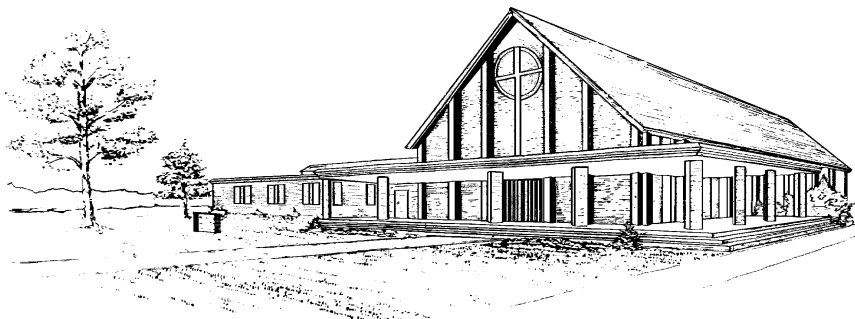


# STEEPLE CHIMES

Newsletter of the First Presbyterian Church of Greenlawn

ISSUE: Two Hundred Seventeen

DECEMBER 2018



## Message From the Pastor

The Christian profession about Advent is that the future has been determined by the past, and the future determines the present. The future, Christ's return and reign, has been determined by the past, Christ's death and resurrection. And the future, guaranteed by the gift of the Spirit, determines and gives shape to our present.

But for many of us, the present just doesn't seem to be cooperating. Our world and our confession of Christ's sovereignty in and over the world don't seem to jive.

As Christians, we believe that Christ is Lord. We believe his kingdom has begun, and that the world really had changed with his coming. But our experience often seems to instruct us otherwise, telling us that the principalities and powers are having the upper hand. We believe in a God who makes all things new. Yet we are painfully aware of all those places in our lives and in our world where God's newness is not yet visible. We say that the kingdom or reign of God is *already* and also *not yet*, but we stand precariously in the gap and do not know how to hold the two in tension. If, in short, human life is a dialogue between expectation and experience, it often feels as if experience has the upper hand.

And so we become fearful. Our fear presents sometimes as sorrow and grief, sometimes as confusion, and sometimes simply as stuckness. In our anxiety, we tend to demand certainty while sacrificing curiosity. We slip into all-or-nothing thinking. We find ourselves tempted by quick fixes and when they are unavailable, we may find ourselves getting angry and defensive. We may notice ourselves stiffening our positions over and against others, and tightening our perspective. In the grip of fear, we lose our ability to hear without distortion and our capacity to respond clearly and graciously to those who see God's world differently than we do.

Especially this Advent, my prayer is that we will be led to a growing inner stillness that allows us to realize that He for whom we are waiting has already arrived and speaks to us even now in the silence of our hearts. As engage in Advent practices of prayer and meditation, and begin to seek our kneeling places in Bethlehem, may Jesus be reborn in our lives slowly and steadily, and be received as the One we come to know even or especially while waiting. If the gap between the already and the not yet, between experience and expectation, has brought us this season to the threshold of fear, we might as well enter. For Jesus is waiting inside, telling us always, "Be not afraid."



See you in church,

Pastor Fred

# ADVENT MEDITATION

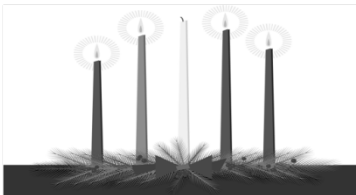
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Join us for Advent meditation on three Mondays of Advent leading up to Christmas (12-3, 12-10, and 12-17). It's easy to remember: three December Mondays, at 3:33 PM in the sanctuary.

You don't have to have experience. You don't have to master anything. You don't have to be "spiritual." It's enough that we come with the intention of consenting, as best we can, to the presence and action of God.

After a brief orientation on this easy-to-explain Advent practice of meditative prayer, we'll sit together for one or two periods of 20 minutes each.

*Be still and know that I am God. Be still and know that I am. Be still and know. Be still. Be.*



Submitted by Pastor Fred



## Flesh and Bones God

In the Incarnation, we discover that God is not satisfied that we might approach him with our minds only. God became flesh and set up his tent among us in a particular time and place so that we might experience Love close up and personal, in every place and time.

The Incarnation reminds us is that it is into the real world of flesh-and-blood human beings that God has chosen to come. That God comes so arrestingly near changes everything for us. For in the Incarnation God went all the way to us, all the way for us, and all the way with us. Because the Kingdom of God has come near, because, in the Incarnation, God sent his Son into our here and now, we can live here and now without fear. Here we discover that the Kingdom of God dawns not when we die, but right now as we wake up.

Because of the Incarnation, the world can no longer be neatly 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. The veil between this world and the other is so sheer that we can almost step right through it. The distinction between heaven and earth begins to collapse as we are gently pried open by God's gentle mercies to discover in every unrepeatable present moment an ever-flowing source of holiness.

Submitted by Pastor Fred





## ***ADVENT 2018 ~ WORSHIP AND EVENTS***

***Sunday, December 2nd ~ Communion ~ First Sunday in Advent***

***Sunday, December 16th ~ Annual Living Nativity and Dinner ~ 5:00 PM***

***Monday, December 24th ~ Christmas Eve ~ Family Worship ~ 8:00 PM***

*Christ  
Is Coming!*

### **CHRISTMAS BELLS**

~Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 1807 – 1882

Nationality American

Father - Stephen Longfellow, lawyer and member of Congress

Educated - Bowdoin College, Brunswick, Maine

Career - Poet, critic, Professor of English Literature at Harvard

Famous Poem - The Song of Hiawatha

I heard the bells on Christmas Day their old, familiar carols play,  
and wild and sweet the words repeat Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And thought how, as the day had come, the belfries of all Christendom  
Had rolled along the unbroken song Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Till ringing, singing on its way, the world revolved from night to day,  
A voice, a chime, a chant sublime Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Then from each black, accursed mouth the cannon thundered in the South,  
And with the sound the carols drowned Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

It was as if an earthquake rent the hearth-stones of a continent,  
And made forlorn the households born Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And in despair I bowed my head; "There is no peace on earth," I said;  
"For hate is strong, and mocks the song Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep: "God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;  
The Wrong shall fail, the Right prevail, With peace on earth, good-will to men."

Submitted by Betty Chatfield



**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 1ST  
10:00 AM TO 1:00 PM**

**COME SPEND SOME TIME  
PREPARING  
OUR CHURCH FOR THE WINTER!**

**YOUR HELP WILL BE  
GREATLY APPRECIATED**

### Call For Coupons!

For the Deacon Food Pantry  
~ We are accepting Manufacturer Coupons ~

Any unused coupons will be donated to The Elwood Library where coupons are being collected and sorted for military families in need  
~ Please NO Store coupons or fast food restaurant coupons!

The coupon collection box is located  
on the table outside 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



Saturday Dec 1 Church Work Day 10AM - 1PM

Come out and help us make our church "shine!"  
Many hands make quick and light work!



Sunday Dec. 16 29th 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. 21 Christmas Caroling

Meet at the church at 7 PM for caroling.

Monday Dec. 24 Christmas Eve Service

\*ONE Candlelight Service! 8 PM

# Jackets For Jesus collected through Sunday, December 23rd



## **PRAYER CORNER** **DECEMBER 2018**

*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 CALL Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.*

Isaiah 9:6

### MY CHRISTMAS WISH (A PRAYER) ~Georgia Adams

What do I wish you this Christmas? Above all, I wish you peace, a peace of heart and soul and mind that will with each day increase.

I wish you a calmness of purpose, a steady and sure resolve that brings a quiet ambition around which all things revolve.

I wish you a tranquil spirit, dependence on God above, a warmness only exceeded by deep, abiding love.

I wish you a still composure, serenity unsurpassed,  
I wish harmonious friendships—the kind that really last.

There may be some storms confronting, but with this gift of mine your Christmas and the days after will be peaceful by design.

## The History Behind “The 12 Days of Christmas”



There is always one Christmas Carol that has baffled us. What in the world do leaping lords, French hens, swimming swans, and especially the partridge who won't come out of the pear tree, have to do with Christmas?

From 1558 until 1829, Roman Catholics in England were not permitted to practice their faith openly. Someone during that era wrote this carol as a catechism song for young Catholics. It has two levels of meaning: the surface meaning plus hidden meaning known only to members of their church. Each element in the carol has a code word for a religious reality, which the children could remember.

The partridge in the pear tree was Jesus Christ.

Two turtledoves were the Old and New Testament.

Three French hens stood for faith, hope and love.

The four calling birds were the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

The five golden rings recalled the Torah or Law, the first five books of the Old Testament.

The six geese a-laying stood for the six days of creation.

Seven swans a-swimming represented the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit: Prophecy, Serving, Teaching, Exhortation, Contribution, Leadership, and Mercy.

The eight maids a-milking were the eight beatitudes.

Nine ladies dancing were the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit: Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, and Self Control.

The ten lords a-leaping were the Ten Commandments.

The eleven pipers stood for the eleven faithful Disciples.

The twelve drummers drumming symbolized the twelve points of Belief in the Apostles' Creed.



## Christmas Flower Memorials

Orders are now being taken for the Christmas Flower Memorials to decorate our sanctuary.

Dedications may be made in memory or honor of loved ones.

**Cost: \$20.00 each ~ Deadline: Sunday, December 16th**

Make checks payable to the church and specify for "Flower Fund".  
Orders can be given to Corinne Burdett, placed in the Flower Coordinator mailbox, or sent to the Church Office.



**Join the Choir...**

**You'll Be Glad  
You Did!**



**CHOIR PRACTICE: SUNDAYS** before service @ 10:00 am

Catch the singing vibe to praise God by singing with XLTD (exalted).

Contact Leonora Colletti, organist, for details

*"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name." Psalm 103:1*



## *First Presbyterian Church of Greenlawn*



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

### ***Sunday Worship***

**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  
**Debra Eitel**, Youth Director  
**Leonora Colletti**, Organist  
**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?"*