

THE Penn Street LETTER

First Presbyterian Church, Fort Worth

DECEMBER 2020 | Volume 20, Number 12



ADVENT WORSHIP

During the Season of Advent we will gather for worship virtually for Wednesday Midday Prayers (12 noon) and Sunday mornings (10 a.m.) on Facebook Live and YouTube as we explore the theme Memory and Hope, which centered both in scripture and selected hymn and carol texts. Visit fpcf.org/worship for more information and links to FPC's Facebook page and YouTube channel.

Additionally, Sunday morning Parking Lot services will be offered at 10 a.m. on December 6, 13, and 20. For more information about Parking Lot services see the article below.

CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP

Christmas Eve worship services include both Virtual Lessons and Carols on Facebook Live and YouTube at 7 p.m. and Parking Lot Services at 12 noon (Lessons and Carols), 5 p.m. (Children and Family focused), and 7 p.m. Lessons and Carols with battery operated handheld candlelight. Visit fpcf.org/worship for more information and links to FPC's Facebook page and YouTube channel.

PLANS BEING MADE FOR PARKING LOT WORSHIP AT PENN STREET CAMPUS

As we continue to creatively and safely worship during the pandemic, plans are in the works for parking lot worship services at the Penn Street campus. FPC hopes to offer parking lot worship, in addition to online worship, on Sundays December 6, 13, and 20, and Christmas Eve, December 24. Watch the December 2 *Penn Street Online* email for further details.

In order to gather as safely as possible, the parking lot services on Sunday mornings December 6, 13, and 20 at 10 a.m. and Christmas Eve at 12 noon, 5 p.m., and 7 p.m., will utilize FM radio transmission on frequency 91.5 so that those attending will remain in their cars, with members of their own household, parked in the two lots directly across from the Sanctuary. Worship leaders will be visible from the plaza in front of the Sanctuary.

Services will last from 30-40 minutes and will include scripture, prayers, preaching, and hymns sung safely while remaining in vehicles (Note: since cars will be parked within 6 feet of each other, masks must be worn if windows are lowered during the service.)

Advance registration is not required for attending a parking lot service, however, those attending agree to remain in their vehicles of the duration of the service for the maximum in care and concern for the health of one another. If you have questions about the parking lot services, please contact any member of our pastoral team.



PASTOR'S LETTER

Dear friends,

In the Advent season, we are called to wait on the Lord. I don't know about you, but I love all the rituals we observe in this season from Advent wreaths to Advent calendars to our Advent midday services. It's not easy in our culture to slow down and contemplate the coming of the Lord. It's easy to want to jump to the end of the story. I was reminded of this after Halloween this year when our 5-year-old twins asked us if they could skip all holidays and get right to Christmas!

In the church, we believe it is important to take time to prepare our hearts for the wonder-filled celebration of Christmas. As hard as it is, especially for our children, it's good for us to wait on the coming of the Lord. When we wait, our anticipation grows, and we appreciate it more.

I love to read, and over the years I've discovered that poetry has a gift of slowing me down. It forces me to take my time, appreciating the rhythm, color, and sound of the words (rather than speed along, trying to digest as much as possible in short order). Certainly, I get more out of my reading when I slow down. Ann Weems is a gifted poet, and I'd like to share one of her Advent poems with you. It's a poem that helps me to slow down and remember the importance of waiting, preparing, and anticipating. The poem is entitled "The Coming of God," and it goes like this:

*Our God is the One who comes to us
in a burning bush,
in an angel's song,
in a newborn child.
Our God is the One who cannot be found
locked in the church,
not even the sanctuary.
Our God will be where God will be
with no constraints,
no predictability.
Our God lives where our God lives,
and destruction has no power
and even death cannot stop
the living.
Our God will be born where God will be born,
but there is no place to look for the One who comes to us.
When God is ready
God will come
even to a godforsaken place
like a stable in Bethlehem.
Watch . . .
for you know not when
God comes.
Watch, that you might be found
whenever
wherever
God comes.*

Keep on keeping on,

SUBMISSIONS

Submissions for the JANUARY issue of the Penn Street Letter are due **Wednesday, DECEMBER 16**. Submissions for the weekly Penn Street Online emailed newsletters are due the Wednesday prior to each week's issue. Please send to Pam Burkholder at pamb@fpcf.org.

FOLLOW US

Do you follow First Presbyterian on social media? If not, find us on the following sites and follow along for photos, reminders, encouragement, and more.



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PUBLISHER INFO

The Penn Street Letter is published monthly by First Presbyterian Church, 1000 Penn Street, Fort Worth, TX 76102-3496. Periodicals postage is paid at Fort Worth, TX and at additional offices.

Editor: Pam Burkholder

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Penn Street Letter at 1000 Penn Street, Fort Worth, TX 76102-3496.

FAMILY FAITH FORMATION KEEPS FPC FAMILIES CONNECTED

As we enter the season of Advent, our children's families have been engaging in a weekly faith conversation together for the past 12 weeks. We will continue our Family Faith Formation program into the spring, as we await the day, we can gather in person again. Over these last several months each children's family has received a monthly delivery from their assigned Family Partners.

We are so grateful for our Family Partners who have continued to devote their time, love, and compassion. With our days continuing to feel long, overwhelming, and uncertain, having a way to connect with one another has reminded us that our community is still there. A few of our Family Partners took some time to reflect on their experiences:

Delivering Sunday School supplies to the families has been such a sweet experience and has allowed us to expand our church friendships even further! Our families live in Keller, North Richland Hills, Colleyville, and Grapevine; It is such a testament to the loving church family we all have that our friends travel such distances to attend FPCFW.

Pam and Phil Grossman

I started the program with no expectations except that I would pick up materials from the church and deliver them to a young family that lives near me outside of Fort Worth. I was surprised that from the very first phone call there was such easy communication and warmth between us. I am certain our paths would never have crossed without the Family Partners Program and having this beautiful young family as new friends is a joy. We have met to walk in a local park for fresh air and exercise, and we have offered each other prayers. I appreciate the opportunity to participate in the program.

Jeanene McIntyre

For us, the greatest thing has been the opportunity to engage and interact with families we may not have connected with otherwise. Our families are at different points of life; their children are younger than ours, participate in different activities and Sunday schools, and our church is big. I am really looking forward to the first opportunity we can have them all over for dinner and build on the friendships.

Austin and Courtney Stubblefield



Read the Bible in 9 Months

You are invited to join an exciting Bible reading program at First Presbyterian. Now in its tenth season, Reading the Bible in 9 Months is a daily reading program that weaves together both testaments in an enlightening and enriching experience of our history as God's people.

A feature of Reading the Bible in 9 Months includes the opportunity for monthly Zoom meetings from October – May. During these one hour gatherings (3 p.m. on the 1st Sunday of the month), participants are invited to come together for support, encouragement, and to engage questions that the readings have raised. Engaging in the reading program does not require attendance at the monthly meetings; they are simply available if you would find them helpful.

The complete reading plan is available at fpcf.org/rb9m. If you have any questions about the program or Bible study opportunities at FPC, contact the Rev. Dr. Michael Waschevski (817.335.1231 ext. 229, or michaelw@fpcf.org).

December 1: Isaiah 52-54
December 2: Isaiah 55-59
December 3: Isaiah 60-62
December 4: Isaiah 63-66
December 5: Hosea 1-7
December 6: Hosea 8-14
December 7: Joel, Habakkuk
December 8: Amos
December 9: Obadiah, Jonah
December 10: Micah; Nahum
December 11: Zephaniah, Haggai, Malachi
December 12: Zechariah 1-6
December 13: Zechariah 7-9
December 14: Zechariah 10-14
December 15: Daniel 1-3
December 16: Daniel 4-6
December 17: Daniel 7, 8
December 18: Daniel 9-12
December 19: Psalm 94; Luke 1,2
December 20: Psalm 95; Luke 3,4
December 22: Psalm 96; Luke 5,6
December 22: Psalm 97; Luke 7,8
December 23: Psalm 98; Luke 9,10
December 24: Psalm 99; Luke 11-13
December 25: Psalm 100; Luke 14-16
December 26: Psalm 101; Luke 17,18
December 27: Psalm 102; Luke 19-21
December 28: Psalm 103; Luke 22-24
December 29: Acts 1, 2
December 30: Acts 3, 4
December 31: Acts 5, 6

Spiritual Formation UPCOMING COURSE OFFERINGS

FPC's Spiritual Formation Subcommittee is pleased to offer several Zoom-based educational opportunities. Visit fpcf.org/spiritualformation for more information or to register for these classes. You may also contact the church office (817.335.1231) with questions or to register by phone.

ADVENT PRAYER GROUP:

Wednesdays, December 2 through December 23, 1 - 2 p.m.

Advent, from the Latin *adventus*, literally means "coming." In our liturgical year, it is a time of expectant waiting and personal preparation which precedes our Christmas celebration of Jesus' birth. But it is also a time of preparation for Christ's second coming – coming to us in the 'Now,' as well as in millennia to come. Meister Eckhart, a 13th century theologian and mystic, famously said, "We are all meant to be mothers of God...for God is always needing to be born." Christ is always "coming" – coming into hearts ready to receive him. With this in mind, members of the Spiritual Formation committee will offer a four-week covenant group (via Zoom) focusing on spiritual disciplines which nurture and encourage that receptivity. Beginning Wednesday, December 2, and extending through Wednesday, December 23, the various leaders will introduce a weekly spiritual practice which, when practiced throughout the week, can open us to the Holy Spirit in ever deeper ways.

SHALOM:

Sundays, January 10 - February 21, 1 p.m.

Desmond Tutu has written a book, *God Has a Dream*. And in it, he echoes MLK, saying, "God says to you, 'I have a dream. Please help me to realize it. It is a dream of a world whose ugliness and squalor and poverty, its war and hostility, its greed and harsh competitiveness, its alienation and disharmony are changed into their glorious counterparts. When there will be more laughter, joy, and peace, where there will be justice and goodness and compassion and love and caring and sharing. I have a dream that my children will know that they are members of one family, the human family, God's family, my family.'"

These great men did not make this stuff up. Instead they took a comprehensive look at scripture and recognized that God's vision of how we were to live with one another and with God permeates all of scripture. And they understood that God was serious about birthing this dream into reality. MLK called the dream, "the beloved community;" Desmond Tutu, "Ubuntu." The Old Testament calls it "Shalom;" the New Testament, "Eirene."

In this 6-week course, Carol Toombs will trace God's dream of shalom as it was introduced in Genesis and fulfilled in Revelation, exploring the richness of shalom blessings and the urgency of human responsibility in co-creating it. The course will explore how, through covenants, law, prophets, Jesus Christ, and the early church, God's dream was both kept alive and revealed in ever greater depth.

Presbyterian Women's Celebration of Christmas

Tuesday, December 8 at 10:30 a.m., followed by Fellowship Zoom time at 11:15.

FPCFW.ORG/PW

PNC UPDATE

Dear friends,

It's been a couple of months since our last update and we wanted to let you know of the progress we are making.

We have listened to hundreds of sermons, read books by pastors, studied homiletics, and listened and prayed intently for the Holy Spirit's - as well as our own - discernment for that pastor who God is guiding us toward. We have slowly narrowed our search to those few candidates that we feel are being called to First Presbyterian Church, Fort Worth.

We had our first in person visit the first week of November and got to show them around Fort Worth and spend time at the church showing what a beautiful facility we are blessed with. They also got to meet the pastoral staff and get time to share with them. One thing I am finding during this entire process is what a "small community" Presbyterian pastors really (there are so many common connections) are and how much love and kinship there is shared among all of them. We are truly blessed to have such wonderful pastors, not only on our own staff but from which to choose in the denomination.

The highlight was visiting our church's more significant mission projects Friday morning. Our visitor was amazed at the extent of the Presbyterian Night Shelter complex and the work we do with Community Crossroads. He praised Toby Owen for his dedication, love, and commitment as well as Dori's enthusiasm and our own Robyn for all the work they do as well as the large number of volunteers that keep it all running.

We shared meals together, usually picnic style lunches in our beautiful Trinity Trails park system, then dinner, one at an outdoor restaurant and the other at one of our committee member's homes. We were able to share great fellowship and food nurtured in the love of Christ. It helped immensely with deep prayer and discussion in working toward that pastor God has intended for us. It was a wonderful and exciting visit, and we hope to continue the process. We found it so much more fulfilling to be able to see each other in person and share our time together. Community is one of the fundamentals of church and this came through loud and clear with this ability to finally meet and share in person.

We will keep you continually informed as we are beginning to see "the light at the end of the tunnel." We only ask for your patience, perseverance, and prayer as we continue to do God's work for our church. Peace!

Patrick Sheppard, Chair, Pastor Nominating Committee

NOVEMBER SESSION UPDATE

At its November 15 Stated Meeting the Session:

- Was led in an opening devotion and prayer by elder David Pettit.
- Examined Elders-elect and sustained their examination.
- Approved the Consent Agenda (included minutes of the October stated meeting; a baptism; and calling a Congregational Meeting for December 13 to act on Pastors Terms of Call for 2021 and to fill a vacancy on the Congregation's Nominating Committee.)
- Heard reports from the Clerk and the Pastors.
- Approved a recommendation from the Trustees to allocate up to \$275,000 from the Trustees General Fund to fund the Livestream project previously approved by Session.
- Heard an update from Patrick Sheppard, chair of the Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC).
- Heard a Stewardship update from Elder Janeen Lamkin on the fall campaign.
- Received the Monthly Update from the Work Group on Reopening, with no changes made to current phase.
- Approved Pastors' Terms of Call for the Associate Pastors, to be acted upon by the congregation at the December 13 Congregational Meeting.

Prayer During the Pastoral Search

The Session commends the following prayer written by the Spiritual Formation Subcommittee for our use during the pastoral search. Please pray it frequently in your own personal prayer time and in committees and virtual gatherings of the church.

Holy God,

We praise and thank you for your steadfast love of our church and humbly ask your guidance and blessing as you lead us to the pastor you are calling to this place.

Nurture and guide your servant for sharing ministry among us. Prepare our hearts to receive his or her gifts.

Give us the courage to speak truthfully and compassionately, so that we might be a building up of Your church. Teach us all the way of Jesus: to walk humbly with you, seeking justice and mercy.

Joyfully, we thank you for your Holy Spirit who enlightens and enlivens the path for each of us.

In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR: FPC CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS



One of the ways we celebrate Advent and Christmas in our congregation is with the beautiful display of poinsettias adorning our worship spaces. This year we will have a greatly reduced need for the usual number of poinsettias and an increased need for safety for those who volunteer to care for the plants. Therefore, this year instead of asking for the actual cost of a plant we are suggesting a donation to the poinsettia fund in honor of and/or memory of a loved one. We will honor those individuals in a virtual bulletin during the season. At the end of the season, the poinsettias will be delivered to those designated by our parish visitors. We are hugely grateful for the ongoing ways we have for gathering and celebrating virtually and look forward to the day when we are once again together in our much-loved church building. To sign up and make a donation, contact Celeste Falter in the church office (cfalter@fpcfw.org or 817.335.1231, ext. 261) by December 15.

STAYING CONNECTED

From a socially-distanced Halloween celebration in our parking lot to a drive-in donation event benefiting the Presbyterian Night Shelter and the annual Thanksgiving Basket Project, pictured here are some of the recent ways that FPC members have been staying connected to the church and one another.



JOYS & CONCERNS

Following are the joys and concerns shared as November 19, 2020. To respect the privacy of those listed, names are included only when the individuals grant their permission.

Our loving sympathy to...

Brynda and John McNey on the death of her father, J. D. Ballenger, on October 3 in Kilgore.

Family and friends of **Darrell Noe**, who died October 17.

Family and friends of **Mark Jennings**, who died October 19. He is survived by FPC family **Tricia Jennings**, **Julia Jennings**, **Brittany** and **Jack Jennings**, **Marilyn Roach**, **Pam** and **Lamar Voight**, **Jacque Morse**, **Brad Morse**, and **Marilyn Morse**.

Family and friends of **Kay Stansbery**, who died October 24.

Mike Turner on the death of his father, Miles Turner, on October 30.

Ralph and Barbara Reece on the death of his father, Stan Reece, on October 30 and his father's wife, Madeline Reece, on October 18 in San Antonio.

Family and friends of **Mary Pace**, who died November 7. She is survived by her husband, **David Pace**.

Our loving thoughts and prayers are with...

Nathan Pettey, **Mike Millar**, **Susie Kuipers**, **Sarah Graham**, **Julie Carter**, and **Mary Jane Witt**, who are recovering from surgery or injury.

Jimmy Burnett, **Claire Midkiff**, **Jim Goble**, **Barbara Reece**, **Karl Kuipers**, **Dorothy Kinser**, **Floyd Kinser**, **Diane Satterlee**, **Jerry Brownlee**, **Eliot Kerlin**, **Joyce Brower**, **Janelle Eklund**, **Frank Stewart**, **Karl Travis**, **Rush Hart**, **Marilyn Wilson**, **Phyllis Propes**, **Emma Coley**, and **Frances Blake**, who are dealing with illness or undergoing treatment.

Our caring prayers for extended family include...

Cora McCoy (mother-in-law of **Lesley McCoy**), **Paula Perkins** (sister of **Susie Kuipers**), **Audrey Hart** (great-granddaughter of **Bob and Jane Trask**), **Ann Welch** (sister of **Andrea Frankenfield**), **Mike Bryan** (son-in-law of **Mary Alice Dobesh**), **Nancy Hatfield** (mother of **Sarah Haddock**), **Patrick Denton** (nephew of **Bill and Pat Gordon**), **Lynn Prater** (daughter of **Harlene Satterfield**); **Bill Neil** (brother of **Marilyn Love**), **Janet Laminack** (cousin of **Julie Sphar** and **Vance Laminack**), **John DeMore** (son-in-law of **June Sprott**), **Kathy Kline** (**Maxine Kruse's** daughter), and **Susan Chenault** (**Frances Chenault's** daughter).

Prayers for peace in our world, for the safety of **Nathan Gunter** (**Russell and Vivian Norment's** nephew) who is stationed in Korea. Also for the safety of **Diego A. Saldivar**, who is serving in the US Navy; **Diego** is the son of **Becky** and **Rene Saldivar**. And for the safety of **Thomas Shelby**, who is serving in the US Navy, deployed in Japan. **Thomas** is the son of **Ellen Buck** and the grandson of **Vance and Donna Laminack**.

Prayers for those affected by the coronavirus pandemic including medical professionals and healthcare providers.

Prayers for **Cindy Corell**, our mission co-worker in Haiti. Prayers for peace and resolution for the people of Haiti.

Our congratulations and best wishes to...

Megan and Adam Pendleton on the birth of **Ruth Hartwell** on October 28. **Ruth** joins big brother, **Auden**, and proud grandparents are **Bob and Natalie Peak**.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING (VIRTUAL):

Sunday, December 13 at 12:30 p.m.

The Session has called a Congregational Meeting (via Zoom) in order to fill a vacancy on the congregation's Nominating Committee and to approve the 2021 Terms of Call for the Revs. **Robyn Michalove**, **Joshua Stewart**, and **Michael Waschevski**.

Prior to our last Congregational Meeting (September 13, 2020) Moderator of Session, the Rev. Dr. Michael Waschevski consulted with the Stated Clerk of Grace Presbytery about options for holding congregational meetings when the pandemic prevents meeting in person. Both the 2004 General Assembly, through an Authoritative Interpretation of F-3.0205 in the Book of Order, and Robert's Rules of Order define a congregational meeting as a "deliberative assembly." In order to deliberate, members must be able to simultaneously hear each other during discussion of motions. Zoom meetings qualify as a deliberative assembly as it is a simultaneous gathering. Members will be able to join the meeting by computer, smartphone, iPad, or a telephone call (no computer or internet access is required, therefore.)

In order to receive the required Zoom link or telephone access number, you will need to register for the meeting. Members may register through a link in next week's emailed *Penn Street Online*, or by contacting **Patty O'Brien** in the church office (pobrien@fpcfw.org or 817.335.1231, ext. 223). The access link or telephone code will be sent a few days prior to the meeting. (The link will not be made public in order to keep the meeting secure.) Please make every effort to participate in the meeting.

If you have questions about the virtual Congregational Meeting, please contact the Moderator, the Rev. Dr. Michael Waschevski at 817.335.1231 ext. 229.



THE penn street LETTER

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Advent Celebration

CHILDREN'S ADVENT CELEBRATION (AND A VOLUNTEER
OPPORTUNITY FOR YOUTH!): SUNDAY, DECEMBER 13 AT 4 P.M.

Although our traditions and celebrations will look different this year, we hope to still mark this the Advent season by gathering safely in the church parking lot. Children, youth, and their families are invited to join us on December 13 for an Advent Celebration. The lot will open at 3:30 p.m. and close at 4 p.m. (at the start of the event).

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY FAMILIES, YOU ARE INVITED TO "DECK THE HALLS" ...of your vehicles with festive holiday decorations for an afternoon as we light the lot with luminaries. We will play games and make music with our favorite carols. Travel by car, van, or donkey and join us! Each vehicle that will be participating must register. Visit fpcfw.org/children for more information and to register.



YOUTH, YOU ARE INVITED TO SIGN-UP TO VOLUNTEER AND SERVE! There will be opportunities to help with set-up in the parking lot and run the event in a safe and physically distanced way. Visit fpcfw.org/youth for more information and to register.

