

# THE MESSENGER



Connecting

to share the  
love of God  
with all

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

NOVEMBER 2020

As we approach Thanksgiving, it is usual for our thoughts to turn towards gratefulness. During this challenging year, offering thanks might feel more like an obligation. We're tired of wearing masks and we want to spend holidays with family and friends.

If we take time and allow our hearts to experience the grace of God, we realize that we are blessed beyond measure. Our faith buoys our spirit and understanding of God's grace garners our gratitude.

While considering the relationship between the two I came across the following which offered fresh insight. Here is a portion of a sermon offered by Nadia Bolz Weber:

Grace and gratitude.

*When I forget about the grace all around me I start to feel entitled to all the good things in my life... To be a living being on this glorious Earth is itself grace. But what did I do that God would knit me together in my mother's womb? How could I earn the right to eat a perfect peach—that the Creator even thought to make the peach is grace to me. My friend Jeff Chu was working with wild bees yesterday and said that honey is grace in a jar, a sweetness entirely given that we did absolutely nothing to deserve.*

When we experience grace, we just become more compassionate.

*And this world needs more compassion. As Richard Rohr says, "Once you have received real grace...real mercy... you are no longer in the position of deciding who the so-called 'deserving poor' are." When we see how God's source code of grace has redeemed our [brokenness] we give other people a break. We stop holding others to a ridiculous standard. We believe God can make beautiful things out of even other [people's messes].*

*But to be clear...*

Faith isn't about self-improvement.

*For it to really be about grace, it can't be about us and our efforts and our intentions and our goodness. Without grace, there's either pride and temporarily getting things right quickly followed by despair and inevitably getting things wrong again.*

*Because God isn't interested in making you a better person. God is interested in making you a new person. Because if this whole thing was only a matter of self-improvement, then trying harder should do the trick, in which case, basically we don't need Jesus anymore. Being better people – being "good-er" Samaritans is something we can do on our own. But to become new people we need God. To become new people, we need a God who daily drowns our old dying selves in the watery grave of baptism and raises us to new life. To be new people, we need a God who has conquered death by death. A God who offers us a way where there is no way. Becoming new people is what this whole Jesus-following thing is about and it doesn't happen through trying harder to be good. It comes by being robbed— robbed of our old ideas about ourselves, robbed of our self-sufficiency, robbed of our piety.*

*...It is grace that our prayers are welcomed by the Creator. It is grace to hear each other's prayers and to make them our own...The sun rising in the East every day is grace. My virtue could not pull that ball of fire up over the horizon.*

May we be grateful for His grace, and generous, patient and loving with each other. May this season be one filled with the realization that though we are experiencing a trying time, God's grace blesses and keeps us...and be grateful.



## November Birthdays

- 2 Rachel Heines
- 9 Tom Ford
- 12 Jodi Rugh
- 15 Bob Jackson
- 17 Renee Shannon
- 20 Jeff Selby
- 24 Grace Basham
- 28 Edie Berner

## Deacons at Work

The Deacons have distributed well over 300 "Grab and Go" lunches as well as giving away clothing over the past months. Also, lunch was sent to the mayor's office. Candy treat bags were delivered to the New Castle Police and Fire Departments.

A special thank you to the youngsters of the church for decorating pumpkins for homebound members. Your work certainly made people smile!!



***Poinsettias may now be ordered. Cost this year is \$15.***

If you would like to order one, you can fill in a form on Sunday morning. If you are not worshipping in person, you may call 724-652-7706 and order your poinsettia(s) to Remember or Honor a loved one. (Please all between 10 - 3.

## Gifts for the King

As we anticipate celebrating Christmas 2020, four opportunities for our King's birthday gifts are being offered by FPC's Mission Leadership Committee.

As in past years, Shenango on the Green is holding their "Adopt-a-Resident" Christmas present project. Each of you who have registered by November 15 will receive the name and gift suggestions for a Christmas morning present for a resident of personal, nursing or dementia care.

Our traditional Angel Tree will be up in Galbreath Hall November 15-29 with gift suggestions for the City Rescue Mission's Family Christmas program. Recipients are youngsters from birth to 14 years of age, and gifts include both clothing and recreational items. If you are unable to choose a gift directly from the Angel Tree, you may call the church office and request an angel. All UNWRAPPED presents must be returned to the church by December 6<sup>th</sup>.

Information regarding this year's PC(USA) Christmas Joy Offering, which supports church leaders, past, present and future, will be in the bulletin on December 6 and 13. You may place your offering in the offering box on the 20<sup>th</sup> or the 24<sup>th</sup>. For your convenience, you may also mail your Joy Offering to the church office.

Finally, a special monetary gift to any of our congregation's mission partners may be a "White Gift" to the One who told us, "When you did it [for] one of the least of these, my brothers and sisters, you were doing it [for] me!"-(Matt. 25:40)

Let us each be and receive a Christmas blessing!

## Tell Me About the Church

...when I am young. In our worship we are to sing psalms and hymns to God. "Bobbie Wolgemuth and Joni Eareckson Tada share the music, stories and prayers of *Hymns for a Kid's Heart*.

...and what it means to be a Presbyterian. In *The Presbyterian Handbook* from Geneva Press, you will find information about our Reformed beliefs, practical tips on following Christ, and bits of Presbyterian humor; for all learners.

...in Bible times. The church's story goes back nearly 2000 years. In *Forbidden Gates*, Denise Williamson tells young readers a story about Stephen, the first martyr in the early church of Jerusalem—one of God's tough guys.

...in different communities of faith. Hope, faith and serving others take many forms. Mitch Alborn tells of two different but incredible congregations who exhibit the true definition of "Church" in *Have a Little Faith*.

...and the meaning of our ordinances. Our church ordinances of baptism and communion can be difficult for little ones to comprehend. In *Sign of Love*, Jeanne S. Fogle explains their significance in devout yet simple terms.

...as it nourishes spiritual growth. We are united in God's Spirit. Former pastor John Ackerman wrote *Spiritual Awakening*, showing any congregation how they can journey spiritually with God, others and themselves.

As part of First Presbyterian Church, we each have the opportunity to grow through reading, becoming more fully united as the Body of Christ. Our library, in room 116, stands open to help.

## Is This Your Child?

by Leslie Stone

Within a child who's raised in Christ  
grows a heart that's kind and giving  
an inner peace that never fails  
a passion strong for living

This is the child who overcomes  
When face with fear and strife  
Determined in the faith he's taught  
That God controls one's life

This is the child who will succeed  
She's wise in how she lives  
For she's not rich in what she owns  
She's rich in what she gives

This is the child with self-esteem  
In honor he'll stand strong  
And even when he makes mistakes  
He'll right what he's done wrong

Sometimes this child will travel  
Down a road that leads astray  
The seed of faith you've planted  
Leaves her hope to find her way

Is this your child I write about?  
The answers plain to see  
Just ask yourself one question  
Does this child resemble me?

For through the many trying times  
Long after he is grown  
This child of your will likely reap  
The values you have sown

So when you feel discouraged  
Remember just this much  
That only Christ can truly know  
The lives your child will touch.

Because of sin throughout mankind  
His truth became unfurled  
When the birth of one loved baby  
Proved God's plan to save to save the world.

## In Sympathy

We offer our sympathy to Beverly Antos at the passing of her husband Dennis. May your faith hold you and good memories warm your heart. May God bless you with His peace.

Our loving hearts also offer sympathy to Jim Rugh and family at the passing of the family matriarch, Bettie Pat. She was a long time member of First Presbyterian and served as a Deacon. May good memories warm your hearts. May God bless you with His peace.

## Thank You

Dear Congregation,

Daniel and gratefully thank you for the gifts of chocolate and eatery cards. Both treats that I am certain we will heartily enjoy. Your thoughtful kindness of appreciation to us means a great deal. And we Thank you!

Kindly,  
Pastor Lorrie & Daniel

Dear First Church,

Thank you for the beautiful throw, your prayers, cards and sympathy at the passing of my husband Dennis. I am very grateful and your kindness meant much more than words can say.

Beverly Antos

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## This is Stewardship Time...

Please prayerfully seek guidance from God  
when considering your 2021 giving.

Let the grace of God fill you with gratitude!

Your giving cards are to be returned during worship on Sunday, November 22nd if you attend in-person worship. If you worship at home, you may mail them to:

FPC  
125 N. Jefferson St.  
New Castle, PA 16101