



**WORSHIP SERVICE ON
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2020**

Our Scripture readings for next Sunday, December 20, 2020, the Fourth (and final) Sunday of Advent, are: Luke 1:26-38; and Luke 1:47-55. The sermon title is "The First Christmas Carol," and the Bulletin is available here:

<https://fpcovictoria.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/2020-12-20-PDF-Bulletin.pdf>

At this worship service, we will have a special Installation Service for the new members of our Session, the Class of 2023:

John Horadam
Lynn McAuley
Bonnie Wilkinson

Please join us to welcome the newly elected members of our Session and to celebrate with gratitude the commitment of these faithful Christians to the leadership of our church. May God grant us and our new leaders strength, wisdom, and perseverance as First Presbyterian Church enters a new year of hope, promise, and continued service to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.



**CHRISTMAS EVE
CANDLELIGHT SERVICE
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2020
AT 7:00 P.M.**

While adhering to our strict public health protocols, we will gather to worship on Christmas Eve by celebrating our traditional Candlelight Service. Our Scripture readings for the worship service are: Isaiah 9:2-7; and Luke 2:1-14. The sermon title is "Living Between the Fact of Darkness and the Hope of Light," and the Bulletin is available here: <https://fpcovictoria.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/2020-12-24-Bulletin-PDF-Christmas-Eve-.pdf>

During this service, we will relight the four candles around our Advent Wreath, and, with joy, we will also light the center Christ Candle to mark the birth of Christ the King, our Lord and Savior. We will likewise celebrate the Lord's Supper, and we will close by lighting our own individual candles in a solemn, darkened Sanctuary while

Robert Wyatt plays the beautiful melody of *Silent Night* on our chancel organ.

The Worship Committee, under Linda Patterson's leadership, will once again create the traditional-- and always spectacular-- poinsettia Christmas tree to decorate our chancel for the Candlelight Service. Members and friends of FPC are being offered the opportunity to purchase a poinsettia for \$15 per plant. You can take your poinsettia(s) home, or you can designate your payment to be used to support VCAM or Promise Pointe. In each instance, your gift can also be designated in honor or in memory of one or more people who are special to you. A list of all the names thus designated will be acknowledged in our Christmas Eve bulletin.

For more information, look for the "Christmas Poinsettias" leaflet which will be inserted in our worship service bulletins during the coming Sundays, or click here to be able to read and, if you wish, print the form: <https://fpcofvictoria.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Poinsetta-Order-Form-2020-PDF-1.pdf>

Also following tradition, there will be an opportunity for our congregation to participate in the "Joy Offering" collected by Presbyterian Mission. Fifty percent of our contributions made in this manner will assist current and retired church workers and their families with critical financial needs. The other fifty percent will make it possible for students to learn and grow in faith at Presbyterian-related schools.

If you would like to contribute but will be unable to attend our Christmas Eve Candlelight Service, simply note "Joy Offering" on the memo line of your check, and we will handle your tax-deductible gift accordingly. Checks can be mailed or dropped off at the Church Office.

First Presbyterian Church Commitment Campaign 2021	
Understanding that all we possess is a gift from God, and that God delights in the generosity of His children, I/we rejoice in pledging to First Presbyterian Church:	
\$ _____	
Weekly \$ _____	OR Monthly \$ _____
Name(s) _____	
Signature _____	
Address _____	
Phone: _____ E-mail: _____	

Many generous and faithful members of this congregation have already completed their pledge cards in connection with our 2021 Stewardship Campaign. We are grateful, also, for those who were able to write an additional, supplemental check to help us close our COVID-caused shortfall in our budget for 2020. May God greatly bless you all!

At the same time, our Stewardship Campaign continues as we ask everyone to fill out and put their 2021 pledge cards in the offering plate or send them to the Church Office. The Session will begin in January to set the church budget for 2021. We cannot plan to spend any more than we can reasonably expect to receive, so please help us plan and prioritize our spending for next year by sending us your good faith estimate of the financial support you expect to be able to contribute over the course of the coming year.

We are truly fortunate that in this church, unlike so many others, we do not need to spend money to raise money (no special sermons, no pamphlets, no videos). Except for a little bit of postage, we do not incur any expenses in connection with our Stewardship Campaign. It is thanks to your generous nature, your responsible attitude, and your love of our church and its missions in the community that makes this possible.

Nevertheless, even though we do not make a “big fuss” about giving at this time of the year, please remember that your gifts are appreciated, our expenses are carefully monitored by the Session and its Finance Committee, and we try to spend every penny wisely, carefully, and responsibly. As you are led by the Holy Spirit, please complete and return your pledge card before the end of the year.



AN OVERWHELMING RESPONSE TO OUR CHRISTMAS DRIVE

FOR PROMISE POINTE

A heart-felt thanks to all who filled our collection boxes to overflowing with gifts and supplies for the residents of Promise Pointe! Marsha Ricottilli delivered those gifts and supplies to Sister Rebecca at Promise Pointe earlier this week, where they were received with joy and gratitude. It was the best of the Christmas spirit for both the givers and receivers of such abundance.



A REPEATED CALL FOR HELP FROM CHRIST'S KITCHEN

Christ's Kitchen has again been overwhelmed by an increase in the number of homeless who look to that organization for likely their only meal of the day. At the same time, the customary suppliers who assist Christ's Kitchen in providing desserts for the meals prepared by the volunteers at Christ's Kitchen once again cannot keep up with the demand. ***Therefore, Christ's Kitchen volunteers from First Presbyterian Church once more need the congregation's help.***

Here is a reminder, from Frances Miller and Billy Leske, concerning how each of us can donate desserts to feed the homeless on Tuesday, the day that FPC's dedicated volunteers prepare to-go lunch boxes for over 900 needy people:

1. If you are able to donate store-bought or homemade cakes, cookies, brownies, etc., you can bring them to the church office on Monday or to Christ's Kitchen (611 Warren Ave.) by 8:30 a.m. on Tuesday mornings.

2. Individual desserts such as cookies, brownies, lemon bars, etc., should be put

in small ziploc storage bags before being delivered. Typical servings per storage bag are 3 to 4 cookies or 2 to 3 donuts, brownies, lemon bars, etc. Cakes or pies should be delivered in disposable, non-returnable containers.

In addition, Frances and Billy have asked me to remind everyone that Christ's Kitchen volunteers from FPC now prepare meals on Monday afternoons to be distributed on Tuesday. During this pandemic, it is safer working in the afternoon with no clients around. Masks are worn and social distancing is faithfully observed. So, if you can volunteer your time as well as extra desserts, please join Frances and Billy and other faithful members of our church on Monday afternoons as they participate in this most sacred ministry to God's poorest children.



NEWSLETTER PUBLICATION SCHEDULE AND OFFICE CLOSURES

During the Christmas and New Year Holidays, the Church Office will be closed as follows:

CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED

Thursday, December 17, 2020, all day
Thursday, December 24, 2020, at noon
Friday, December 25, 2020, all day
Thursday, December 31, 2020, at noon
Friday, January 1, 2021, all day

Unless otherwise requested, any gifts, pledges, or donations left at the Church Office or mailed on or before December 31, 2020 will be recorded as a gift made in 2020.

In addition, the Church Newsletter will not be published on the following dates:

NO NEWSLETTER ON

Wednesday, December 23, 2020

Wednesday, December 30, 2020

We apologize to our members who are dependent on our mailings for their copies of the Newsletter and the Bulletin. We hope you will forgive this interruption in our ministry to you, and we look forward to resuming contact with you in the New Year.



CARES AND CONCERNS

To all the congregation, including our homebound members, I want to say that as 2020 draws to close, I imagine most of us are ready to say, "Good riddance!" Enough turmoil, enough financial distress, enough coronavirus! With the promise of a new vaccine, we look forward to an end to the pandemic and the massive suffering that accompanied it. We long for the ability to gather in person with our friends and family, and we hope for a prompt recovery of our economy and the employment it will bring.

Consider this as well: Do you remember how you felt when you first heard of the promise of a vaccine that would bring an end to the pain, misery, and death in the world due to the coronavirus? What if you heard that someone was coming who would bring an end to the pain, misery, and death in the world due to sin and evil? As Christians, we realize during Advent, Easter, and all throughout the year that we *have* heard that good news!

Do we feel as exalted, as joyous, in our hearts with the news-- brought by angels, no less-- that there is one who has been born for us who is a Savior, who is the Messiah, as we do with the news about the coming of a vaccine? While both the coming of the vaccine and the coming of Christ are wonderful tidings of great joy, the former will only save us for a while, the latter will save us forever!



Peace, grace, and mercy,

Pastor Jim

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