra is out of the office all week

Pat Yancey's day off

Tuesday, December 1

11:00 a.m. Staff Meeting

12:00 p.m. Fellowship Meeting

Wednesday, December 2

6:30 a.m. Men's Bible Study Zoom Mtg

4:00 p.m. Worship Team Zoom Mtg

4:30 p.m. Operation Food Secure Neighborhood Food Box Distribution

6:00 p.m. AELC CPR Class

6:30 p.m. Property Committee Mtg

Saturday, December 5

7:00 a.m. TDC Learning Centers—Breakfast w/Santa, Willard Hall

Sunday, December 6

9:30 a.m. Children's SS, Zoom Mtg

10:30 a.m. Worship Service, live streaming online

IN OUR PRAYERS

Joys: Beginning the season of Advent; Neighborhood Food Distribution; Children's Zoom Sunday School; Blessing Box ministry.

Concerns: Tyler Lockett; Terry Hafling; Jim Rose; Beth Johnston; John Peterson, Shirley Martin's brother; Michelle Sailors and family; Mark Mueller; Marge Robards; Nathan Cochrane and family; Dottie Crawford; Kathy Van Abel and her sisters, Carolyn and Norma; Mary Patterson; Kay Wischropp's son-in-law's grandmother, diagnosed with Covid; Bill Sale, friend of Vernie & Ruthie Covert; comfort and healing for all those grieving loved ones; those who have been infected with the coronavirus; healthcare workers; first responders; good health for staff and students in schools and colleges; all who are unemployed; willingness of elected officials to work together for the good of our country and all people.

Sympathy: Jeanene Hoover and family at the death of Jim; Sandra and family at the death of Rod.

ADVENT DEVOTIONS

We ordered Advent daily devotions from *Presbyterian Outlook* written by Jill Duffield. The devotions can be downloaded from our website or picked up at the church office.

NOON NOELS

A new online-only format for Noon Noels is in the works, and we will continue with those plans. Noon Noels will be prerecorded and posted online at noon December 2, 9 and 16. We will still have beautiful music, an uplifting message, sharing of beloved Christmas memories and a favorite holiday recipe each week. More information will be shared soon.

BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE

If you have lost someone or are needing support this Christmas season, we invite you to join us for the Blue Christmas candlelight service on Wednesday, December 9, at 6:00 p.m. online.

ORDER A POINSETTIA

If you would like to purchase a poinsettia to adorn the sanctuary for Advent and Christmas, the cost is \$8 for each plant. Please see the order form at the front desk or on our website.

DOORSTEP NEEDS ITEMS/DONATIONS

Doorstep is greatly in need of some food items that they are completely, or nearly, out of: peanut butter, spaghetti sauce, cream of mushroom soup, variety of soups (Chunky, Progresso, etc.), canned fruit (any kind), egg noodles, tuna, peas, and pork and beans. Food donations can be delivered to Doorstep, Monday through Friday, from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. In addition, Doorstep is asking for blankets, towels and hygiene items to be donated by Monday, December 7, to make health kits. If you would like to provide new blankets, towels or hygiene items, you may drop them off at Doorstep or at church. Thank you for helping families in need in our community!

SUPPORT FOR SANDRA BROWN AND FAMILY

Many of you may be wondering how you can express care for Sandra and her family following the death of Rod. If you would like to send a sympathy card, please mail it or drop it off at the church office and we will make sure it gets to her. Sheryl Daniels is organizing complete meals (main dish, side, salad or dessert) for the family Wednesdays and Fridays. Please contact Sheryl at 272-7830 to sign up for a date.

Hope



Discerning God's *kairos* in the midst of our daily *chronos*

ADVENT DEVOTIONS – WEEK 1
NOVEMBER 29–DECEMBER 5, 2020

by Jill Duffield,
Presbyterian Outlook editor

SUNDAY | TIMOTHY 4:6-10

We use the word hope frequently, perhaps even flippantly. We hope not to get stuck in traffic or to get tickets to the game. The word hope gets thrown around and employed for wishes or desires. But the hope of Advent, the hope of our faith, goes much deeper than our likes and wants. The hope of Christianity entails nothing less than the redemption of the world — and this hope, while often difficult to maintain in the face of evil, is nonetheless certain. Paul instructs Timothy, his young apprentice in the faith, to train in godliness and focus on that which is true and worthy of full acceptance. He reminds Timothy, “For to this end we toil and strive because we have set our hope on the living God who is the Savior of all people, especially those who believe.” Our hope encompasses all of creation. Imagine that scale of expectation.

Our hope in this world of pandemic and war, poverty and disease, is set on the living God, the Savior of all people, who soon will become incarnate and dwell among us, who promises to return and set all things

right. As we begin this liturgical year and look to the end of the calendar year, we do not take hope lightly. The year 2020 does not afford us the luxury of cheap hope. Too much has been lost, altered or upended for us to hope for anything less than redemption, salvation and God for and with us. If we have learned nothing else this year, we have learned the limits of our own power. We cannot save ourselves. Our finitude cannot be denied. Our need for divine strength and intervention feels obvious this Advent. This year when we sing “Come, Lord, Jesus” from behind masks while we are physically distant from one another, I suspect we will do so with palpable longing, with a yearning hope to know without question that God is indeed with us.

As we eagerly anticipate the inbreaking of God’s kingdom this Advent, hearing Paul’s words to Timothy — that young disciple attempting to shepherd a nascent flock living in the middle of a threatening context — could guide and encourage us, too. Focus on godliness. Remember the teachings of Jesus, the commandments of God. Emulate those people of faith who are admirable, wise and stalwart. Think about the good doctrine learned from the Word of God and faithful people. Ignore irreverent and silly myths. Hope in no one less than Jesus Christ and nothing short of the salvation of all people.

Lord of all that is seen and unseen, we set our hope on you, our living God who comes to save, not condemn, the world. This year we feel battered and weary, ready for your inbreaking, longing for a sure awareness of your presence. We know you are true and worthy of full acceptance even on days we doubt your providence and wonder when you will set all things right. Help us to set our hope on you and live as people of hope who point to your light and enact your love in a world too often awash in hopelessness. Amen.

MONDAY | HEBREWS 11:1-3

Hebrews tells us that faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. As you begin the Advent season and reflect on the year, what are your fervent hopes for yourself, your community, church and the world? Write those hopes down, envision them and pray about them. Can you be convicted and assured of their coming to fruition, even if you do not yet see them?

Gracious God, align our hopes with yours so that our dreams and visions participate in your good and certain future for all creation. Do not let our fear overtake our hope. Do not let us capitulate to lesser desires or false teachings. Grant us the faith to hope for nothing less than the redemption of the world that Jesus comes to bring. Give us the courage to participate in the new, good, life-giving thing, your near kingdom, present and coming. Amen.

TUESDAY | 1 PETER 1:13-16

Set your hope fully on grace. This, Scripture tells us is how we prepare our minds for action. Focus and anticipate and hope in grace — not efficiency or power or intelligence or even wisdom, but grace. Hope in grace runs counter to our culture obsessed with righteousness or winning, consumption or acquiring. What would it mean to set your hope fully on grace today?

Gracious God, grace seems like a risky bet given the state of our hearts and the state of our world. Won't those who hope in grace get exploited in the face of evil and sin? Besides, we take delight in seeing people get what we think should be coming to them. Help us to desire grace not only for ourselves, but for everyone. Show us again the unmatched, transformative power of your grace. Amen.

WEDNESDAY | ROMANS 8:18-24

The whole of creation groans together in the pains of childbirth. When we survey our world, where do we hear it groaning? Paul insists these groans lead not to death but to new life in Christ. This is the hope in which we are saved, for which we wait in patience. What difference does it make if today you reframe present suffering as birth pangs? What new life is God ushering into the world?

God of new life, you send your Son to usher in redemption. Nothing can separate us from your love. We confess that our waiting for suffering to end is not always marked by patience or hope. Despair creeps into our consciousness and we doubt that creation can survive, let alone thrive. Send your Spirit to intercede so that we might live in and act out of the hope of our faith. Amen.

THURSDAY | 1 CORINTHIANS 13:7,13

This most familiar of Bible passages reminds us of the intimate connection between hope and love. Love bears, believes, hopes and endures all things. The love of God made manifest in our human relationships tethers us together and binds us to one another in ways that will not be undone by life's myriad challenges. Consider those you love this day, those you are called to love, those you struggle to love. What are your hopes for them?

Loving God, you unite us in Christ. Such intimacy is not our doing and we cannot undo it. Nonetheless, we often test this oneness and fail to bear, believe, hope and endure in love. Knowing your unfailing love for us, we pray to exhibit a love that hopes all things even for those we find hard to love. May our stalwart love bear witness to your love for the world. Amen.

FRIDAY | JEREMIAH 29:10-14

God has plans for us, plans for our welfare and future. God promises to hear us when we call out and be found when we seek our Lord. When have you struggled to believe that God had plans — good plans — for you? Can you recall a time when you could not discern God's providence in the moment, but could see how God's good plans were evident in retrospect? Can this remembering give you hope for today?

God of our past, present and future, when present circumstances baffle and challenge us, test and upend us, we struggle to see your good plans and we worry about the future. We know you promise to hear us when we call. We know your word is trustworthy and true. When we cannot yet perceive your providence, sustain us and give us hope until that time when we see your good plans for us come to fruition. Amen.

SATURDAY | LUKE 24:21

This verse comes in the middle of the discourse between several of Jesus' bereft disciples and the risen Christ. They voice their dashed hope to the One walking with them who fulfilled it. They cannot yet see that their hope is not lost, but found and present right in front of them. How often is this true for us? Today prayerfully ask God for the vision to see God's fulfillment of promises right in front of you.

Lord of all that is seen and unseen, even when we hope for that which you promise, we often fail to see your present and coming kingdom despite the fact that you are walking alongside us. Give us eyes to see and ears to hear the holy in our midst. Do not let our human expectations blind us to your divine inbreaking wherever and whenever it comes. Amen.