



## Newsletter Update

November 19 - December 2, 2021

### **“Give thanks to the Lord, for God is good”**

A couple years ago, at our family Thanksgiving gathering at my sister’s house in Virginia, I brought a variety of blank notecards, envelopes and stamps. I asked each person in the family — young and old — to write a note to themselves and to include anything they wanted: joys and concerns, thoughts about our get-together, goals for the year ahead — anything at all. I explained that I would keep the notes for a year before dropping them in the mail. “It will be a surprise when you receive your note back,” I said. “You’ll recognize the handwriting and remember you wrote the note to yourself last Thanksgiving.”

I wish I could tell you that everyone gladly participated without grumbling. One person never found time to sit and write, and another just sealed up a blank notecard to appease me. Some, however, completed the task thoughtfully. Here’s what a member of my family said about the note written in 2018 and opened in 2019:

*When I wrote the note, I was dealing with an upsetting circumstance that I was trying to deal with biblically. I felt misunderstood and that nobody was taking my perspective. I felt nobody wanted to listen to me, and I felt frustrated. I was trying to leave things in God’s hand, so I was memorizing 1 Peter 2:23: “When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.”*

*When I received the note in the mail a year later, I remembered why I wrote what I did. As I read it, the note served as a reminder of my struggle that continued, but through the year as I learned to recall the verse when I became angry, I claimed it as my verse. I was learning to appropriate the fact that I do not always have to be understood and fight to be right. Jesus dealt with the worst misunderstanding and continues to be misunderstood and will continue to be misunderstood. Although the issue had not disappeared from my life, it felt less raw. I had learned to leave my concerns with God because he will take care of me no matter what.*

If the note idea doesn’t work for you, think about starting a scrapbook that you write in on special occasions like holidays. My husband found one that his family started in 1998, and it has been a joy for him to read across more than two decades. Whatever you do, let this be a Thanksgiving to remember.

**And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work. — 2 Corinthians 9:8**

*Tammy Warren, Communications Associate, Presbyterian Mission Agency*

## **Deck the Halls luncheon will be this Sunday**

A noon congregational luncheon is coming up this weekend. A “Deck the Halls” covered dish lunch will follow the 11:00 worship service on **November 21**. This will be served family style. Our Fellowship Team is providing the main dish of turkey and the desserts. Everyone else is asked to bring a side dish to share.

Mindful of our smaller kitchen crew these days, the format will differ from our full Thanksgiving meals of the past, but will still accomplish the primary goals of expressing gratitude to God and sharing the opportunity to connect with our church friends and guests who attend.

Following the meal, everyone who can stay a little longer is asked to help us to “deck the halls” as we decorate the sanctuary and other parts of the building for the upcoming Advent and Christmas seasons.

## From the Pastor

# Advent: A season for preparation, expectation, hope

Happy New Year !!

(And, yes, aren't we all ready for a year that is New ... and Happy.)

No, I'm not jumping the gun, ignoring December, or needing to not only reset my clock from Daylight Time but also my day-planner from any confusion.

We actually, though, ARE just about ready to start a new year. The liturgical year. We Christians actually *do* jump the gun on the rest of the culture, as the Christian liturgical calendar marks the start of each year is four Sundays before Christmas Day. Our version of each year begins with a season of preparation and expectation of the Messiah's arrival. This is the Advent season which launches our annual trek to re-experience the life of Christ: prophecies about him, his birth, growing up, baptism, earthly ministry, suffering and crucifixion, and then resurrection and ascension back into heaven. Those seasons – Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter – take us through about half the year, then the rest of the year (until next Advent) brings the focus to the Holy Spirit, the church, and the Christians' callings.

Advent across the centuries has merged a couple of major themes, both of which are appropriate for us to utilize in our individual and shared spiritual lives during the month ahead. One aspect is toward preparation for the Lord's arrival. It recalls how Christ's first coming to Earth was pre-announced by the Hebrew prophets. There were warnings about a judgment to come. The later message of Jesus' forerunner cousin John applies: "Make straight the path for the Lord." You and I and all Christians would do well to use this Advent as a time to reflect upon our lives and our discipleship. What does it really mean to have a Lord and a Savior? Especially *this* one? What are the implications for our future actions and decisions? Through much of Christian history, the liturgical color for Advent has been the same purple used during Lent. Advent can be essentially like a mini-Lent. It is a time of reflection and repentance and turning. How do we throw ourselves into the gift of the Lord's merciful grace?

The flip side of that same coin though also takes us to the implications of Christ's first arrival here and the Second Coming which is on the way. We can return to the Old Testament prophets not only for warnings about impending judgment but also their reassurance pronouncements to exiled and suffering people that a Messiah was on the way. The Lord's advent here is primarily not about fear but about expectation. God will redeem the people. The setbacks and defeats will themselves be reversed. People without hope will become people with fulfilled hope.

Many congregations have adapted the liturgical color scheme to demonstrate this distinction. Rather than repeating the Lenten purple, the color of Advent can also be blue, indicative of the hope which Jesus brings. You will see that in the paraments and Communion table covering at Edinboro Presbyterian during the season ahead, whether you attend our worship in person or view or online videos in the weeks to come.

My prayer for you is that, as we arrive at the end of Thanksgiving weekend, you will intentionally seek out ways to make this divine season ahead of that O Holy Night meaningful in your faith. Just as there are holiday preparations to be made in other ways, Advent is a prime opportunity to prepare yourself for the arrival of Jesus Christ to strengthen your heart and mind and soul. Just as children find the weeks before Christmas to be full of exuberant anticipation, may this Advent season bring to you strong and confident evidence of the expectant hope which we will experience as Christ's entry into this world is celebrated anew.

Happy New Year indeed!

*Greg*

## Visit our “Giving Tree”

# Sharing Christmas excitement with children & teens

This month’s Mission of the Month at FUPC is another hands-on opportunity to connect with neighbors around us. We have not one but two ways to serve children and teens and their families.

As we have done in previous years, Edinboro Presbyterian is providing Christmas gifts requested by these young people whose households are facing current financial stresses. Look for the special tree in our east entryway. It has gift tags with the requests made by the children. Any appropriate details – such as sizes, colors, ages and the like – are listed. Take one or more of these tags, then mark which tag number(s) you



have on the checklist provided. Do your shopping, then return the items to the church building during late November or in early December. Please attach or include the original gift tag, so your gifts can be distributed to the child who made that request.

One program we help in this way is the young people of the Hermitage House. (Many of the gift tags indicate a store gift card, which makes a good and appreciated gift for these teens.) You may giftwrap these items for Hermitage House. The last day to receive these is December 15.

FUPC also is partnering with the local Kiwanis Club and other congregations to provide Christmas gifts for the families served by the Edinboro Food Pantry. There is an earlier deadline for these gifts: **December 5**. For the Food Pantry recipients, please leave these gift *unwrapped*. They can be placed, open, in a larger gift bag with the description tag enclosed. These items will be distributed when those families come through on a December Thursday for groceries.

### Insights from elsewhere: *For further reading*

**THANKSGIVING: “Not just a day, but a season”** [Mark D. Roberts](#)

**ADVENT: “Advent Wreaths, with a child-friendly option”** [Presbyterians Today](#)

Follow these internet links, or ask the church office to provide you a printed copy.

## Congregational Meeting on November 21

# It is time to elect our next set of ordained leaders

The session (council of elders) has called a congregational meeting for this coming Sunday, November 21. It will start at 10:55 a.m. in the sanctuary. Voting members who wish to join electronically can join us via Zoom, using meeting number 814 734 3511 and password 814. (We are starting before worship this time, so that we can move to the church luncheon immediately after the worship service.)

The only item on this docket will be to hear the report of this year's Officer Nominating Committee and elect deacons and elders for our leadership boards. Two-thirds of each council continue into 2022, with one-third of the officers rotating off or being reelected. Presbyterian rules provide that a member can be on a given board for up to six consecutive years, then must take one year doing something else (unless a special waiver is requested and granted).

The nominating committee of Rick Walker, Sue Payne, Powell Smith, Buzz Walker and Linda Rummell have prayerfully worked over the past several months to discern whom God might be calling to this form of servant leadership at this time. They then meet with potential candidates and ask them to consider God's calling, their talents and attitudes, and the church's upcoming needs.

Those who the committee will recommended for your election are:

ELDERS: Sue Payne and Jan Zeart (*Class of 2024, three-year terms*)

DEACONS: Jan Schulz, Margo Roberts, and JoAnn Austin (*Class of 2024, three-year terms*)

For your information, these are the current rosters for our ordained boards. Members of the Class of 2021 end their current terms when their successors are installed early next year.

*CURRENT ELDERS, 2021: Jan Zeart, Rick Walker, and Lianne Walker*

*2022: Brian Long and Pauline Kraus*

*2023: Shari Gould, Milly Williams, Art Smaltz, and Doug Roberts*

*CURRENT DEACONS, 2021: Jan Schulz, Joyce Overheim, and Talon Frick*

*2022: Mary Walker, Marilee Wnek, and Marcia Cooke*

*2023: Linda Rummel and Loretta Vanstone*

## Order your poinsettias for our worship space now

Now is the time to order poinsettias which will decorate the sanctuary for Christmas Week. Members and friends of FUPC should let us know how many plants you would like to order, at a cost of \$10 each. Some people do this in memory or in honor of loved ones, while other poinsettias are designated "given to the glory of the Lord". Please fill out an order form, or phone the church office to order. Deadline to order is December 1st.

# Sharing a holiday weekend meal with college students

A holiday tradition from FUPC's past is back again, especially important as college students are living on campus again. Next week Edinboro Presbyterian will be one of the local churches which is providing a simple meal to students who are unable to travel during the Thanksgiving break, and therefore they are staying on campus while it is otherwise closed.

This particularly affects international students, many of whom are not able to cross national borders due to Covid restrictions. Therefore, we have a group from FUPC who will provide a simple soup lunch for them. Our date is the Saturday following Thanksgiving, November 27, from 11am-1pm. Please phone the church office if you would like to donate soup, bread, or a simple dessert, or if you would like to help host and share some fellowship time the students.

**Worship *Online*** from First United Presbyterian Church of Edinboro is posted each Sunday morning. The videos can be watched at any time, any day. You can watch them on your own, or this makes a good opportunity for households to experience worship together, then talk about what they heard and sang and prayed. Each week has several video segments to provide easier uploading and downloading. You can watch them all in a row, or you come back to any given video on its own whenever you like. Go to [🖥 EdinboroPresby.org/videos](https://www.EdinboroPresby.org/videos). If you discover any element (which is too local or subject to copyright restrictions) that asks you for a password, use our area code: **814**.

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