



The Steeple Chimes

The E-Newsletter of The First Presbyterian Church of Greenlawn
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Rev. Dr. Ann M. Van Cleef, Pastor

December, 2020

Pastor's Message

My Beloved Congregants,

One of the many blessings of having children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, and even neighborhood kids in one's life is the gift of being able to see Christmas through their eyes.

I cherish the memories of Christmas Pageants at Westhampton Presbyterian Church, where I was a member for 25 years. My son, Philip, played the part of an angel, then a shepherd, and finally a Wise Man. (No, he never got to be Joseph.) I remember with great fondness his shouts of delight on Christmas morning because Santa Claus had paid us a visit. After I married Bob in 2004, I became "Grandma Ann" to his three grandchildren, and was again privileged to observe the holiday season from a child's point of view.

Another fond memory. One year, during my teaching career, Southampton High School hosted a Chinese exchange teacher named Zhang Wei. In China, your family name is first and your given name is last, so he was "Mr. Zhang" to the students, and "Wei" to the adults. The school asked for teachers to volunteer to house Wei so he could get a better taste of American life. Bob and I happily shared our home with him for Christmas break.

Wei is an English teacher and a school principal. He is from Xi'an, a very important Chinese city of almost 4 million inhabitants. The city is 3,100 years old. Wei was very excited about spending time in a town of 850 people. (Yes, that's the population of Orient, NY.) I told him that I was the pastor of a small church, and I hoped that he wouldn't mind that his time with us would involve attendance at several worship services. "Ah, yes," he replied. "In China, before I left, they told me to try to get to a church in your country." Then he added, "My mother believes in God."

That's when it hit me – Wei grew up in Communist China, a godless society. He was in his 40s, and had never read the Christmas story, never sung a Christmas carol, never watched a Christmas Pageant, never had a Christmas stocking, and never experienced the excitement of Christmas Eve and Christmas Morning. What a splendid opportunity for Wei to experience Christmas and for Bob and me to experience it anew.

We became good friends with Wei. He spent many weekends with us after that Christmas break, and the following year, we visited him in China.



Christmas is going to be different this year. We can choose to let it get us down, or, we can choose to enjoy it to the best of our ability. Sadly, there won't be any Christmas pageants. There won't be much visiting, nor will there be guests from other countries.

Nonetheless, the "magic" of Christmas will still be there in Scripture, prayers, carols, and church services. The wonder of candlelight and the peacefulness of the Crèche will still be ours to enjoy. Children will still await Santa with his sleigh full of toys and gifts. And the laughter of friends and relatives, although it might not be heard in person, may still be shared across the back fence, on the telephone, or via video conferencing.

There is hope. And isn't that one of the things that Christmas is about? Hope? This pandemic will not last forever. So this year, it's up to us to find the peace, love, and joy that comes with the birth of our Lord and Savior.

I pray that all of us will have the best Christmas possible. And all of God's people said, "Amen!"

With love and blessings,

Pastor Ann

Zoom Worship

How are we going to worship on Sundays?

We will "simulcast" our Sunday worship on Zoom for those who cannot be in the Sanctuary. You may log on as early as 10:00 a.m. for coffee and conversation. Worship begins promptly at 10:30. The easiest way to do Zoom is to download the Zoom App from the App Store. Zoom will work on a computer, a laptop, an I-Pad, or a Smartphone.

What are the Meeting IDs?

From now through January 3, the meeting ID is 997 8744 0701. The passcode is : 623169.

The Christmas Eve 5 p.m. Service ID is 918 2349 2891. The passcode is 051914

Please note: for the Christmas Eve Service, Zoom participants will be muted when they enter the service.

Will I get a reminder about logging on to these services?

If you are on the church e-mail list, you will get a weekly e-mail with the Zoom link.

I don't have a computer or a Smartphone. What can I do?

You may telephone the following number:

1-646-558-8656

You will be asked for a meeting ID and passcode. (Please see paragraph 2)

You won't be able to see us, but you can still hear what's going on.



Birthday Blessings!

December 6 – Mark Polcer, Sr.

December 7 – John Rixon

December 16 – Thomas Dean

December 30 – Corinne Burdett





Prayer Corner

For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life. ~John 3:16NIV

This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life. ~John 3:16Message Bible

There is a Light where'er I go,
There is a Splendor where I wait.
Though all around be desolate,
Warm on my eyes I feel the glow.

The fight is long, the triumph slow,
Yet shall my soul stand strong and straight,
There is a Light where'er I go,
There is a Splendor where I wait.
~Anon

LORD, BLESS THE CARDS WE'VE WRITTEN
by Myrtle Beeler Day

Lord, bless the cards we've written;
May they bear a joyous greeting.
Bless the gifts we've wrapped and tied;
May they radiate Thy love.
Bless the wreaths that we have hung
in doorway, stair, and hall;
May they speak of life eternal,
Thy dominion over all.

Bless the lovely candle
Shining forth into the night;
May it carry far and wide
The wondrous message of Thy light.
Bless all the sweet traditions of
Thy dear, holy birth;
May they lead us in the worship of
The Savior, Lord of Earth.

submitted by Betty Chatfield

THE GIFT

*You created my inmost being; You knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from You when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in Your book before on of them came to be.
~Psalm 139:13-16*

Not what we give, but what we share,--
For the gift without the giver is bare;
Who gives himself with his alms feeds three,--
Himself, his hungering neighbor, and Me.
~James Russell Lowell

Advent

The Season of Advent anticipates the coming of Christ from three different viewpoints: the Nativity in Bethlehem, the reception of Christ in the heart of the believer, and the Second Coming.

The Advent Wreath is a Christian tradition symbolizing the passage of the four weeks of Advent. It originated in Germany in the 1500s, but did not spread to North America until the 1930s.

Traditionally, there are four purple candles and one large white one in the center. Some churches substitute a pink candle on the Third Sunday of Advent. In the past 30 or so years, some churches have adopted blue as the Advent color, because purple is also the liturgical color for Lent.



(The Kirchhoff / Lawrence Family lights the first Advent candle)

Carol Sing and Christmas Movie

On Friday, December 4, and again on Sunday, December 6, our Vision 2020 Team will present a special Christmas event.

The first part will be a Christmas Carol Sing-Along, karaoke style! No, there won't be any soloists at the microphone. Instead, we will *all* be soloists, singing from behind our masks, sitting in our seats, socially distanced from our neighbors.



The second part will consist of the showing of the movie, *The Christmas Story*. Let's face it – you probably haven't been to the movies in a while. So, please join us, and get into the Christmas spirit!

On Friday, doors will open at 6 p.m. We will start singing at 6:30, and the movie will start at 7.

On Sunday, doors will open at noon. Singing starts at 12:30, and the movie will begin at 1:00.

Temperatures will be taken at the door with a non-touch thermometer.



Masks are required, and social distancing will be maintained. There will be a suggested donation of \$10 for adults, and \$5 for children. But if that is a problem, no one will be turned away.

Christmas Eve Services

In order to avoid overcrowding, the FPCG Session has voted to hold two Christmas Eve Services this year, at 4:00 and again at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, December 24.

In an effort to maintain social distancing, we will only be able to accommodate 50 – 60 people at each Service. The Sanctuary will be fogged with a disinfectant between Services.

To guarantee a seat, reservations are strongly encouraged. Several people have already done so, but there are still some seats available. There is a sign-up sheet available after church each Sunday, or you may call the church office at (631) 261-2150.

The 4:00 Service will be simulcast on Zoom. Log-on information is available on page 2 of this newsletter.

A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols

A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols Service will be held on Sunday, December 20, the Fourth Sunday of Advent, at 10:30 a.m.



This Service tells the story of the fall of humanity, the promise of the Messiah, and the birth of Jesus. It is told in nine short Bible readings from Genesis, the Prophetic Books, and the Gospels, and is interspersed with the singing of Christmas

carols, hymns, and other music.

The original format was based on an Order of Worship for Christmas Eve, 1880, in Cornwall, England. It is said that a key purpose of the Service at that time was to keep men out of the pubs on Christmas Eve!

The Service at FPC Greenlawn will be based on the one at *The King's College* in Cambridge, England, where the nine lessons are read by representatives of the congregation and of the local community. We already have several community leaders who have agreed to read. We also have some soloists from our congregation.

This will be a very inspiring Service of worship. Please plan to attend, and invite a friend!

Memorial Fund Year-End Gifts

As the end of 2020 approaches, the Session would like to remind you that gifts to our Memorial Fund are welcomed.

The Memorial Fund was established by Session, whereby contributions may be made in memory of departed loved ones, given in lieu of floral tributes, or as a personal expression of love or friendship.

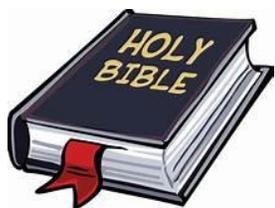
This fund is in addition to and separate from all Endowment Funds, which are used for bequests or gifts received in wills or trust accounts.

Contributions are deposited in a special account and are used, together with income earned, for special needs of the Church not provided for in the budget as may be determined by the Session.

Acknowledgment of each contribution is sent to the donor and to the family of the person in whose memory the gift is made. A permanent record is also made in our Book of Remembrance.

Worship at FPC Greenlawn

On November 1, we celebrated All Saints Day by remembering those who have gone before us. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was celebrated on that day.



We thanked God for our Veterans on November 8, and blessed the Veterans in our congregation.

November 15 was Stewardship Sunday. Pastor Ann spoke of stewardship in terms of planting a seed and expecting a good harvest.

We celebrated Thanksgiving Sunday on November 22. The sermon was called "The Faith that the Pilgrims Had;" we were encouraged to use their level of faith as an inspiration for our own.

November 29 was the First Sunday of Advent. Knowing that Advent is a time to think about The Second Coming, the sermon was called "Sometimes It's Hard to Stay Awake."

Upcoming services are tentatively as follows:

- December 6 – Second Sunday of Advent: "The Voice of a Prophet."
- December 13 – Third Sunday of Advent: "Who Is John?"
- December 20 – A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols
- December 24 – Christmas Eve Services at 4:00 (Simulcast on Zoom) and 7:00.
- December 27 – The First Sunday after Christmas: "The Theology of Christmas Carols."



Pastor Ann blesses one Veteran in person, and two Veterans on Zoom, November 8.



Vision 2020 is a committee of FPC Greenlawn. Its mission can be defined with three Rs:

- 1) RETAIN our current members.
- 2) RECONNECT with former members.
- 3) REACH OUT to potential new members.

This past year, Vision 2020 has had several programs that have touched at least one of the above categories. These programs include:

- Assisting with the logistics and refinement of our Zoom services
- "Coffee with Friends," a series of Wednesday night fellowship events that took place in the spring
- "Homecoming Sunday," a celebration of our first Sunday together again in our Sanctuary on September 20
- Equipping the Sanctuary with WiFi
- Renovating the old choir room and turning it into a community room
- Assisting with our Blessing of the Pets Service in October
- Taking steps in the de-cluttering and beautification of our church building.

The Vision 2020 Committee consists of Larry Foray, Leonora Colletti, and Debbie Eitel, with Pastor Ann sitting in on meetings and offering encouragement.

The more people who get involved with this project, the stronger our church will grow. Please see Larry, Leonora, or Debbie to find out how you can help in 2021.

A Thought for the Day

"I thought 2020 would be the year I got everything I wanted. Now I know 2020 is the year I appreciate everything I have."

Masks by Leonora

The new Christmas Collection has arrived! Each mask is handmade, reversible, adjustable, contoured to shape your face, and made with 100% cotton fabric. One size fits all.



Masks are \$10.00 each with all the proceeds going into the Room Improvement Fund. If you would like to help FPCG by promoting additional sales, reach out to your family, friends, and neighbors. Masks make excellent gifts.

Leonora Colletti has pictures of her collection and order forms to give you for community outreach. Contact her any Sunday after Service, or call the church office to have the forms mailed to your home.

Choir Room / Community Room Update

The walls have been painted and pictures have been hung. The bathrooms outside the choir room have been painted and redecorated. The lobby area at the bottom of the stairs has been given a fresh coat of paint, as has the stairway itself.

Larry Foray has dedicated countless hours to this project; please be sure to thank him when you see him.

Work on this area will resume after the First of the Year. A new ceiling, new lighting, and a new floor will be installed. Contributions to the Room Improvement Fund are always welcome and much appreciated.

What This Church Means to Me

During the month of November, four of our church members, Barbara Small, Larry Reinhardt, Meg Lawrence, and Craig Satterlee, spoke during the Service of Worship, of what our church means to them. Each testimony was different, and each one was received with a round of applause.



Thank you, Barbara, Larry, Meg, and Craig, for sharing your very personal stories. Your words inspired us all!

Larry Reinhardt tells why he joined our church.

Dedication of Flag and Little Food Pantry

On November 22, the members and friends of our church held a double dedication outside after our Service of Worship.

Our American flag had been getting worn out, so Bob Van Cleef donated a brand new one to our church. As Larry Foray and Bob raised the new flag, the congregation said the Pledge of Allegiance and sang a patriotic song. The flag was then slowly lowered to half staff in memory of all those who died from COVID-19.



Immediately afterward, we turned around and said prayers of dedication for our new Little Food Pantry. Paul Proctor, who built the pantry, was recognized and thanked. Then each person put an item of food into the pantry before the final Benediction.. We hope that this Little Food Pantry will be a blessing to those in our community who are hungry.



Kathy Fitzgerald places some pasta in the food pantry

Christmas Poinsettias

45 poinsettias have been dedicated by members and friends of our church. They will be on the Chancel on December 20 and on Christmas Eve, and may be taken home after the 7:00 Service or on December 27. Thank you so much!



Thank You for the Goodie Bags

On Thanksgiving Sunday, November 22, everyone was pleasantly surprised to receive goodie bags from Debbie Eitel. The bags contained candy, an Entenmann's apple tart, and a plastic mask support to make it easier to breathe through our masks.

Thank you, Debbie, for your thoughtfulness and generosity.



3 Kings Poem

As we near the end of 2020, we try to keep our sense of humor, despite everything that is happening in the world around us.

A person named R. G. Huff (who obviously has way too much time on his hands), has come up with some new words to *We Three Kings*. Smile and enjoy! (Reprinted with permission)

*We three kings are six feet apart.
We'll Purell before we depart.
We've been tested as suggested.
Careful are we, and smart.*

*REFRAIN: Oh, Do our masks go with our gowns?
Do these face shields hide our crowns?
We've had plenty twenty twenty!
Still we head toward David's town.*

*Melchior is now quarantined!
Stuck in Persia, so it seems.
No more travel on a camel
'Til there's a good vaccine. REFRAIN*

*Balthazar has lost his taste.
Eating food is such a waste.
How disquieting. Now he's dieting.
Life now is slower paced. REFRAIN*

*Caspar left the caravan.
He postponed his stargazing plans.
No more roaming. Caspar's homing,
Scrubbing his reddened hands. REFRAIN*

From the Pastor's Kitchen: Russian Teacakes

I belong to the Ladies Auxiliary of my local fire department. I enjoy it for several reasons. First, I'm *not* in charge of it! Second, it's like Girl Scouts for Grownups; we get together, talk, eat, and do good deeds. We even have uniforms. (Okay, we don't earn badges.)

One of our projects is to prepare Christmas stockings for senior citizens in the area. We all bake cookies to put in the stockings; I bake Russian Teacakes. They fulfill my requirement of having very few ingredients. They're a bit messy, with powdered sugar on them, but as you can see by the photo, I put the cookies into little plastic bags before I give them away.

So, here's a recipe for your Christmas cookie repertoire. Enjoy!

Ingredients:

1 cup of butter or margarine
½ cup of powdered sugar
1 teaspoon of vanilla extract
2-1/2 cups all-purpose flour
¾ cup chopped nuts (optional)
1/4 teaspoon of salt

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Combine the first three ingredients.
Mix in the rest of the ingredients.
Shape into 1-inch balls
Place them 1 inch apart on a cookie sheet.
Bake for 10 – 12 minutes,
but don't let them turn brown.

Roll warm cookies in a bowl of powdered sugar.
When they cool, roll them again in powdered sugar.



Last year's teacakes, packed and ready to go.



Imagine You Were Born in 1900

When you're 14, The Great War begins. It ends when you're 18, with 22 million dead.

Soon after, a global pandemic, the Spanish Flu, appears, killing 50 million people. You are alive, and you're 20 years old.

At age 29, you survive the global economic crisis that started with the collapse of the New York Stock Exchange, causing inflation, 25 percent-plus unemployment, and famine.

When you're 33 years old, the Nazis come to power.

World War II begins when you're 39 years old, and ends when you're 45. 60 million people die, including 6 million Jews and millions of others in the Holocaust.

The Korean War begins when you are 50 and ends when you are 53. When you're 64, the Vietnam War begins; it ends when you're 75.

A person born in 1985 thinks his great-grandparents had no idea how difficult life was, but they survived several wars and catastrophes.

Today, we have all the comforts of a different world, amid a new pandemic. But we complain because we need to wear masks. We complain because we must stay confined to our homes where we have food, electricity, running water, Wi-Fi, and even Netflix! None of that existed back in those days. But humanity survived those circumstances and never lost its joy of living. A small change in our perspective can generate miracles. We should be thankful that we are alive. We should do everything we need to protect and help each other.

Written by Colleen Duggen

Submitted by Debbie Eitel

Pictured above: New York City in 1900

Our Church Officers

Session

- Betty Chatfield
- Debbie Eitel
- Diane Kirshhoff
- Susan Perrotta
- Ruth Satterlee

Deacons

- Carolyn Brockett
- Corinne Burdett
- Arlissa Dean
- Larry Foray
- Kathleen Gerlach
- Gary Prentiss
- George Santos



Laughter is the Best Medicine

I don't have an Advent calendar, so I'm just opening my cupboard doors eating whatever's in there.

No matter how old you are, an empty Christmas wrapping paper tube is still fun to bonk someone over the head with.

You can't truly refer to yourself as an adult until you catch yourself getting really angry when your favorite grocery store changes its layout.

I'm going to stay up on New Year's Eve this year. Not to see the New Year in, but to make sure this one leaves!

Think you're bored? Sir Isaac Newton invented calculus during the plague. Do you have any idea how bored you must be to invent calculus?

Get your relatives speaking to one another again by sending a heartfelt Christmas card with a picture of your family with an extra child that nobody knows.

My going out clothes have missed me so much! I put them on yesterday and they hugged me so tight.

One minute you're young and fun. And the next, you're turning down the radio in your car to see better.

I'm gonna quit my job and travel the world until I run out of money! I estimate I'll be home again around 10:00 this evening ...