

FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH
San Luis Obispo

The Kirk
December/January



Waiting has never been my strong suit. People who have known me for a long time would never refer to me as, well, patient. I've gotten a little better with age, but it's been a long wait!

Learning to wait—to live in a state of expectation—is the discipline of the Advent season. Yeah, we know how the story will end up, but each year we transport ourselves back to a time when God's people waited for the Messiah to come, with varying levels of patience.

Even the songs reflect the theme of waiting in anticipation.

“O come, O come Emmanuel”
“Come, thou long-expected Jesus”

Waiting is the heart of Advent, as we remember the coming of Jesus, and learn to wait for his promised return.

I'll be honest, I've had plenty of lessons in waiting this season. When I was diagnosed with some significant heart disease in October, they told me not to wait too long to do something about it. As it happened, December 1st was my surgery date—it has felt like a long time to wait to get myself fixed up.

The completion of the surgery will bring another set of lessons: I have to spend the first two weeks near enough to the hospital that a home care person can drop in for some visits. I can't pick up anything that weighs more than 10 pounds for the first month. I can't drive for a minimum of six weeks. See what I mean? Even after the surgery I'll be waiting for these new limitations to pass.

I suppose this is the perfect season to learn some lessons in patience. The Israelites waited for centuries to receive the Messiah God had promised, and the Church has waited 2000 years for Christ's return. My lessons may seem huge to me, but they're pretty small compared to what God's people had to endure. If Advent is about learning to wait all over again for the Son of God to come, I'm glad for the chance to learn that lesson all over again (mostly!).

How about you? How will you take on the practice of waiting and watching in your own celebration of Christmas this year? The joy of Jesus' birth feels all the more fresh and exciting when we do the work of remembering how hard it is to wait for a promise to be fulfilled.

Let me encourage you to spend a little time practicing how to wait during this Advent season. I think it will make your Christmas deeper and more meaningful. In the meantime, remember that even in our waiting we claim God's promises to heal our hearts and draw us together in unity. Here's a verse from “O Come, O Come Emmanuel”:

O come, desire of nations, bind,
In one the hearts of all mankind.
Bid Thou our sad divisions cease,
And be Thyself our King of peace.

Blessings to you and yours this Advent and Christmas season! I'll be waiting impatiently to be back with you in the New Year.

Pastor John

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION YOUTH

We are so excited to be planning and participating in some GREAT things this season. Hopefully, you are reading this in time to join us for two big events.

ADVENT NIGHT 2023

This year the theme is all about kindness.

December 3 – 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. - Wilson Hall
Everyone, and we mean EVERYONE, is welcome!
Bring family, friends, and neighbors. We will have crafts, food, fun, and fellowship for all ages.
If you are able, bring a finger food to share.

See you December 3 at 5 p.m.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH CHRISTMAS PROGRAM AND BAKE SALE

December 10, after Worship in Wilson Hall

Join us in Wilson Hall after Worship for the Children and Youth Christmas Program—“Peace on Earth.” Immediately following the program, the bake sale will open. All donations will go to the Children’s Benefit Fund.

Please help us by donating something for the Bake Sale. All creations can be brought to the Church Office or the morning of the Bake Sale. Creativity welcome ...

Breads, cookies, cupcakes, cakes, jams, peanut brittle, candies, granola, etc.

We will price the items in the kitchen on Sunday morning and have them ready for the Bake Sale event following the Christmas Program.

We are so excited to be able to do this again. You will not want to miss it!!!

Wednesdays at the Rock will continue to meet through Wednesday, December 13. We will then take a short break and start again in the New Year on January 3, 2024.



We have a small but mighty group of Youth. We are currently figuring it all out and figuring out how to proceed in the New Year.

A great big Thank You to Scott Machado for organizing the Youth program for the past few months!

The Youth will be participating and helping with Advent Night on December 3, as well as the Children and Youth Christmas Program and Bake Sale/Donation on December 10. They are so helpful and supportive, and we really appreciate all of their efforts.

We look forward to the New Year and hope to fill it up with new opportunities and adventures.

Thank you to all of you who supplied a meal and were able to spend some time with the Youth. We really appreciate it. The offer still stands, so if you are interested in providing a meal and spending some time with the Youth, let Jen know.

Congratulations to Cole Ragsdale and Lloyd Esola for their Eagle Scout Court of Honor ceremony. First Pres SLO was honored to host this event and participate in honoring Cole and Lloyd. We are so proud of both of them.

MERRY CHRISTMAS, HAPPY HOLIDAYS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR from your Children and Youth team!

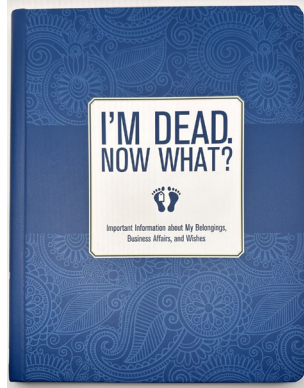
Jen, Brooke, Bella, Ash and Scott



ADULT EDUCATION

“I’m Dead. Now What?”

Expert help on pre-planning for your exit from earth. Why? Your family will be appreciative, and your Pastor will be grateful. An emotional time is not the best time to figure out all of the details.



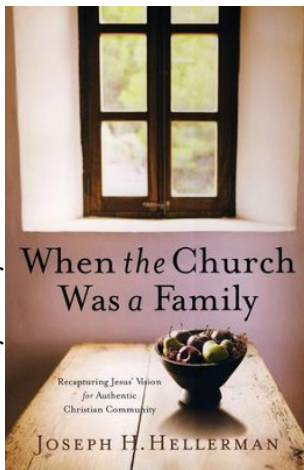
This class and book is a valuable gift for those left behind when you are gone, or if you become unable to speak for yourself. It provides an all-in-one place for you to gather vital details about your contacts, legal matters, health information, financial affairs, and day-to-day practical matters.

This class will be taught by Bob Gordon and will start after the first of the year. Any questions, call Bob at 805-541-1532.

LIBRARY REVIEW

When the Church Was a Family, by Joseph Hellerman, has been added to the library and is available for borrowing. It is located on the book cart.

Spiritual formation occurs primarily in the context of community. This author calls believers back to the wisdom of the first century, examining the early Christian church from a sociohistorical perspective and applying the findings to the evangelical church in America today. With confidence, Hellerman writes intentionally to traditional church leaders and emerging church visionaries alike. Believing what is detailed here about Jesus’ original vision for authentic Christian community will deeply satisfy the relational longings of both audiences. (This review is adapted From Amazon.)



BUDGET AND FINANCE STEWARDSHIP

We invite you to prayerfully consider your pledge as you support the ministry of this church, both financially and with your time and talents.

These past couple of years, while giving has been sufficient to help us pay our bills, pledging has lagged considerably. As stewards of your donations, pledging helps us to better plan for the ministry of our church and have fewer sleepless

nights worrying if or where the funds will come from.

As we move into the future and work to “grow our church,” consider giving a COLA (Cost of Living Adjustment) raise to your pledges or more to allow us to do even more of God’s work. Then sleep on it and pray on it. We look forward to seeing how we will “abound in every good work” together.



ENDOWMENT

INCLUDING FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN YOUR WILL OR ESTATE PLAN

It seems every charitable organization from the animal shelter to radio stations is asking to be included in our estate plans. Every non-profit has learned: if you don’t ask you won’t get. First Presbyterian Church of San Luis Obispo has long sought to keep members aware of the need and opportunity to be included in your estate plan. Numerous past and present members have taken the steps to do just that. Today’s members are benefiting from gifts made by past members and we need to do the same for future members, in perpetuity.

- There are a variety of LIFE INCOME PLANNING tools that enable you to provide for the present and future of our church while allowing income for you or your loved ones. These include (but are not limited to) Charitable Remainder Trusts, Charitable Gift Annuities, Pooled Income Funds, Permanent Funds, and Family Foundations. It doesn’t take a lot of money to contribute to the Fund. Some of our current endowments were started with gifts of modest sums that have grown over the years. As with all financial decisions, anyone considering stewardship using one of the above methods should seek appropriate tax, legal, or financial counsel. If you don’t currently have an advisor, the Endowment Committee or Church office can suggest professionals in this area who can provide these services.

- TRANSFER of securities (stocks, bonds, mutual funds) and ASSIGNMENT of Life Insurance Policies and IRAs are also attractive ways to give, often providing greater tax benefits to the donor than a simple gift of cash. REAL ESTATE also provides a unique gift opportunity. You can make a gift of your home and still retain the use of it during your lifetime.

The decision about how your bequest will be use is yours. And, what better time to further your desires and goals for our Church than December as we celebrate the birth of Christ our Lord. Your tax deductible, year-end Endowment gift can be designated for broad areas of mission or ministry. You can specify a particular need or cause you support, or you can leave your gift undesignated. If you desire, the FPC Endowment Committee can assist you to make an appropriate designation of your gift

Life Income Plans can provide income to the donors, tax benefits, and a professional management of funds and a new way to support the work of the Church. To help get you started, a general brochure that briefly covers a number of the options available has been created by the Endowment Committee and is available to interested members upon request.

Contributions to an existing fund can be made by cash, check, securities, or by debit/credit card. Contributions are accepted personally by the Church Treasurer, at any time online, or mailed to First Presbyterian Church San Luis Obispo, Attn. Church Treasurer. Talk to the Church Treasurer for a copy of our DONATION GUIDELINES.

If you feel led to include a gift to the First Presbyterian Church of San Luis Obispo in your financial or estate planning, please contact any member of Endowment Committee: Peggy Estes, Don Green, Jerry Kaml, Ray McKelvey, Diane Shervem, Bert Townsend, or Virginia Walter (Chair). We can help guide you through this important process or steer you to the right people and resources.

Even a modest gift will make a difference.

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE **DATE FOR EIGHT GROUPS!**

We will be taking sign ups for new “Date for Eight” groups that will be forming and getting together sometime in late January or early February. If you are interested in being on the list, please contact Pam Rodewald at psmrmony@mac.com or (805)215-2396. Some of the activities from previous groups have been Morro Bay Art in the Park, Elfin Forest, game nights, dinners out or in homes, and the SLO Art Museum. Each group decides on the activities. This is a great way to learn more about each other and make connections in community.

THE 150 YEAR CELEBRATION

A group is forming to help organize our 150-Year Anniversary in 2025.

This fun-filled group will put together regular presentations throughout the year. Information for the committee is being prepared by a group of church historians. I cannot imagine any more fun activity for our church than this celebration.

Learn a lot about our history and enjoy presenting it to the congregation. Join the happiest and most fulfilling committee ever!

Please contact Virginia Walter at 805-543-8260 or vwalter@calpoly.edu to sign-up for the committee.

COFFEE FELLOWSHIP

Congregational Life is looking for volunteers to make and serve the coffee for fellowship time after the Sunday services. We will train you and help you in getting started by partnering with you. Please contact Evelyn Ruehr at eruehr@calpoly.edu or Pam Rodewald at psmrmony@mac.com to sign up!

EPIPHANY STARS

Epiphany Stars will be given out at the end of the service on Sunday, January 7. If you will not be there, please let Pam Rodewald know and your name will go on a list. (We will also have them available on January 14 by the back door.) Contact Pam (805)215-2396 or psmrmony@mac.com .

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Happy Birthday to the following seniors (over 85) who will celebrate birthdays in December and January:

Richard Wiens – December 5
Nancy McKelvey – December 15
Kathy Coull – December 20
Marilyn Wilson – December 29
Dorothy Truesdale – December 30

Mary Butler – January 5
Dorothy Pippin – January 5
Joan Knowlton – January 15

Happy Birthday to all others who have December and January birthdays.

Our church records may be incomplete. If we have overlooked someone, please contact the church office.

CONGREGATIONAL CARE CORNER

Please pray for our church family, especially:

For **Pastor John D'Elia** as he leads our congregation, while recovering from heart surgery;

For our **Elders** as they guide our congregation in making decisions about the life of our church;

For the **Deacons** as they care for our church family;

For **Jen Rabenaldt** as she takes on her role as C.R.E.;

For **Scott Machado** and **Brook Palmerston** as they work with our children and youth;

For **Scott Glysson** and the many wonderful musicians in our church;

For **Carolyn Luenser**, as well as family and friends of **Don Luenser**, who passed away in October;

For **Barbara Daily**, as well as family and friends of **Jack Daily** who also passed away in October;

For family and friends of **John Stechman** who also passed away in October;

For family and friends of **Jim Nielsen** who passed away in November (service will take place next summer);

For those who support our worship services with their technical help to make it possible for live streaming and recording of the service;

For our church members, friends and family who are undergoing treatments for various health issues;

For all our church's senior citizens, for their families and caregivers;

For members, family, and support personnel serving in the military;

And, for all of us as we serve God wherever He calls us.

Because we care about you, if you are hospitalized or ill, please call the church office (805) 543-5451 to leave a message for Pastor John or the Deacons.

If you have a prayer concern, please call the Church Office at (805) 543-5451 or write me at gdeklein@calpoly.edu.

God bless us all,
Gloria DeKleine

BOOK BROWERS

Book Browsers will again meet the first Tuesday of each month via zoom. Our discussions will begin at 7 p.m.

The following is our schedule for the year:

Dec. 5 The Book of Lost Names,
by Kristin Harmel

Jan. 2 You'll Never Believe What Happened to Lucy,
by Amber Ruffin

Feb. 6 West with Giraffes,
by Lynda Rutledge

Mar. 5 Bloomsbury Girls,
by Natalie Jenner

Apr. 2 Secrets of Charmed Life,
by Susan Meisner

May 7 The Undocumented Americans,
by Karla Cornejo Villavicencio

If you have any questions, please contact Diane Shervem at 805-459-9844 or dshervem@charter.net.

WOMEN'S MINISTRY

The women's retreat at Granite Ridge Christian Camp, October 27-29, was a big success. There were 31 ladies that signed up to attend. Even the weather cooperated that weekend. In November, we continue our annual ministry partnership with the Kayenta Presbyterian Church as we support their indigenous community with holiday dinners and Christmas gifts.



Calling all women!!! As we move into Advent, we will have a Christmas gathering for all women...ALL WOMEN. You do not need to be a member of our church, you only need to be a woman that wishes to nurture their faith and join in some fun and fellowship with other women.

On **Sunday, December 17** after worship and fellowship time in the courtyard, we will have our annual Christmas gathering in Wilson Hall. There is no cost to you and a lunch buffet will be included. We will have a small, (standalone) lesson from Luke-Acts, with no pre-required study. Sharing a ride to church or need a ride home afterwards? Let us know, and we can help you out with that as well. We hope to see you there!



MISSIONS FRONT PORCH

I am sharing a portion of the Front Porch Newsletter that was sent out after the fundraiser last month:

We are delighted to announce that, thanks to your incredible generosity, we were able to raise an astounding \$97,000 during the evening. Not only did we meet our goal of \$85,000 to receive a matching gift, but we exceeded it!

Reaching this goal for the matching gift would not have been possible without the unwavering support and kindness of our community. We are truly grateful for the over 100 individual donations that contributed to this collective success. It is through your dedication and commitment that we can continue to make a meaningful impact on the lives of the students we serve.

While this is incredibly good news, there is still a budget deficit that must be met by the end of the year. Even though Front Porch is a ministry of the Presbytery, it receives no direct financial support and must depend on fundraising to meet its total budget. Individuals are the strongest supporters of Front Porch. If you would like to donate, please send a check made out to Front Porch, 1468 E. Foothill Blvd., San Luis Obispo, CA 93405.

Front Porch Thanksgiving Dinner

A huge thank you to all the people who bought, got donated, roasted, and deboned turkeys for the annual Thanksgiving Dinner, to the helpers who cubed bread and made dressing, to the persons who donated pumpkin pies and whipped cream, and especially to Evelyn Ruehr, who made the gravy and coordinated the whole event. About 72 hours went into preparing the meal, and at least half of it by Evelyn. Interns transported the cooked food to Front Porch and provided the mashed potatoes and cranberry sauce to round out the meal. Evelyn even provided a special dressing for vegetarians with mushrooms and a mushroom sauce!

The meal was served by the CP Swim team and word is that the meal went very well, and they had just enough food. The Front Porch staff said how important this was for them: a special time to celebrate gratitude together as for so many students, holidays can be hard.

As Evelyn said, "It is special to provide this experience. It could not happen without all of us." This outpouring of love by FPCSLO for the Front Porch community is so much appreciated. Thanks again.

Susan Updegrove
UMB member

P.S. And this event on December 10, from Valerie Evans, is to remind everyone of the "COOKIES FOR FINALS EVENT!" First Pres helps to provide students with just enough sugar in their systems to pass those finals. (Please don't let this interfere with your baking for the Children's Bake Sale!!) With "premade money," Valerie will gladly purchase those pre-made cookies that are found in grocery stores for you. Meet Valerie at the Church Marquee out front before or after the service on December 10.

CHRISTMAS JOY OFFERING

The offering collected at the Christmas Eve service will go to the Denominational Christmas Joy Offering. This offering goes to provide assistance to current and retired church workers in their time of need and in developing future leaders at Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color. Thank you in advance for your generous contribution to this offering.

ALTERNATIVE GIFT FAIR (AGF)

It's time to go shopping at the Alternative Gift Fair. After the church service on December 3, walk over to Wilson Hall, grab a cup of coffee and a cookie, and browse through the tables and displays. Representatives from the 12 charities will be there to chat with "shoppers" about their organization's work. The fair will also be on-line until December 15 so "shoppers" can peruse the website from home.

You should have received your packet of materials in the mail with the list of non-profits, directions and an order form. If you have not received the packet, please call the church office to have one mailed to you, or go to the FPC website, www.fpcslo.org, and follow the AGF instructions.

The Alternative Gift Fair (AGF) is a wonderful way to give and to model the joy of giving to friends and family members young and old. When buying intangible gifts of donations to local, national, and international charities in honor of family and friends, we experience a "Bethlehem Christmas"—a metaphor for God's greatest gift to us.

Thank you.
Peacemaking and Social Justice Committee

40 PRADO

As we come into the holiday season, we are anticipating the dinner that our church will provide at 40 Prado on the 4th Saturday of December. We would appreciate your help in planning ahead to meet the dinner and serving needs for these event. The upcoming dates are:

On December 23, we will be serving approximately 140 persons. We will need four (4) double main dish baked rigatoni casseroles (recipe provided), and three (3) large baked

green bean dishes (recipe provided). Additionally, a total of four persons are needed to serve the dinner at the shelter from 4:45 p.m. until 6 p.m.

Signups for meal components and serving will be on Sunday, December 17. Please let Pamalee Brady know if you are available to provide a meal component or serve on any of these dates. It will be a great help in planning for the busy months ahead.

WORSHIP **JAZZ VESPERS**

Please join us for the 7th annual Christmas Jazz Vespers on Sunday, December 17, at 7 p.m. The concert will feature the Dave Becker Quintet with all proceeds benefiting Friends of 40 Prado. The jazz quintet features Dave Becker on sax, Talia Ortega on flute and vocals, Marshall Otwell on piano, Dylan Johnson on bass, and Darrell Voss on drums. The concert will showcase original arrangements of classic Christmas carols and seasonal music that celebrates the beauty and diversity of the holiday season. Doors will open at 6:30 p.m. Early arrival is recommended. A reception will follow in Wilson Hall.

With a generous sponsorship by the Mike and DD Patrick family, 100 percent of the proceeds from the concert will benefit Friends of 40 Prado—a local non-profit organization whose mission is to collaborate with community organizations for the common goal of helping the homeless and hungry of our community.

You are encouraged to purchase advance tickets (\$20 recommended donation) online at www.my805tix.com/e/christmas-jazz-vespers-with-dave-becker-5.





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