

First Presbyterian Church

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Connections



December 2024



Pastor's Thoughts

In the afterglow of the recent presidential I was searching for something that might help us put everything in perspective. In between the celebration of the Republicans and the grieving of the Democrats, there is the question, "What's next?" My search led me to one of my "go to" passages: Ecclesiastes 3:1-14 and a sermon that I believe helps us all put things in perspective. The author is unknown, but his words are so timely. Read and enjoy. It's entitled "Our Times are in His Hands."

A few weeks ago, Kentucky Fried Chicken released an advertisement intended to show the tastiness of its product. The ad was a full minute montage of customers eating KFC chicken and then licking their fingers. "Finger licking good," that's their slogan, or at least it was. That advertisement could have worked a year ago, but a room full of strangers in close proximity licking their fingers in a restaurant doesn't work today. The ad was quickly pulled.

I don't know how long it takes to think up, cast, film, edit, and distribute a commercial. I do, however, know that KFC is not in charge of the times in which we live. I also know that you are not in charge of the times in which we live. You were not in charge of them a year ago. You will not be in charge of them a year from now. President Trump is not in charge of the times. He wasn't a year ago and he won't be a year from now.

Abraham Lincoln wasn't in charge of the times when he was inaugurated President as states were seceding from the union. The slaves who were freed as a result of the war that followed those secessions were not in charge of the times.

You are not in charge of your times. Rather, you find yourself in the times that God has appointed. This has been the case for your entire life, and it will be until you enter eternity.

You don't set the times. God does. The best that you can do is revere the One who sets the times, live wisely in each time, and enjoy what you can in each time. Since God sets the times, fear Him, live wisely, and enjoy what you can.

First: God sets the times. Here in Ecclesiastes we are studying life as it is. Wisdom literature, like Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, speaks to what is wise given the way that life really is. For example, you might wish that everyone had your best intentions at heart, but they don't. Wisdom literature tells you how to deal with that fact. You might wish that you were in charge of the times in which you live. You aren't. This passage tells you how to deal with that fact.

This passage of Ecclesiastes and especially its poem, are far and away the most famous section of the book. Ecclesiastes is a difficult book to understand. Scholars, who agree on almost everything else, disagree on even its basic meaning. Some think the book is cynical with almost no redemptive value. Others think it is tongue in cheek. I think that Sidney Greidanus was most likely right when he said this book teaches us to, "Fear God in order to turn a vain, empty life into a meaningful life which will enjoy God's gifts."

The teacher in Ecclesiastes, and we will assume he is Solomon, discussed wealth, reputation, romance, success to show that by themselves these will all disappoint. He argued that only the fear of the Lord can put these in their proper places. Ecclesiastes teaches you that if you put first things first, the rest of life falls into place; however, if you put anything else in God's place, life will become meaningless. In other words, wealth is a valuable servant but a terrible master. Romance is a valuable servant but a terrible master.

In our passage, the teacher considers the times in which he lived, and in which we all live. He wrote, "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven."

The poem that follows isn't a prescriptive list of what you ought to do. Solomon wasn't telling his readers to make a time to plant. It is a descriptive list of the way life goes. Solomon told his readers that there is already a time to plant and they ignored that time to their own peril. These times are outside of your control. You merely live in them and must act wisely within them.

This poem is meant to cover all times. You can see that Solomon has all times in mind when you notice his use of the number seven. The poem is arranged in sevens. There are fourteen contrasts, like a time to be born and a time to die. That's seven times two. The Biblical authors, especially the poets, used the number seven to underline totality. Solomon's use of sevens drives home what he said in verse 1, "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven."

There is no season that is outside of God's purposes. You have never lived in a season and never will live in a season that is outside of the plan and purposes of God. You might not know why God allowed this or that time, but, of course, you are not God. You certainly prefer the good seasons to the bad. So do I. You would make all the seasons good, if you could, but you are not in charge. As Solomon put it in verse 11, you "cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end." You can't fathom why God arranges life the way that He does. If you need to understand His ways before you submit to Him, you will never submit to Him and you will face the consequences of that decision.

This poem makes clear that life is beautiful and life is ugly. Life is a joy and life is a pain. You didn't have a choice of whether to be born into this, just as you are not in charge of death or what comes afterward. You simply enter into these by God's choice. He is in charge.

There is no escaping this reality. You live in the times which God has set and that is always true in this life. Solomon underlined this fact with a poetic technique called "merism". A merism is two words meant to represent the whole. Perhaps the most famous merism is the contrast of heaven and earth. When Genesis 1:1 tells us that, "in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," it wasn't simply telling Israel that God created two places—heaven and earth. It was telling them that God created everything. The two words heaven and earth were meant to represent the whole.

The same goes for the two words in each line of this poem. The line, "a time to be born and a time to die," does not simply refer to birth and death; it speaks of the totality of life. The line, "a time to plant and a time to uproot," does not simply refer to planting and harvest; it refers to the entire agricultural cycle until it starts over again. The line, "a time to love and a time to hate," covers the full gamut of human attitudes. The line, "a time to weep and a time to laugh," covers the full gamut of human emotions. You live in the times which God has set and God has set all the times.

Now you can try to change the times, but all your efforts will do absolutely nothing unless God changes them. Farmers know this better than most. Farmers understand quite well this dynamic of time as seen in verse 2, "a time to plant and a time to uproot." I don't know much about farming, but I do know that no farmer considers planting corn in the middle of a snowstorm in January; it isn't time. It isn't a time to plant. No farmer considers harvesting her corn a month after she plants it; it simply isn't time. She can wish that corn could be ready in a month but wishing won't change the times. She can only do what is appropriate for each time.

You must accept that and respond appropriately. Think about the first couplet, "there is a time to be born and a time to die." You are aging. My eye doctor told me that I'm nearing an age when I might find myself in need of reading glasses. Now I can lament the fact that the brain becomes less capable

of bringing near objects into focus, or I can accept it and respond appropriately. Think of the phrase, “a time to die.” You can pretend there isn’t a time to die and die anyway, or you can respond appropriately by considering what death means and what lies on the other side.

This is a call to act wisely in the times you find yourself. Consider, for example, the couplets of verse 4, “a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance.” If you are wise, you will behave differently when attending a funeral than when watching a comedy show. The day of a woman’s wedding is a much different day from the day on which she buries her husband, but the time comes for both. If she is wise, she will recognize that fact.

These times keep coming and the times keep changing. You see that in the repetition of the phrase “a time to”, “a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance.” The repetition of these words is, according to JA Loader, “like a clock that, inexorably and independent of the wishes of people, keeps ticking and striking. Whatever happens, happens, and there is nothing you can do about it.” There will be plenty of times in your life when weeping is the best recourse available to you and there is nothing you can do today to prevent those times from coming. You will also have plenty of opportunities to laugh and there is nothing anyone else can do to take that away from you. That is life. Recognize it and act appropriately.

If you don’t recognize these realities of life, you will be quite miserable. You see that in the question of verse 9, “What does the worker gain from his toil?” To understand that statement, think back to the KFC commercial. What did KFC gain from that commercial? If their plan was to sell more chicken, they would say, “we gained absolutely nothing from all that toil.”

The fact is that we are all KFC in this sense. None of us can control the times. Sometimes nothing comes from the best of our labors and that often has nothing to do with the insufficiency of our labors. It has to do with the times. Life is often futile. You know this. Your best intentions often come to nothing or even worse. Now you can rail against that reality, but what you are really railing against is the fact that you are not God. You are finding yourself bumping up against the same reality as Adam and Eve in the Garden. They wanted to do what only God could do.

Now you know how frustrating this sense of futility and wasted effort is. I imagine that you, like me, recognize it more and more the older you get. You come to realize that there is very little that you can control. This is, in part, what Solomon meant in verse 10, “I have seen the burden God has laid on men. He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.”

Life in a fallen world is endlessly frustrating because we were created for eternity with all the permanence and purpose that goes along with it. Yet we find ourselves in the midst of time, and time overturns so much of what we do. So much of life in this world seems to have no eternal consequence. As one singer put it, “today was just a day drifting into another and that can’t be what a life is for”, or as Ecclesiastes commentator Duane Garrett put it, “we feel like aliens in the world of time and yearn to be part of eternity.”

You have the sense that you were made for so much more than this. You have the sense that you were made for the permanence and purposefulness we see in eternity and not the futility and pointlessness we experience now. That is the case for everyone. That’s the pain of verse 11, “God has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.” You can’t get your mind around eternity in this life, but you want your life to matter; you need your life to matter, and it will only matter in the way that you hope when you enter eternity. Accept that today.

That takes us to the resurrection because were it not for the resurrection, there would be no hope of entering eternity. Were it not for the resurrection, life really would be pointless. Even your faith would be pointless. As Paul put it, “If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.” Life has a point only because of the resurrection. “Life is worth the living just because he lives,” as the hymn puts it. The Son of God entered time so that you might enter eternity. If he didn’t, you would never escape the futility of life.

The Son of God entered into futility so that you might escape it. Jesus entered into futility. As Mark put it, “Jesus could not do any miracles [in his hometown], except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. He was amazed at their lack of faith.” The Son of God entered into this meaninglessness. He is the servant in Isaiah who said, “I have labored in vain; I have spent my strength for nothing at all.” He is the servant who did everything right and yet cried out, “my God, my God; why have You forsaken me?”

Humanly speaking Jesus’ work seemed pointless. His disciples saw that. Listen to two of them describe Jesus as they walked to Emmaus on this very day centuries ago, “He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel.” ‘We had hoped, but that’s over. He’s dead. It was all pointless. Three years down the drain.’ Humanly speaking, in that moment those words seemed right.

However, they were entirely wrong. That’s what Jesus’ resurrection says. Jesus’ resurrection was God making effective what seemed so ineffective. To use the words of Isaiah, the cross says, “I have labored in vain; I have spent my strength for nothing at all. Yet what is due me is in the Lord’s hand, and my reward is with my God.” To use the next words of Isaiah, the resurrection says,

“And now the Lord says—He who formed me in the womb to be His servant to bring [His people] back to Him and gather [them] to Himself, for I am honored in the eyes of the Lord and my God has been my strength—He says: “It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.” The cross seems to say, ‘it was all a waste.’ The resurrection says, ‘no, the best for which any human could hope was too small. This is making all things new.’

So yes, you live in a world governed by times which you do not control and can't change. Get used to that because that is life. God sets the times. He has purposes which are beyond your comprehension. You must submit to Him.

Submit to Him in time to enter eternity. If you try to live out eternity in this fallen world, you will be miserable. If you recognize the realities of this time and submit to God's means by which you can enter eternity, the pain of this life will be greatly dulled, and you can be patient as you wait for life as it was meant to be.

Live eternity in eternity. Live today, today. That's our second point: fear God and live today. If you are wise, you will make adjustments to match reality. For example, you will recognize that one day you will die, and you will make adjustments to match that reality. If you are a fool, you will either refuse to recognize that you are going to die, or will you recognize reality and refuse to make adjustments. You won't make a will. You won't have any regard for the state of your soul. You will act like a fool. Fools don't make adjustments to match reality. Wise people do.

We just studied one adjustment that wise souls make. They desire to enter eternity and they submit to the means God has appointed to enter eternity. Now we consider that wise souls fear God. We see that in verse 14, “I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that men will revere Him.”

You should fear God because what He does lasts forever and what you doesn't. My dad is a bricklayer. Brickwork lasts a long time, but he is now to the point in his career that he is re-doing some of his earlier work because the styles of have changed. He is also replacing work that his dad did decades ago. Time makes all of our work obsolete. Time does not make God's works obsolete. That is a reason for humility.

Unless the Lord returns first, one day I will be long dead and no one who is part of this church then will remember anything about me. I will simply be a name in the denominational yearbook. No one alive, even among my descendants will remember me then. Time will take me out. It takes out everyone, Solomon says, except for God. You know this even if you don't want to acknowledge it.

Time beats us all. In the movie, Creed, the boxer Rocky Balboa makes this point. Rocky was speaking with the son of Apollo Creed. Creed was the champion until Rocky defeated him. Creed's son had never met his father. He asked Rocky whether his dad was really as good as they say. Rocky said, "He was the perfect fighter. Ain't no one ever better." So Apollo's son asked the logical question, "So how did you beat him?" and Rocky responded, "Time beat him. Time takes everybody out. It's undefeated." Now when this film began, we learn that Rocky had recently buried his best friend. His wife was long dead. Over the course of the movie, Rocky gets cancer. In other words, "Time beat him. Time takes everybody out. It's undefeated."

The same goes for you. The same goes for me. The same goes for everyone other than God. "I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that men will revere Him."

If you have eyes to see, time will show you that you are only a vapor and that only God is eternal. If you have eyes to see, time will show you that you can never accomplish exactly what you purpose, and that God will always accomplish everything He purposes.

That should humble you. That should make you feel small. Now feeling small isn't the same as feeling bad about yourself. Feeling bad about yourself involves humiliation. Feeling small involves humbling. Feeling small is appropriate because before God you are small. The constant march of time should make you feel small before God.

God humbles us. This is for our good. It is for our good as we think about eternity and it is for our good as we think about the small pleasures of today. As Solomon puts it in verse 12, "I know that there is nothing better for men than to be happy and do good while they live. That everyone may eat and drink and find satisfaction in all his toil—this is the gift of God."

You aren't going to enjoy eternity today. You aren't going to enjoy the new creation today. This life will be filled with a fair bit of futility and seasons that seem utterly purposeless. Accept it because that is the way that it is. Accept that and you will have, as Tremper Longman puts it, "a resigned awareness that life's enjoyments... come from small sensual pleasures, rather than an understanding of the grander scheme of things... [this] is not the highest, best imaginable good, but... life in a fallen world, which is the best humans can do under the circumstances."

There will be a time to mourn so when it is time to dance, dance. There will be a time to weep so when it is time to laugh, laugh. There will be a time to refrain so when it is time to embrace, embrace. Enjoy all that you can when you can.

You don't control the times. God does, so fear Him. Live wisely. Enjoy what you can when you can, but don't try to enjoy eternity today. The Son of God didn't die and rise again so that you could do that. He died and rose again so that you could enter when that time comes. "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven" including that. Amen.



December Sermon

If you were given the opportunity to meet any person in the first Christmas story, who would you choose? There are so many fascinating characters to choose from. Would it be Herod, the wicked old king who sat on the throne of Israel and was insanely jealous of a baby? There's the Magi, the Wise Men from the east. Wouldn't you want to ask where they actually came from or how did they know which star to follow? Might it be the Innkeeper, a good man, frustrated and overwhelmed by the demand for the lodging and being confronted with the very pregnant Mary and no room in his inn? Did he ever realize just who he had turned away?

If that's not enough, consider the Shepherds. For the most part they were teenagers, possible boys and girls, probably around 16 and 16 years old. Imagine their amazement and shock at being commanded to leave their flocks and go into Bethlehem and the stable, and there witness the birth of the Son of God?

There are so many other characters just as interesting: Anna the Prophetess, Simeon who held Jesus in the temple, and of course, Mary. But there is someone in this entire story I would want most to meet: Joseph - the Forgotten Man of Christmas. Just what do we know of this? It's as if he falls off the edge of the earth! In fact, a survey of Christmas carols and you'll find Mary is mentioned 7 times but Joseph is not mentioned at all. That's right, ZERO! However, what we know is that no one is insignificant in God's plan for salvation. God chose Joseph as he chooses each of us, for a time, to fulfill a purpose. Read the Old Testament prophets. Once they have completed their work, they return to their lives.

So, my friends, take a break from decorating the tree, wrapping gifts, baking cookies and hanging the stockings and read and think about Joseph - the forgotten man of Christmas. The Sundays of Advent will focus on this man: his significance, not just in the birth of Jesus, but how everything he did propelled that baby into adulthood and becoming the Savior of the world.

Sunday, December 1st First Sunday of Advent Lord's Supper

Text: Matthew 1:12-17

Title: "Up Close and Personal"

Sunday, December 8th Second Sunday of Advent

Text: Matthew 1:18-25 (18)

Title: "Pledged to be Married"

Sunday, December 15th Third Sunday of Advent

Text: Matthew 1:18-21 (18-19)

Title: "A Teenager's Dilemma: That's Not My Baby!"

Sunday, December 22nd Fourth Sunday of Advent

Text: Matthew 1:20-25

Title: "I Had A Dream"

Tuesday, December 24th Christmas Eve Lord's Supper

Text: Matthew 1:20-21

Isaiah 9:2-7

Title: "He Shall Save His People"

Sunday, December 29th First Sunday after Christmas

Text: Luke 2:1-20

Title: "Advent Epilogue: Joseph's Finest Hour"



The Season of Christmas

The feast of Christmas will soon be upon us! The secular world has been busy about it for quite some time. Ribbon began to appear in Hobby Lobby in May, and displays of trees started at the 4th of July. Hallmark exhibited its first ornaments in mid-July, and we began to hear Christmas carols in September. The Hallmark Channel's Countdown to Christmas began October 19 with non-stop Christmas movies until January 1! Black Friday predates the first Sunday in the season of Advent! Is it any wonder that we see more and more trees on the curbs on the afternoon of December 25 because "Christmas is over"? The secular world is tired of all the drama that started long before the holiday even begins.

The church, in its wisdom, calls us to something else that is as "counter cultural" as it could. Advent begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas Day. This year the first Sunday of Advent is December 1. We are called to spend that time in preparation for the great mystery of the incarnation.

Where did this season of Advent come from? Historically Christmas Day, and the season of Christmastide, was a late addition to the church's calendar. The earliest record of it is about 450 A.D., long after the feast day of Easter and Pentecost. In fact, the day of Epiphany (on January 6) predates Christmas by over 200 years. Epiphany, the "manifestation of Christ", was the second biggest day for baptism after the Easter Vigil. While we tend to think of Epiphany as the coming of the Wise Men, it also included the Baptism of Jesus, and the miracle at the wedding in Cana of Galilee. Because it was a major day for baptism, a period of forty days just like the season of Lent, began for the preparation on the feast of St. Martin of Tours on November 11, and was referred to as "St. Martin's Lent." The color of the season was purple, just like the season of Lent before the Easter Vigil. It is for this reason that Advent in the early church was a penitential season, and its color was purple. More recently some churches use the color royal blue for Advent, pointing us to the coming of a king.

[Side note: the twelve days of Christmas ARE NOT the twelve days before Christmas, regardless of what Hallmark says! The season of Christmas lasts for twelve days, beginning on December 25 and ending on January 5, just in time for Epiphany. In the early church, the season of Christmas was celebrated for forty days, through the Feast of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple on February 2!]

The season of Advent is one of expectant waiting, of preparing for something other than a Hallmark Channel event. Christmas comes to remind us of the great mystery of the incarnation; that God would lay aside Eternal Majesty and put on human flesh in the person of Jesus Christ to restore us, ultimately, back to right relationship with God Almighty. We see that mystery described in the first chapter of John's gospel. We are called to not be so drawn into the secular

world's glitter and tinsel at the beckoning of Hallmark, and instead spend some quiet time in our souls, preparing for one of the greatest mysteries of our faith. Don't allow the secular world to co-opt the holiday that God intends!

O come, o come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel that mourns lonely exile here until the Son of God appears. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

Warmly,
Randy+



Believe...

During her lifetime, Paul and I would take our daughter, Heather, to Disney World occasionally. The last time we were there “it” happened while we were standing on the Main Street in the Magic Kingdom. We had finished our first full day there— shopping, riding rides, and trying to see as much as we could. From far up the street you could hear it coming... The sound of the bands announced the arrival of the lighted parade and we were standing right in prime spots. As the sounds approached, the children standing around me became more and more excited, anxiously awaiting the parade. And suddenly it turned the corner right in front of us. Because it was just about nightfall, we were about to see an extraordinary display of floats, all lit by thousands and thousands of brightly colored lights. This was probably the first time in my life I’d ever witnessed a parade at night, and the effect was nothing short of magical.

But what was more magical wasn’t the vast display of colored lights; instead, it was the ready acceptance of the hundreds of children around me who all know the dozens of characters on the floats and walking on the streets to greet them. Yes, I knew who they were, too, but there was a difference. I knew that all of the characters were really human beings dressed up to look like the characters. The children had no trouble grasping the concept that mice could talk to them, that huge grey elephants could wear pink tutus and toe-shoes and dance, that dogs could drive cars, and that fish and mermaids all enjoyed the sounds of a band of “aquatic” musicians. They possessed for themselves the true magic, and I had only a veneer of that magic...

It was that same sense of believing that caused Virginia O’Hanlon to write the editor of the New York Sun in 1897 the now-famous question..

Dear Editor— I am eight years old. Some of my friends say there is no Santa Claus. Papa says, ‘If you see it in The Sun, it’s so.’ Please tell me the truth, is there a Santa Claus? Virginia.

And of course the Editor responded with words that are now famous— “Yes Virginia, there is a Santa Claus.”

There is something infinitely theological about what the Editor writes later in that editorial...

Not believe in Santa Claus! You might as well not believe in fairies! You might get your papa to hire men to watch in all the chimneys on Christmas Eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if you did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove? Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see. Did you ever see fairies dancing on the lawn? Of course not, but that’s no

proof that they are not there. Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders there are, unseen and unseeable, in the world.

We are approaching the great festival of the incarnation of God in human form— one of the great cornerstones of all Christian thought. But I wager to bet that, for many of us, the thought of God stooping to take on the form of humanity in the person of Jesus Christ is a bit like our understanding of Disney characters. And, for us, the next step, that each of us, then, contains divinity within each of us, is equally hard to fully believe. But that is what Christmas, and God’s incarnation (or “enfleshment”) is all about. Do we truly believe what greatest miracle that ever happened? Or do we politely place it on the shelf along with our other childhood magic, and take up the polite veneer of adulthood?

I challenge each of us, as the yearly festival of God’s enfleshment approaches, to try once again to “conceive or imagine all the wonders there are, unseen and unseeable.” And come to God’s house on the evening of December 24th and peek over the edge of the manger. Perhaps you’ll see your own self lying there as God takes on human form.

Randy+





**HAPPY
BIRTHDAY**

December Birthdays

- 05 - Gary Brotherson
- 15 - JoAnn Williams
- 22 - Patty French
- 29 - Bernie Garcia
- 29 - Dick Hoisington



Table for One

Our December event will be held Wednesday, 12/4 @ 5:30p.m. @ Doyle Ruble's home @1245 Messiah Dr. Burlington, IA

Yum-Yums

News from Yum Yums. A group of 14 church members and friends enjoyed a dinner & fellowship at Gator's in Burlington, IA. Those attending voted not to meet for Yum Yums in December. Yum Yums will meet again in January, those attending chose to go to El Toro, on the corner of Division St. & Flint Hills Dr. in Burlington, IA We will meet on January 16, 2025 @ 5:00pm. If you have any questions, call or text Sandy Russell @ 319-572-6124

2nd Sunday Luncheon

Sunday, December 8
following morning service!

Please Join Us!

Luncheon is free and gracious donations help to defray the cost and are much appreciated.



Happenings of Fellowship and Music

Poinsettias

Our poinsettias for the church sanctuary have been donated again this year. If you would like to make a Christmas Memorial gift for the Polish the Jewel Campaign in memory of or in honor of someone, the forms will be available at the church. The list will be in the bulletins beginning on Christmas Eve. If you would like poinsettias for your home, I can order them through December 5 from Ritters. The cost is \$17.50. Let me know as soon as possible if you need me to get some for you. *Randy+*

Second Sunday Luncheon

Our Second Sunday Luncheon will be held on Sunday, December 8th, following the morning service. The Advent Luncheon is free to all, and your generous offerings help to pay for the costs. Please join us for lunch on the 8th!

Silver Singers Program

The Silver Singers will present "A Silver Singers Christmas Card" on Sunday, December 15 at 3 pm at the Capitol Theater. The program is a blend of both sacred and secular music for the season. A festive Afterglow will follow in the Nightcap Lounge. The concert is free. Several of our choir members sing in the Silver Singers, and Randy is their music director. Please join us!

A Special Day of Music and Mission on the 22nd of December

Our choir will be joined by area musicians to present Karen Marrolli's "Light of Peace", during the morning service at 10 am. The work contains five pieces in Celtic form about Christmas and its importance to us as Christians. The choir will be joined by Roger Hatteberg, piano, Jeffrey Phillips, violin, Marcia Korb, flute, and Scott Teater, Irish hand drum. Please invite friends and family to join us!

Following worship there will be a fund-raising soup and salad luncheon to benefit the Transitions program for the homeless, here in Burlington. There is no cost. Please invite your friends to join us to benefit Transitions.

Then, at 1 pm, there will be a special public presentation, which will include a second presentation of the Marrolli piece, along with a hymn festival of the Great O Antiphons, the liturgical pieces we know as the hymn "O come, O come, Emmanuel." We hope you will help us with this "courageous outreach" to the people of our community.

Light of Peace

Celtic Carols for Christmas

Karen Marrolli



Meeting Highlights

Plans are being finalized for the November 23 Presbytery meeting here. This is quite an honor for our church and congregation, and we are hoping that we have a good turnout.

We will be entering a float in the Lighted Holiday Parade on Saturday November 30 and volunteers are needed to build the float and walk in the parade to pass out candy canes to the children and hot cocoa packets to the adults.

We have approved a project to create a T-shirt that members can wear that identifies them as a member of this congregation. A design has been selected, and more details will be coming soon.

Budget requests need to be submitted by Thanksgiving, November 28. Advent begins Sunday, December 1 through Sunday December 22. The December 24 Christmas Eve service will be held at 5 PM this year. Stay tuned for further information!

The next Session meeting will be **Thursday, December 5, 2024 at 1:00 PM.**

Cheryl Lotz, Clerk of Session



Messages from the Deacons

The Deacons would like to invite you to the Fellowship Hall after the Christmas Eve Service. We will have a treat for you to get you through until you get home. Anyone who would like to donate cookies for Christmas Eve please sign up on the sheet on the table and bring them the Sunday before Christmas. We appreciate all who bring to this.

If you have a need that the Deacons may be able to help with please bring it to any Deacon. We want to help in any way.



We honored our Veterans during our Veterans' lunch on November 10!
Thank you for your service, Doyle, Leona, and Francis!

Photo submitted by Wilma Hemphill





Allison would love to hear from you!

Allison Nalley would love for you to send her some cards and notes while she is away at college!

Allison's address:

Allison Nalley
Robertson Hall
Cottey College
1000 W. Austin Blvd
Neveda, MO 54772

A Big Thank You from Pat Whitmore

As anyone who has lost a loved one knows, it is hard. Looking back, it seems that our 64 years of marriage went by in a flash. However, the story is that God put people all along the way to help guide us. Starting out in Forks, Washington with Ed's first job after Iowa State, his Bosses wife invited us to church our first week there. Fast forward 8 moves and later to Burlington, IA in 2004, We moved into our house on a Tuesday. Reading the newspaper that week, I spotted an article about a Bagpipe Group coming to the First Presbyterian Church that Saturday night. As Ed was a Piper, we attended the performance and met a number of people who were warm, welcoming and glad to see us. Although many things have changed through the years, I have been so blessed to be a part of the people in this church and the things we are doing to still be a vibrant example of our love for God and others. In closing, I thank you for all the condolence cards, and notes written inside, donations to the Organ Fund, meals, conversations and love.

Pat Whitmore

A Thank you from Janet Calvin

TO MY CHURCH FAMILY I WANT TO WISH YOU ALL MANY BLESSINGS , LOTS OF FAMILY GET TOGETHERS FILLED WITH GOOD HEALTH , LOVE , AND JOY THIS THANKSGIVNG AND CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY SEASON . WITH LOTS OF SHARING AND GIVING TO THOSE IN NEED. MAY YOU FEEL GODS LOVE AND PRESENCE IN ALL THAT YOU DO .

BLESSINGS ,
JANET

A BLESSING PRAYER THAT HAS BEEN HANDED DOWN FROM MY FATHERS IRISH / SCOTTISH ANCESTORS:

OUR KIND HEAVENLY FATHER , WE ACKNOWLEDGE OUR THANKFULNESS TO THEE FOR ALL THE COMFORTS OF THIS LIFE . BLESS THIS FOOD FOR IT'S INTENDED USE . GUIDE AND DIRECT US IN THIS LIFE . WE ASK IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST , OUR SAVIOR AND LORD.
AMEN

(THANK YOU FOR LETTING ME SHARE THIS FAMILY BLESSING PRAYER WITH ALL OF YOU }

KNITWITS

Want to be warm, able to relax, enjoy conversation with others and not feel guilty about it? We have the perfect answer for you: join the prayer shawl ministry group. Stop by the Church Parlor for an hour between 10:00 and 11:00 on **Wednesday, December 4th**. Whether you know how or would like to learn to knit or crochet, we will have willing and patient teachers on hand to help. Needles and yarn and some patterns will be provided, or you can bring your own.

Hope to see you there.

Questions?

Contact Pat Whitmore 319-850-6803



Missions Is Up To Doing Good

Mission Committee Upcoming Meeting

The Mission Committee plans to have its monthly meeting on the first Monday of each month at 12:00 noon. Bring a sack lunch. December 2nd next meeting.

Thank you to everyone who brought in items for our Thanksgiving Baskets! We had 14 baskets were delivered! Everyone is Thankful for your giving!



★ Christmas Baskets ★

We will start collecting for Christmas Baskets on Sunday, December 8th with the last day for items being Wednesday, December 18th. Baskets will be picked up or delivered on Friday, December 20th.



Angel Tree



The Congregation can pick up tags from the Angel Tree starting December 8! Pick a tag (or tags) to fulfill the wish/need and return with tag attached under the tree. You may wrap your gift if you wish. Deadline to have gifts back is December 18th.



Cozy Tree



The Cozy Tree will start up December 1 and will be collected until the 5th of January. Bring coats, hats, mittens, gloves, scarves, undergarments, pants, tops, or any clothing for a child. The items will be donated to the Burlington Community School District to be distributed to our schools.



Lets fill the tree!

Missions Cont'd.

In following Joe Myers presentation, on Sunday, Nov. 10th about Transition DMC, we have found out they are in a financial challenge.
Any donation would be very much appreciated !!

Paper towels
Laundry soap
Bleach
Pine-Sol
Any brand will be great!

THANK YOU !!

Bring to church and place in fellowship hall.



Announcements!



Second Sunday Luncheon will be on Sunday, December 8.

The Silver Singers will perform on Sunday, December 15 @ 3pm @ The Capital Theatre.

On December 22nd, "Light of Peace", a work of Celtic Christmas songs, will be performed by area musicians during the morning service @ 10am and again at 1pm. Please see page 17 for more information.

The Cozy Tree is up and awaiting donations, starting December 1, of cold weather items for area children in need. Please see the Missions page for more detailed information.

Angel Tree will be starting on December 8. Deadline to have gifts under the tree is December 18th. Please see the Missions page for more detailed information.

Christmas Basket collection will start Sunday, December 8. Last day for collection December, 18. See Missions page for more detailed information.

Shepherd's Table will be on Wednesday, December 18 from 4:30pm-6pm @ 1st Congregational. This is a week earlier than usual, due to the Holidays.

Farmer's Market at the Church will be on Thursday, December 19 from 4:30pm-6pm. If you know of anyone that is in need of food, send them down!

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service will be at 5:00pm on December 24.

Wendy will be out of office on Friday, December 20

Office will be closed on Christmas Day. Merry Christmas!

Live Streaming our Worship Services

Can't make it to Sunday service? No problem! Every Sunday service is live streamed on Facebook! Please join us! Just go to Facebook on your phone, tablet, or computer and navigate to our Facebook page!

If you have not yet watched a Facebook service, or don't know how, locate Facebook on your phone, tablet or computer, search for First Presbyterian Church of Burlington, Iowa, and then sit back and enjoy. The weekly bulletin is being provided via e-mail so you can follow along and take part as you wish. Comments are appreciated





December 2024



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 1st Sunday of Advent 9:00 a.m. Adult Ed. 10:00 a.m. Worship Cozy Tree starts	2 <u>Missions meets at Noon</u>	3 	4 8:30 a.m. Bible Study <u>Knitwits meets @ 10:00 am</u> <u>Table for One meets @ 5:30pm @ Doyle Ruble's home</u>	5 Session Meets @ 1pm	6	7
8 2nd Sunday of Advent 9:00 a.m. Adult Ed. 10:00 a.m. Worship 2nd Sunday Luncheon Christmas Basket collection & Angel Tree starts	9	10	11 8:30 a.m. Bible Study	12	13 	14
15 3rd Sunday of Advent 9:00 a.m. Adult Ed. 10:00a.m.Worship Deacon's Meeting <i>The Silver Singers presents "A Silver Singers Christmas Card" @ 3pm @ The Capital</i>	16 Deadline For Connections	17 	18 8:30 a.m. Bible Study <u>Shepherd's Table</u> 4:30pm-6pm Last day for Angel Tree gifts Last day for Christmas Basket collection	19 <u>Farmer's Market @ the Church</u> 4:30pm-6pm	20 Wendy out of office Christmas Baskets delivered or pick up	21
22 4th Sunday of Advent 9:00 a.m. Adult Ed. 10:00 a.m. Worship <i>"Light of Peace" during worship service & 1pm</i>	23 Trustees Meet @ 10 a.m.	24 Christmas Eve Candlelight Service @ 5:00pm	25 Office Closed 	26	27	28
29 1st Sunday of Christmas 9:00 a.m. Adult Ed. 10:00 a.m. Worship	30	31 				Office Hours <u>M-W-F 1:30 pm-4:30pm</u> T-Th 9:00am-1:00pm