

December 2023

Friends,

Welcome to Advent!

Now, let's talk about music.

There is a debate among pastors and church musicians about what music should be used during the season of Advent. The season of Advent is meant to be a time of preparation and pondering as we move toward Christmas. Rather than telling the stories leading up to Jesus' birth, the scripture readings of Advent often focus on the resurrected Christ and the prophetic foretellings of Christ found in the Old Testament.

In order to match this time of preparation and scripture readings, there are specific Advent hymns. These are a separate category from Christmas hymns. If you look at the purple Glory to God hymnal, you can see in small writing above the hymn numbers "Jesus Christ: Advent" and "Jesus Christ: Birth" splitting between hymns 107 and 108. For purists, crossing the line between Advent hymns and Christmas/Birth hymns is a no-no.

The rationale for this definitive line comes from a theological perspective in which we understand Christmas to BEGIN on December 24/25 and not END at that time. Thus, the use of Advent hymns right up through the Fourth Sunday of Advent. Then the Christmas hymns are used through the day of Epiphany, usually celebrated on the 2nd Sunday after Christmas.

I am not an Advent purist. Indeed, I'm even less so now that I have children. Christmas hymns are such a great way to teach the stories about Jesus' birth. Plus, most of them are easy to sing. And there is the added benefit that folks tend to generally like to sing Christmas hymns.

For worship, I try my best to cram as many Christmas hymns as possible into the bulletins without turning it into a sing-along and while still including some of the favorite Advent hymns – O Come, O Come Emmanuel, Light One Candle, and others. At the end of the day (or end of the season, in this case), I'm not sure that it matters all that much which hymns we choose. We sing to the glory of God for the sake of worshipping God. Singing is a form of praising, and in some cases is also a form of praying. God's glory is lifted up in all our songs.

May Jesus Christ be praised! (Hymn #667)

Pastor Jessica



December 2023

SHARING OUR SUNRISE JOYS AND CONCERNS

"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look the young woman is with child and will bear a son and shall name him Immanuel." (Isaiah 7:14)

"For a Child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace..." (Isaiah 9:6)

"To you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord." (Luke 2:11)

Sometime in early November I start noticing the reflection from the stained glass over the choir loft in the sanctuary onto the wall. The sun has shifted in the sky and the blue from the cross becomes ever more vivid with each passing week. The cross comes to fulfillment during Advent, its shape boldly reflected on the wall by late December. Bill always had a special affinity for the way the wall lit up during this time, as if it is part of our Christmas decorating. In the years after Bill was no longer with us, Woody carried on the tradition of pointing it out to us to behold. Though neither of them are now with us, we continue to marvel at the cross as centerpiece of our celebration of Christ's birth.

The significance of the cross and the child, the cross and the star, the cross and the shepherds is not lost on me. For as we read the above scriptures from the prophecies of old to the Birth in Bethlehem, Jesus was born to be our Savior, our salvation, our redeeming grace. And so, at least for me, on this Christmas night as the light of the Christmas Star shines bright with peace and love, I think too of how the path to the cross and the light of salvation it reflects shines God's everlasting love on us.

With the promise of the star in our hearts, we remember those who are struggling during this advent season with illness, loneliness and grief. We pray that the hope inherent in the season will hold them fast. Rod Paronto is hoping to get home for the holidays after many struggles and setbacks. Prayers for Rod and Dixy. So many in our congregation have been touched by family members or friends dealing with cancer. We ask that God hold tight those friends and family, remembering Ed Maki, Barb Chigbrow's son, Orville, Tana's brother David, Marlene Tesch McCauley's daughter Johanna, and Joyce Newman's daughter Vickie. May God's hand hold them through their journeys. Remembering others who are ill or undergoing treatment, we remember Norman Anderson with ongoing treatment, Marilyn Andrews waiting test results, Chandelle McCullough recovering after a concussion and Jana Ferry Pfeifle undergoing back surgery this week. Extra prayers for Estelle and her grandsons during the holiday season.

Prayers for Paul, Koko, Lio and Nina Ellis as they make the move back to Ohio to be closer to family. We will miss the joy they brought to our congregation.

We give thanks for those who made our house of worship especially festive and meaningful by decorating during this advent season. Thanksgiving for those who continue to reach out to those who cannot be with us in worship. Just a card or a visit brighten their days.

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I often think of the words to an anthem the choir used to sing, "It was an ordinary night, a night like many nights before. It was an ordinary night. So ordinary nothing more. A common ordinary night. A night like many nights you've known. *Unless you consider the Child.* It was a simple little town ... a manger filled with hay ... sheep and animals around ... unless you consider the star ... unless you consider the angels who sang ... *Unless you consider the child.*"

That God would send His child to ordinary people like us is extraordinary. That the angels would first announce it to the simple shepherds is astounding. "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, " *Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors.*" (Luke 8:13-14)

May Peace, Joy and Love be with you as we Consider the Child and Cherish the Cross.

Merry Christmas, Tana

December Reading List



This month's scripture list comes courtesy of theadventusproject.wordpress.com. For those who don't engage in a regular scripture reading practice, Advent can be a great time to start.

Best two things you can do to begin? 1. Devote a space, and 2. Devote a time. With a space cleared and a time allotted, you are ready for a month of scripture reading! Blessed Advent friends!

December Reading List

1	Isaiah 2:2-5
2	Isaiah 9:1-7
3	Isaiah 11:1-9
4	Isaiah 11:10-16
5	Isaiah 39:5-40:11
6	Isaiah 52:1-12
7	Isaiah 61:1-4
8	Galatians 4:4-6
9	I Thessalonians 4:13-18
10	1 Thessalonians 5:1-11
11	1 Corinthians 15:20-28
12	Colossians 1:15-20
13	2 Peter 3:3-13
14	Mark 14:60-65
15	Jeremiah 33:14-17
16	Micah 5:2-5
17	Ezekiel 34:11-31
18	Zechariah 8:1-8
19	Zephaniah 3:14-17
20	Isaiah 7:10-17
21	Matthew 1:11-17
22	Luke 1:26-38
23	Luke 1:39-56
24	Matthew 1:18-25
25	John 1:1-14
26	Romans 13:11-14
27	Romans 15:7-13
28	Psalms 148
29	Psalms 24
30	Matthew 2:1-11
31	Genesis 22:15-18

Reminder: When donating cans to the can shed, please remember to tie the bags they are donated in. Thank you for being committed to the aluminum can recycling project! We collect \$10-20 of cans per month and this money goes to provide shipping for our pill bottle reuse endeavors.



December 2023

What has happened with our environmental initiatives?

After 18 months, we have some projects that we have continued and some that we have not. Here’s a summary.

We have ongoing collections: aluminum cans, plastic bags for recycling, and pill bottles for re-use. Aluminum can money is being used for pill bottle shipping.

We have decided to continue annually the Crayon Initiative and the Spring Product Exchange.

We replaced nearly all lighting, inside and outside, with LED lights.



FISH Food Bank



	Oct 2023	Year to Date 2023
Families (non-Single)	52	466
Singles	61	463
Adults	141	1,313
Children	77	537
Meals	3,270	27,750
Pounds of Food	7,646	61,199

Food Suggestions for December:

- Ketchup, Mayonnaise, Mustard
- Box Macaroni & Cheeses
- Salad Dressing
- Any Type of Soup; Tomato, Cream of Mushroom, Chicken Noodle

Thank you to the volunteers who helped during the Thanksgiving holiday; John DeVoss, Janette Forsyth, and Carol Stilli. Our next week to volunteer will be January 8th - 12th. If you would like to volunteer contact Maribeth Doan at 406-452-2727.

Thank you to all who contributed to the Town Pump Donation match! Together, we were able to raise \$2,401.42 which will be matched by Town Pump! All money raised will go directly to food banks in our area!

Committee Restructured Format Begins in January

From time to time, it is good to evaluate how our committees are functioning. Over the past year, we have noticed that we have a lot of cross-over between some of our committees in terms of both projects and member participants.

In order to improve, the Session has made the following changes to our committee structure. These changes will go into place in January.

We need you! If you feel called to serve in any of these committee areas, please let someone from the session know, or contact the church office.

Committee merges:

Mission and Outreach with Faith & Life;

Memorial with Finance and Stewardship;

Social Media with Admin/Personnel.

Buildings and Grounds, Christian Education, Nominating, and Worship will continue to stand alone.

Attend a meeting to check it out! Meeting schedules are found in the monthly calendars and online.

December 2023

Advent study -

It's not too late to join the Glacier Camp Advent Study - online, beginning on Sunday, November 26 at 5 p.m. and meeting weekly. The study will explore the book of Romans.

To sign up, email:

timothy@glaciercamp.org



Start a Reverse Advent tradition this year!

THE ANTICIPATION OF CHRISTMAS IS HALF OF THE FUN. IF YOU HAVE EVER ENJOYED AN ADVENT CALENDAR, THIS ONE WON'T DISAPPOINT. INSTEAD OF GETTING A LITTLE TREAT OR ITEM EACH DAY, TURN IT AROUND AND GIVE AN ITEM INSTEAD! DONATE BASED UPON THE ITEM SUGGESTIONS BELOW, OR COME UP WITH YOUR OWN DONATION FAVORITES.

Week 1	FISH Food Bank - peanut butter, canned meats, protein-rich foods
Week 2	Great Falls Rescue Mission - boxes of bandaids, feminine hygiene products, individually packaged tooth brushes, new wash cloths
Week 3	Housed Great Falls - hats, mittens, gloves, scarves, small tarps (6'x8' or similar)
Week 4	YWCA Great Falls - feminine hygiene products, toilet paper, paper towels, laundry detergent, toiletry products

Incoming and Outgoing Elders and Deacons - Transition time has arrived! Here are some important things to know:

The new class of Elders and Deacons will be elected December 10. The term begins at the first meeting of the new year - January 7 following worship for Deacons and January 23rd at 5:30 p.m. for Elders. Outgoing elders and deacons continue to serve up until the January meetings. Outgoing folks do not need to attend the January meetings unless they have specific information to pass on.

Incoming elders are welcome to attend the December meeting, though this is without voting privileges. Session will be one week early in December due to the Christmas holiday - it will meet December 19 at 5:30.

you're invited to
Kids Christmas Crafts

Sunday, December 17
1-4 p.m.

\$15/child Free!

Tickets available online at
Sunrisegreatfalls.net

Painting, Crafts, Small holiday ornament gifts, hot chocolate

Sponsored by Harp Financial Group

Join Us For A

Holiday Dinner

10 December, 2024
Sunday at 4:00 PM

December 2023

December Calendar of Events		
Dec 3	9:30 am	1 st Sunday of Advent, Worship, Guest Speaker Rev. Tim Lanham
	10:45 am	Fellowship, Children’s Sunday School
	11:00 am	Deacons Meeting
Dec 7	10:00 am	Women’s Bible Study
Dec 10	9:30 am	2 nd Sunday of Advent, Worship, Communion
	10:45 am	Congregational Meeting, Fellowship, Children’s Sunday School
	4:00 pm	Holiday Dinner
Dec 17	9:30 am	3 rd Sunday of Advent, Worship, Children’s Program
	10:45 am	Fellowship, No Children’s Sunday School
	1:00 pm	Kids Christmas Crafts (1-4pm)
Dec 18		Newsletter Deadline
Dec 19	5:30 pm	Session Meeting (Moved from the 26 th)
Dec 20	6:00 pm	Mission and Memorials
Dec 21	10:00 am	Women’s Bible study
Dec 24	9:30 am	4 th Sunday of Advent/Christmas Eve, Worship
	10:45 am	Fellowship, No Children’s Sunday School
	7:00 pm	Worship
Dec 25		Christmas Day, Office Closed (Also closed Jan 1 st)
Dec 27		Newsletter Assembly

Deacons on call for December: Bill McCullough & Ruth Hickey



Bring your favorite Holiday treat to share during Fellowship time on Sunday, Dec. 17 after the children’s program. Leftover treats will be taken to our homebound members. Put your treats on the kitchen counter or serving table in fellowship hall before worship that day.

2024 Per Capita is \$63.50. We pay per capita on each member, with monies split between the Presbytery, Synod, and General Assembly.

December 2023

Special Halloween!



December 2023

2023 Session Elders

Admin & Personnel: Lianna Gaskins, Scott Shull
Buildings & Grounds: Travis Harp, Lee Hickey
Christian Education: Erica Rusinski
Faith and Life: Eric Chigbrow, Lee Hickey
Mission & Memorials: Norman Anderson, Scott Shull
Nominating: Scott Shull, Eric Chigbrow, Millie Sivak
Outreach & Social Media: Lee Hickey
Stewardship: Eric Chigbrow, Lianna Gaskins, Scott Shull
Worship: Norman Anderson, Travis Harp
Clerk of Session: Millie Sivak

Board of Deacons:

Chair: Ember Woods
Secretary/Treasurer: Janette Forsyth
Beth Hoseck, Dixy Paronto, Ruth Hickey, Bill McCullough, Sandy Lambert, Marilyn Andrews, Pam Chigbrow



«City», «State» «Zip»

«Address»

«First Names» «Last Name»

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