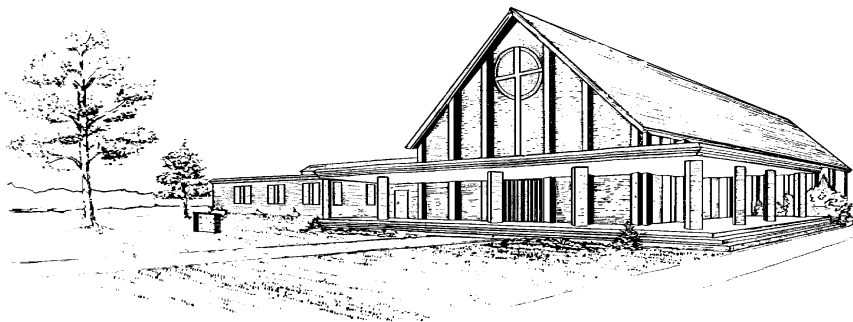


STEEPLE CHIMES

Newsletter of the First Presbyterian Church of Greenlawn

ISSUE: Two Hundred Six

DECEMBER 2017



Message From the Pastor

Maybe like me, you need a God with flesh and bones, a God fleshed out *for us*. In the Incarnation, we discover that God is not satisfied that we might entertain abstract thoughts about divinity, or approach God with our minds only. Nor is it enough that God should take up residence in our hearts only as a spiritual presence, granting us no more than a feeling of nearness. God became flesh and set up his tent among us in a particular time and place so that we might experience love up close and personal.

The Incarnation reminds us is that it is into the real world of flesh-and-blood human beings that God has chosen to come. And that God comes so near, sometimes so arrestingly near, changes everything for us. For in Jesus Christ, God went all the way to us, all the way for us, and all the way with us. Because in the Incarnation, God sent his Son into our here and now, we can live in our here and now without fear. For our here and now is not set over against the hither and yon of the eternal. Because of the Incarnation, eternal life begins not just in the by and by, but right now, right here, when many of us feel we need it the most.

Because of the Incarnation, the world is no longer divided into the “now” and “then,” the “sacred” and the “profane,” or the “holy” and the “unholy.” In the Incarnation we celebrate the sacrament of the present moment in which everything is sacred, everything is holy; everything matters. We matter. Matter matters.

Celtic spirituality speaks of “thin places,” those gossamer regions where the veil between this world and the other is so sheer that we can almost step right through it, where the distinction between heaven and earth begins to collapse. With the Incarnation, such “thin places” start opening up everywhere, not just in so-called sacred places, like church buildings, but outside where we do most of our living. And not just on the beach or on mountaintops, but everywhere we go because with the Incarnation, Jesus hits the road with us. And not just on holy days, like Christmas, but all the time, if only we would allow ourselves to be gently pried open by God’s gentle mercies.

As we make our journey to Bethlehem may we all find our kneeling places and find in this unrepeatable present moment an ever-flowing source of holiness.

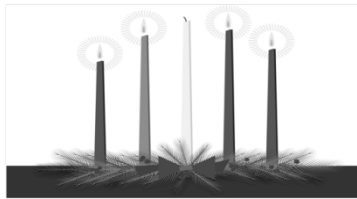
See you in church,

Pastor Fred

Advent

The season of Advent expresses the anticipation and prayer that the Risen Christ, come to us first as a baby, shall come again to establish his rule over everything. Advent is what we look to when we pray, “*Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*”

Every year we hear talk about “putting Christ back into Christmas” as if it were up to us to redeem Jesus from irrelevance. And we hear ominous talk about “the War on Christmas” as if the battle were being fought in our shopping malls rather than in our own hearts. Let us pray to encounter Christ at Christmas, but also throughout the season of Advent. Let us pray that God might shake off all the lies that have been piling up all around us and in us; that God might free us from our false gods, false certainties, false hopes and false dreams. Remembering that the One who has come shall come yet again- not as an enemy, but with healing in His wings- let us pray that God may turn us around, and surprise us with joy. This Advent, may we rise up in praise, wonder and hope. Let us live into the blessing of Advent, the end of fear.



Margaret Lee Bequest

In late October, the church received the final bequest on the estate of Margaret Lee (August 14, 1929- January 19, 2017). Margaret was a long and faithful member of this church even after she moved to Salem, Oregon in August 2012. Even after her relocation to the West Coast, Margaret, a true benefactor of the church, remained generous with who she was and what she had, helping our church through a difficult season, and with no desire for recognition.

Later, a properly executed will permitted Margaret to accomplish goals even after her passing. One of her goals was to create a legacy for the First Presbyterian Church of Greenlawn.

A bequest in a will might be a specified amount, a percentage of one’s estate, or a residual amount (after expenses and other bequests have been deducted).

Speak with your attorney about how best to include the First Presbyterian Church of Greenlawn in your will given your special circumstances. Although your attorney can assist you with specific language, here is some typical language that might help you get the conversation started with your attorney.

General Bequest. A general bequest is among the most popular ways to make a planned gift. In a general bequest, you leave a specified dollar amount: “*I give _____ (insert dollar amount) to the First Presbyterian Church of Greenlawn, 497 Pulaski Rd, Greenlawn, NY 11740 as an unrestricted gift.*”

Percentage of Estate: You can also designate some portion or percentage of your estate: “*I give _____ % (insert specific percentage) of my estate to the First Presbyterian Church of Greenlawn, 497 Pulaski Rd., Greenlawn, NY 11740, after all debts, taxes, expenses, and all other bequests have been paid as an unrestricted gift.*”

Residuary Bequest. You can also designate what some describe as a residuary bequest: “*I give the remainder of the property I own at death to the First Presbyterian Church of Greenlawn, 497 Pulaski Rd, Greenlawn, NY 11740, after all debts, taxes, expenses and all other bequests have been paid as an unrestricted gift.*”

The First Presbyterian Church of Greenlawn has a proud heritage, and your gifts and bequests assure its continuance into the future. Thank you for keeping the promise of that future in your prayers as did Margaret Lee.

Submitted by Pastor Fred

Christmas Season Worship Scheduling

Our **Living Nativity** is scheduled for Sunday, December 10th at 5 p.m. followed by our community dinner. We will join together for regular worship at 10:30 AM on Sunday, December 24th, and will celebrate **Christmas Eve** with a candlelight service at 8 PM that evening.

December 31st is Pajama Sunday. Don't dress up for church, dress down. Come to church the last day of the year in your PJs; your warm fuzzy fleeces; or those comfy clothes that you would wear in the company of those you love and trust, those with whom you feel safe and comfortable.

Theotokos

The title *theotokos* ("the bearer (or mother) of God") became a popular term of devotion for the Blessed Virgin Mary in the first centuries after Christ. But the title *theotokos* was not without controversy. Some thought that to call Mary the mother of *God* undermined Jesus' full humanity; others thought it elevated Mary to a too exalted status.

A millennium later, Meister Eckhart (1260-1328), the German mystic and theologian, was bold to suggest that "We are *all* meant to be mothers of God. What good is it to me if this eternal birth of the divine Son takes place unceasingly but does not take place within myself? And what good is it to me if Mary is full of grace if I am not also full of grace? What good is it to me for the Creator to give birth to his Son if I do not give birth to him in my time and culture? This then is the fullness of time: When the Son of God is begotten in us."

As we enter into Advent, may we all be bearers of God in a world some would dismiss as godforsaken. May our news about our God be the good news for which our broken world so much longs! May we be bearers of God for the world that God simply loves to death.

Submitted by Pastor Fred

**ANNUAL LIVING NATIVITY
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10TH**

5:00 PM

CHRISTMAS DINNER

6:00 PM

PARTS STILL AVAILABLE-SIGN UP NOW!

CHRISTMAS POINSETTIA

MEMORIALS

\$20.00 EACH

ORDERS BEING TAKEN THROUGH

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17TH

Contact Corinne Burdett (631-261-4636) or

The Church Office

December Youth Happenings

Want to know more about the Church Youth Group?
Contact Youth Director Debbie Eitel at debbie_eitel@ibi.com



Sunday Dec. 10 28th Annual Living Nativity - 5PM

***Dress Rehearsal at 3 PM - SHARP!

Help us re-enact the Nativity.

All members encouraged to be a part of our yearly outreach to the community.

FREE Community Dinner in CE hall to follow



Friday Dec. 22 Christmas Caroling

Meet at the church at 7 PM for caroling.

Sunday Dec. 24 Christmas Eve Service

Morning Worship Service 10:30 AM

*ONE Candlelight Service! 8 PM

PRAYER CORNER

December 2017

—
For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

~Isaiah 9:6

MY PRAYER

~Kathryn Myers

May these be yours this joyous Christmas season—
Such hope as shepherds harbored long ago,
Such gratitude as wise men felt within them
That prompted each his present to bestow,
Such knowledge as the humble mother pondered,
That He will come to all who will accept,
Such peace as knew the beasts with in the stable
Who mid the town's confusion calmly slept,
Such joy as filled the mighty angel chorus
Whose anthem through the star-pierced heaven rang.
May these be yours this joyous Christmas season,
And your heart sing the song the angels sang!

GIVING

~Norman Vincent Peale

True fulfillment comes through giving. If you think only of yourself, your life will stagnate, for what really makes life worthwhile is giving yourself to others in Christ's name. Take risks, lose yourself in people and causes outside yourself, and you will find deep inner joy.

The more you give to life, the more you receive from it.

*“Christmas is a golden chain that binds a family in faith, hope,
And love...drawing each to the open hearth of togetherness.”*

~Juanita Johnson



AN ALPHABET OF CHRISTMAS

~Anon

A is for Animals who shared the stable.
B for the Babe with their manger for cradle.
C for the Carols so blithe and so gay.
D for December, the twenty-fifth day.
E for the Eve when we're all so excited.
F for the Fun when the tree's at last lighted.
G is the Goose which you all know is fat.
H is the Holly you stick in your hat.
I for the Ivy that clings to the wall.
J is for Jesus, the cause of it all.
K for the Kindness begot by this feast.
L is the Light shining way in the east.
M for the Mistletoe, all green and white.
N for the Noels we sing Christmas night.
O for the Oxen, the first to adore Him.
P for the Presents Wise Men laid before Him.
Q for the Queerness that this should have been
Near two thousand years before you were seen.
R for the Reindeer leaping the roofs.
S for the Stockings that Santa Claus stuffs.
T for the Toys, the Tinsel, the Tree.
U is for Us—the whole family.
V is for Visitors bringing us cheer.
W is Welcome to the happy New Year.
X Y Z bother me! All I can say,
Is this is the end of my Christmas day.
So now to you all, wherever you be,
A merry, merry Christmas, and many may you see

A SISTERHOOD APART

~Nina Stiles

I often think that had a mother been
The hostess there that evening at the inn,
There would have been no question of a stall.
She would have found some place within her hall
For Mary to lay down her tired head,
Perhaps she would have given her own bed.
And in the cradle of her own wee son,
She might have placed that night the Holy One;
Not with the thought of harboring a King,
Or any hope of gain her act might bring,
But from the simple goodness of her heart,
For mothers are a sisterhood apart.

Submitted by Betty Chatfield

**O, Little Lamb, Who Made Thee?
A Christmas Tale
By Karen Zauytk**

It was cold in the stable that night, and the animals were huddled together for warmth. The cows and the oxen and the donkeys.

And one little lamb.

Sad, scrawny little lamb, born lame and frail. Too frail to be out with the flock in the fields. The shepherds had carried it into the stable, where it would be safe from the wind and the wolves, for both the wolves and the wind came down from the hills with a fierceness in wintertime.

The lamb had food and shelter, but that was not enough. It was lonely. Separated from its mother, it felt unloved. The other animals tried to be kind, but they had no time. During the day, they were busy working: The cows had milk to make, the oxen had earth to plow, and the donkeys had carts to pull.

At night they were all very tired. They'd feed upon the fodder, and then go right to bed. None would talk, none would play. None would even sing a lullaby to a lamb that needed comfort. Every night the lamb would cry, and be told to hush, for its bleats disturbed their sleep.

Thus, that night, the lamb cried without making a sound, as it had learned to do. And it looked at the strangers who were sharing the stable. At the man, who held the woman's hand and spoke to her so softly. And especially at the woman, who spoke not at all.

Huddled together, the animals slept, and eventually the lamb slept, too. And the night was silent.

But then, in the darkest hour, there was no more darkness and no more silence. There was the cry of a baby. And the stable shone with the brightness of lights and there were voices ringing in the air.

The animals, shaken from their dreams, were frightened. They stamped their hooves and tossed their heads and made their frightened-animal noises, but the light was so lovely and the voices so beautiful, it wasn't long before they quieted and began to lose their fear.

And when the light had dimmed to a glow, and the voices were only an echo, there in their manger, they saw the baby, and their eyes went wide with wonder.

The animals murmured but would not approach until the woman beckoned. Then, one by one, the beasts came forward. All, that is, except the lamb, which was only a baby itself and still terribly afraid. Forgotten by the others, it trembled in a corner and tried to hide beneath the hay.

But the baby in the manger was trembling, too. The cold of the night had returned, and the baby had started to shiver. When the animals saw this, they huddled closer about the crib.

The man took off his cloak and made a blanket of it, but the cloak was thin and threadbare and provided little warmth.

The woman held the baby to her breast. He shivered still, and she began to weep.

And the lamb, which knew what weeping meant, lifted itself from the hay. Though it was still afraid, it left its hiding place. It made its way among the legs of the bigger beasts, until it stood beside the woman, and it laid its head against her knee.

And the softest of hands reached down and stroked its wool.

And the gentlest of hands picked it up and tucked it into the manger straw, and tucked the baby in beside it, and covered them both with the cloak. The baby snuggled near, and smiled, and closed his eyes.

And the lamb was very glad it had learned to cry without making a sound. Because it was crying now and didn't want to wake the child.

But the lamb wasn't crying because it was sad. It was crying because, at last, it didn't feel alone. Or afraid. Or unloved.

Then the lamb closed its eyes, too. And the woman sang a lullaby.



Words cannot express fully the Blessings my friends at Greenlawn Presbyterian Church have been to me. The phone calls, visits, cards, flowers, food and uplifting prayers have helped me successfully overcome troubled times. Thank you and God. Bless you all.

Nancy MacIntrye

The congregation sends a special THANK YOU to Ed Close for his years of invaluable service as Assistant Treasurer and Head Usher. We appreciate your time and talents in your service to our church.

Thanks also to David Hammer who has volunteered to take over as Head Usher. Please speak to David if you would like to become a member of an ushering team.

First Presbyterian Church of Greenlawn



497 Pulaski Road
Greenlawn, New York 11740
Phone: 631-261-2150

Sunday Worship ***Sunday School*** **10:30 AM**

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." (Matt 19:14)

Pastor Fred's Office Hours

are from 11:00am through 5:00 pm Monday through Thursday... unless visiting or attending meetings.
Outside the above hours, please call (631) 626-3702
for appointments and consultations.

OUR STAFF

Rev Frederick H. Woodward, Pastor
Linda Siegmann, Administrative Assistant
Catherine Mahler, Director of Music
Debra Eitel, Youth Director
Margaret Negrelli, Clerk of Session
Jim Dean, Treasurer
Betty Chatfield, Financial Secretary
Nancy MacIntyre, Benevolence Treasurer

This is Your Church

As Christians, we are called to serve God by serving others. Here at Greenlawn, many members respond to that call by volunteering their time and talents in one or more of the activities that support our church and community. Volunteers care for our church and facilities, participate in our worship and music services, nurture each other in times of need, and reach out to lend a helping hand in communities near and far.

Ask yourself :
"How is God calling **Me** to His Service?"