



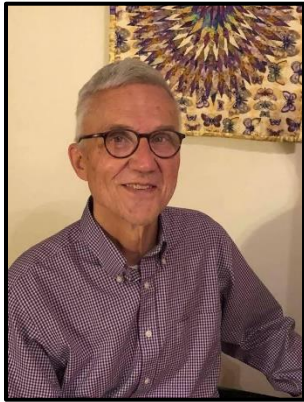
FIRST UNITED
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
EST. 1909

First United Press

THE NEWSLETTER OF FIRST UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

*To BE a Testimony of Christ's LOVE and GOODNESS
as we Encourage and Uphold the
BODY OF CHRIST*

DECEMBER 2023



Grace and peace to you,

As we enter the Season of Advent, and turn our attention toward Christmas, I want to thank you for your faithfulness and continued witness. Since your congregation's inception, you have observed this sacred season in concert with

Christians around the world. Together we cherish the gifts and traditions of Advent. Its message is one of light approaching, even and especially in a darkened time.

As the first season in the Christian calendar, Advent begins a new liturgical year. The Advent candles we light are amplified in the wider Festival of Lights that our friends and neighbors enjoy each year. Thank you for gathering in affirmation of Christ's birth as the primal reason for the season.

Advent provides a crescendo. It begins with the message of hope, of light shining in darkness, and culminates in a celebration of Christ's nativity. While it shares time and space with a broader holiday season, for Christians, Advent is a spiritual summons. It invites an increased attention to God's presence.

J.S Bach (1685-1750) wrote a famous piece of music that we know in a hymn entitled, "*Sleepers Awake.*" The work of Bach is often celebrated with the sounds of grand pipe organs; however, it has gentler interpretations as well, some by piano, some

YouTube will reward your search for such offerings. My own recent search netted a gentle acoustic guitar arrangement that sounded like something a parent might use to serenade a sleeping child, in the hope that youngster would arise and see the marvel at hand.

A wise counselor said, "*The Spirit rarely shouts; more often it whispers in an effort to gain our attention.*" To that end we are blessed with each other's company and shared witness, as those who have been affected by such whisperings. With each other's help, we echo and amplify them as we also light candles, trees and storefronts, and enjoy favorite carols and scriptures.

One of my favorite seasonal images is from someone whose name I've lost. She had been so stirred by a simple Advent candle lighting in worship, that she wrote a poem with a refrain of petition asking God, "*Light tall candles in my heart.*" We dare ask such a thing, because of our shared belief that the light of Christ shines in the darkness, which will not overcome it.

Blessings to you,

Pastor Steve Smith



Join us for an evening of cheer and

JOLLY POTLUCK

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2023

6:30pm at Home of The Purdys

.....

Please bring one covered dish, an Appetizer, or Dessert to Share.

RSVP Jana 209.604.0099
By December 6th

Christmas Eve
CANDLELIGHT SERVICE

8:00 pm

We are bringing back **Christmas Cocoa Party** out in our Parking Lot.

We will be gathering on the two weekends before Christmas, **December 15-17, 22-23; 5pm - 8pm.**

There will be S'Mores, Hot Cocoa, Cookies, Marshmallows to Roast, Popcorn, and Good Cheer!

Join US as we gather around a fire pit or two and Share stories, Laugh, and be Joyful as we celebrate the Birth of our Savior this wonderful Christmas Season.

If you'd like to help, please contact the office.



O Lord, How Shall I Meet You?

This is the opening line of an Advent hymn we will sing this Sunday, and it is a question worthy of our pondering. As we enter into this Advent Season, this season of preparation, how do we prepare to meet Jesus, the Son of the Living God, our Savior? It is almost too big a question! It is a question for our entire church, and yet it is also a question for us as individuals.

As a church family, we decorate the church with bright bows and candles, with trees decorated with lights and ribbons, and walls hung with tapestries telling the stories of kings and angels and others. And as a church family we gather each week in worship to sing the songs and hear the words which remind us of the events so long ago of the birth of our Lord Jesus.

But as individuals, how do we prepare for this great event? Perhaps we should just allow ourselves to be guided by this hymn:

O lord, how shall I meet you, how welcome you aright?
Your people long to greet you, My hope, my heart's delight!
O kindle, Lord most Holy, A lamp within my breast,
To do in spirit lowly. All that may please You best!

If we could only do that which please God the best! That, I think, would please God! That might be enough! Perhaps just to keep that as our focus for this season!

Happy Advent!
Rev. Wendy Warner, Director of Music

PW Women's Bible Study usually meets on the third Wednesday morning of the month. Our next gathering will take place on the second Wednesday, December 13, at 10:30 am in Voight Hall. This month, instead of Bible Study, we will be signing Christmas cards to send to those not able to get out and about or need encouragement. There will not be a Zoom link for this meeting. Finger foods/goodies may be brought to share.

Regular Bible Study lesson will resume on Wednesday, January 17, 2023, at 10:30 am in Voight Hall/Zoom. We will continue our lessons from Sacred Encounters: The Power and Presence of Jesus Christ in Luke-Acts authored by Olive Mahabir. In the nine lessons of this Bible study – the author invites readers to consider Jesus, “the good shepherd” (Luke 10:15), who shared the Good News through sacred encounters with everyday people. The Gospel according to Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, or Luke-Acts “one story in two parts,” demonstrate the unfolding of God’s redemptive purposes in human history and present a distinctive perspective on the person and work of Jesus Christ. Written by Luke, a physician and traveling companion of Paul, the message to the early Christian community (and to us) is radical, inclusive, and hope filled. Further, this message invites the church to deeper, compassionate engagement with the world. “What are the potential implications for the church if we treat our interactions as sacred encounters that demonstrate the transformative love of Christ Jesus?” *For any questions or more information, please contact Candace Peterson.*

All women of the church are welcome to attend. We encourage you to bring a friend.

BUILDINGS & GROUNDS

Once again our church has been the recipient of Al Colquhoun's construction expertise and we thank him for the work he continues to do on our behalf.

The wood on the overhang in front of Voight Hall has been in a state of disrepair for years. The header and the ends of the eaves were severely damaged with dry rot.

Al used new wood, and also repurposed some wood from the sanctuary garden project. Once the construction was completed, everything received a fresh coat of paint and the gutter was relocated.

Work is also being done on the inside of Voight Hall. The unsightly metal ceiling apparatuses that formerly held up the sliding room dividers are being removed and replaced with new ceiling tiles. The long divider in the center of the room cannot be removed as it is needed to structurally hold up the ceiling tile support frames so that will have a new metal cover. Once that structural work is completed the entire ceiling will receive a fresh coat of paint.



BEFORE



AFTER



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10TH

FPC Turlock's Mission Faire held annually in December has been a longstanding tradition that has helped many people locally and around the world live a better life. This year we will once again hold our Mission Faire in Voight Hall. Please stop by and prayerfully give to the ones you'd like to support with your donations. However, if you're unable to attend, it does not mean you still can't help those that need help the most, especially during these troubled times.

Please take notice of the Mission Faire flyer in the newsletter. To donate, simply fill out the bottom section and return it with your checks made payable to "First Presbyterian Church" and all donations will be forwarded to the mission project(s) of your choice along with all other FPC donations. There are three different ways of giving: a) Mail to 2619 N. Berkeley Avenue, Turlock, CA. 95382; b) Drop your donation in the secure mail box outside the church office; or c) Give online on our webpage, www.fpturlock.com.

Thank you for your continued generous support! ~ *FPC Mission Committee*



CHRISTMAS JOY OFFERING

Now Till December 24th

This special annual offering reflects that God is with us and your gifts are a reflection of His love. Through your generous giving we will be able to offer assistance in two areas. 1) For retired and active church leaders in need (through programs of the Presbyterian Board of Pensions), and 2) for needy students at the Presbyterian racial ethnic schools and colleges.

Please consider giving generously....for when we all do a little, it adds up to a lot! You may give through the church offering, donate by credit card online at peusa.org/christmasjoy or simply text CHRISTMASJOY to 91999 or visit peusa.org/christmasjoy. Thank you!



The Learning Zone would like to thank each one of you for your support this past year and wishes you a very Merry Christmas!

Our Christmas break is from December 18th – January 5th. We will resume back in session on Tuesday, January 9, 2024.

CHILDREN'S Sunday School



The children (grades 3-7) continue to work through a survey of the Old Testament, called The Bible -- The Story of God's Faithfulness. We are

currently finishing Moses and the 40 years in the wilderness and will learn about Joshua and some of the Judges in the coming weeks.



KIDS AND YOUTH CHRISTMAS PARTY

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 13TH
DINNER 5:00PM
PROGRAM 5:30 – 6:30PM

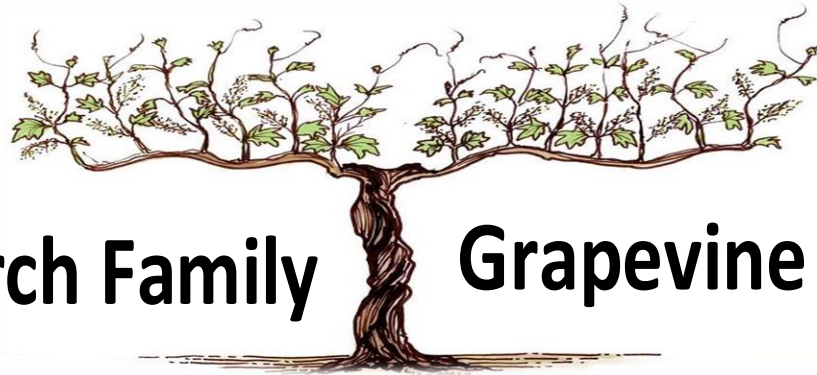


We just finished a unit on "Growing in Grace" involving planting flowers from seed and learning the fruits of the spirit with a somewhat sassy sunflower puppet named Sara. Plans for January are still in flux. Rick and Ruth Gaffney continue to provide wonderful leadership, and we can always use assistants to help cook, supervise, and substitute. See Stephanie or Candace if you are able to serve in some capacity.

Youth Group is in need of a permanent adult leader! We thank everyone who have stepped up in the fall to help with keeping the program intact. Stephanie Anderson continues to plan events and make sure there are volunteers for each weekly meeting.

If you feel led to take on this task in supporting our youth as they grow into mature Christians facing a challenging world, please contact Candace Peterson or Stephanie Anderson.





Church Family

Grapevine

Ongoing Prayer Needs Key Code:

P-Personal, F-Family, G-Grief, H-Health, S-Surgery, PG- Pregnancy, E-Employment, ST-Safe Travel, A-Adoption, SA-Salvation, M-Military

Blixt, Elizabeth (H)
Brugger, Betty (H)
Callahan, Julie(H)
Josh, Sheila (S,H)
Lowe, Marge (H)
Marsh, Lois (H)
McBride Family (G)
Mizicko, Marlena (H)
Narita, Leona (H)
Reeves, Jean (H)
Runsten, Tricia (Darlene's Daughter) (H)
Taylor, Paul (H)
Ulrich, SaraLee (H)
Vesperman, Richard (H)

*Please praise God continuously for who He is and what He has done in your life...
Blessed is His Holy Name.*



Birthdays

Dec 5 Nancy Clegg
Dec 12 Robert England
Dec 15 Russell Limprecht
Dec 15 Margaret Vasquez
Dec 17 John Sims
Dec 18 Ray Houlihan
Dec 20 Susan England
Dec 21 Donna Lansing
Dec 23 Joann Wickwire
Dec 26 Sue Strickland
Dec 30 Ashley Yonan

Anniversaries

Dec 15 Rev. Wendy Warner & Gene Allen
Dec 16 Arby & Marilyn Hoobyar
Dec 28 Bob & Maxine Kisling

If we have missed your birthday or anniversary, please contact the church office.



May LOVE come alive within your heart as Christmas time draws near. May HOPE fill each room you decorate and bring JOY to those you hold dear. May PEACE be before you at every meal and FAITH ring through every song. For CHRIST is ALIVE, the LIGHT of the world.

May He BLESS you all season long.

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

Session last met on November 20, 2023. We welcomed Rev. Dr. Stephen Smith as Moderator of Session.

Of interest:

- Approved spending up to \$500 towards rolling racks for tablecloth storage from the Bake Sale proceeds of November 19, 2023. The remaining balance of the proceeds will go towards a new church sign.
- Approved to have regular worship at 10 am on Christmas Eve and a single Christmas Eve evening service at 8 pm.
- There was consensus to move the regular meetings of Session to the third Tuesday night of the month at 7 pm.

As we enter the season of advent, please keep in mind the reason for the season, the arrival of Jesus the Christ on Christmas morn. Stop to breathe amid the hustle and bustle of the season and listen closely to the words of the Christmas carols and hymns as they tell the story of Jesus. Safe travels to those of you on the road and in the skies.

On behalf of Session, thank you for your continuing support of the mission and ministries of First Presbyterian Church.

In HIS service,
Pat Wallace

FINANCE UPDATE

January through October, 2023

Contributions: \$209,645

Other Income: \$40,007

Total Income: \$249,652

Expenses: \$241,641

Excess Expense: \$8,011

Transfers from Operating Reserves (savings): \$25,000

We thank the congregation for another financially positive month. October income was \$23,694 and expenses were \$17,139 resulting in excess income of \$6,565. We were able to transfer \$5,000 into our operating reserves (savings account)! We are grateful for the gift of Pastor Steve and look forward to his positive ministry on our church and our financial security.

We hope to continue to increase the balance in our reserve/savings account and we pray for your continued support for the remainder of the year. First Presbyterian Church is a blessing!

May His Peace reside in you during this holy season.

Your Finance Committee

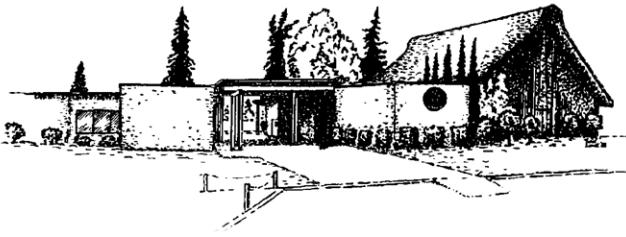
DEACON MINISTRY

Deacons met on Sunday, November 12th at 11:15 a.m., after the church service. Pastor Steve joined our meeting and contributed a great deal to the agenda. After the reports, Deacons signed up for communion prep for December. It was also reported that a new room is being set aside for the storage of tablecloths. The Building and Grounds committee will let us know when there is going to be a day to move racks to hold the tablecloths from the shed to the new room. We will go through all of the tablecloths at that time and toss those that are too stained.

Robert England agreed to be the kitchen manager for the Tidings of Comfort dinner on Wednesday, November 15. Deacons signed up for different times to come and help with decorating the tables, preparing the meal under the direction of Robert in the kitchen, and cleanup. At this writing, the Tidings of Comfort dinner has taken place. A huge thank you to Robert England and all of the Deacons who assisted with this wonderful event.

We will not have a meeting in December. Our next meeting will be at 11:15 a.m. on Sunday, January 14, 2024, in the tutoring room.

In Christ.



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Worship Service at 10AM
 Phone # (209) 202-3977
 E-mail: fpcturlock@att.net
 Website: www.fpturlock.com

Facebook:
www.facebook.com/firstpresbyterianchurch



Church Staff

Interim Pastor: Rev. Dr. Stephen Smith
 Administrative Assistant: Polet Yonan
 Bookkeeper: Kim Sasman
 Youth Ministry Director: Stephanie Anderson
 Director of Music: Rev. Wendy Warner
 Organist: Barbara Bort
 Child Care: Rebecca Staley
 Janitor: Michael Morris

ELECTED DEACONS AND SESSION OFFICERS

<u>Elders</u>	<u>Elders</u>	<u>Elders</u>
<u>Class of 2023</u>	<u>Class of 2024</u>	<u>Class of 2025</u>
Michael Betts Donna Harrison Candace Peterson John Sims	Mark Aldax Kathleen Gunn Marilyn Hoobyar Priscilla Peters	Dan Hardesty Adria Sanders Jerel Steckling Pat Wallace
<u>Deacons</u>	<u>Deacons</u>	<u>Deacons</u>
<u>Class of 2023</u>	<u>Class of 2024</u>	<u>Class of 2025</u>
Alison Aldax Marlena Mizicko Kendra Reyes Darlene Runsten Cyndi Sims Lisa Wellman	Brent Harrison Donna Lansing Elaine Neely Pat Rubalcava Nancy Seaver Meghan Young	Bill Bishop Niki Higdon Jana Purdy Jeannie Staley