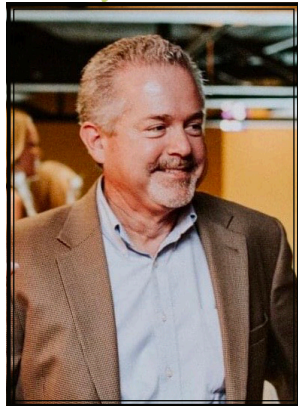


**FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH**
San Luis Obispo

The Kirk
December 2021



This truly is a wonderful time of year. At its best the Advent and Christmas seasons draw us together, they help us find joy in unexpected places, and they inspire us to big and little acts of generosity. I know, I know. There are all kinds of things about Christmas that we complain about: commercialism, crowded travel lanes, and let's not forget family squabbles.

But deep down, I'm an optimist; and I choose to love this time of year.

There are differing views on how to move through Advent, mostly having to do with music. The traditionalists want to hear only the dark and somber tunes of longing and expectation all the way until Christmas Eve. Those who struggle with delayed gratification (you know who you are) request that we do joyful Christmas songs as soon as we've cleaned up from Thanksgiving. I fall somewhere in the middle. We'll begin with the songs about waiting for the first two Advent Sundays, then gradually blend in the excitement of Christ's birth until the big day.

No matter what we think about the music, though, the real point of Advent and Christmas is what God accomplishes for us in becoming human and walking the earth for those short years.

In coming to be with us Jesus teaches us something about what God is like. God is loving and welcoming—God is fun and sacrificial—God gets agitated when the weak are abused or manipulated by the strong. We learn a lot about God's personality by watching and listening to what Jesus does in the stories we read in the gospels.

But in the coming of Jesus we also learn about what we are supposed to be like.

Jesus calls us to trust him—to believe that he is who he says he is. Whatever else we say about what it means to be a Christian, it begins with faith in the saving message of the Gospel, even when we wrestle with it. And how do we express that faith and trust? By living our lives in partnership with Christ according to the values of the Kingdom of God. Of all the Christmas songs we sing or hear every time December rolls around, this verse from "O Holy Night" says it best:

*Truly He taught us to love one another
His law is love and His gospel is peace
Chains shall He break for the slave is our brother
And in His name all oppression shall cease
Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we,
Let all within us praise His holy name.*

We're made to love each other and to work together with Christ to bring peace, release, and freedom from oppression to our neighbors. And in the end, look what happens: We end up singing "sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus." Maybe it does all come back to the music!

This Advent season let me invite you to try something. Spend a little time each day cultivating a sense of longing and expectation for a renewed sense of Christ's presence in your life. It has been more than a year and a half of disruption and distancing, but the whole point of Christmas is about God's coming near. Make it a priority to find a little of that closeness of Jesus in the daily events in your life.

It'll make Christmas feel new and magical again.

It'll help those around you see the presence of Christ in your generosity and character.

May this Advent season be a time of holy waiting for you, and may this Christmas be one of joy and meaning and renewal.

Blessings in Christ,

Pastor John

CHILDREN'S ED

The Children's Ed program is winding up 2021 learning about Advent and what the Hope, Peace, Love, and Joy of the Season looks like and what it means. We are excited to share with you what we have learned and are looking forward to 2022. Thank you for your continued support through these difficult and confusing times. We look forward to being able to do even more in 2022. Keep our kids and their families in your prayers. "The Village" has never been more important than it has during the past year and will continue to be.

We loved being able to give the kids a new Bible and share what an important book the Bible is. The following is a true story. We have learned a lot about Stewardship and what it means to be a Matthew 25 Church. After we shared the book More, we handed out the new Bibles. One of our students came to me and said, "Miss Jen, I can't take this Bible home." I asked her why and she said, "Because I have too many books at home, and I want someone else to have it." This student is 4 years old. I explained to her that this was a very special Bible, and it was just for her. I thanked her for being so willing to share and suggested that she pick out a couple of books from her home library that she could share with a friend or someone who did not have a book so that she had room to keep her new Bible. She thought that was a great idea and her mood instantly changed--from tears to a big smile. I tell you this story to remind each of us that even the youngest among us get it. We take pride in teaching our children to have a heart for mission and caring for the least of these. Our kids are amazing, and we cannot wait to invite more of them to join us.

Blessings to you all,

The Children's Ed team,

Jen, Delaney, Jenny, and Sarah Jane

YOUTH

What a pleasure it is to have Sarah Jane join us and begin to run the Youth Program. Her leadership has been a blessing! The Youth are a small but mighty group full of energy and questions. Next time you see one of our Youth, ask them if Jesus had any brothers and sisters? They truly care for one another and we are excited to keep that commitment going not only to our group but the community. We have lots of plans for mission projects at the Church and throughout our community. We look forward to the time, hopefully soon, when we can participate in outreach and invite lots of friends. The third floor has missed all the activity and energy the Youth bring to it. Beyond the "goofiness" of being a Youth, we are learning the importance of living our lives through Jesus and what the Bible can teach us. We have enjoyed welcoming some new friends to Church and to the Youth Group. We are busy making plans for 2022 and are praying we can actually implement them.

Thank you for your continued support and keep us in your prayers as we navigate a new year.

The Youth team,
Jen and Sarah Jane

ALTERNATIVE GIFT FAIR CHRISTMAS SHOPPING

Are you looking for the perfect Christmas gift for a special friend or relative who already has many material things? 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 we buy 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. We participate in the real Christmas story as we bring our gifts to Christ as Matthew 25 calls us to actively engage with people and the world around us. "Whatever you did for the least of these...you did unto me." Matthew 25:40.

Due to pandemic restrictions, the AGF will be virtual again this year. You should have received your packet of materials in the mail with the list of non-profits and directions for shopping online or by returning the order form to church by US mail. 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. You may shop anytime from the 1st of December to the 15th of December.

Thank you,
Peacemaking and Social Justice Committee

MISSION COMMITTEE

Pastor John keeps mentioning Matthew 25 during services, but what is it exactly? Good Question!

Matthew 25 is a vision established when the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in 2016-18 challenged the PC(USA) to take Jesus' words to heart and embrace his command to serve "the least of these brothers and sisters." Each congregation is challenged to respond to the needs of people who are hungry, without a home, imprisoned or oppressed. Our church's session accepted the challenge and we became the 1,000th member church in the nation. Churches are asked to focus on up to three specific areas and we chose all three. The areas are congregational vitality, dismantling structural racism and eradicating systemic poverty. We are currently at the first step in the process: reviewing current ministries of our congregation to see how we are meeting these challenges. Next, we will look at how to expand our outreach. Please read Matthew 25:31-46 and pray about how you would like to serve. Your participation in the mission survey will be essential as we assess the interests of this congregation to determine where next to reach out into our community. Feel free to contact any member of the Mission Committee or Susan Updegrove, Chair, with your interests and concerns.

FRONT PORCH FUNDRAISING DINNER

Thank you to all who were able to attend the Front Porch Fundraiser--it was a great success! It was also great to see so many FPCSLO members there, some even in the Roaring 20's costumes! The financial goal was met and more, which means Front Porch will end the financial year well. Did you ever wonder why Front Porch holds a fundraiser each year? Let me tell you. Front Porch is a self-supporting ministry with no direct financial support from Presbytery, even though it is a ministry of the Santa Barbara Presbytery. Individual churches within the Presbytery do support the ministry, but many don't. The "congregation" of Front Porch is college students, most of them are not in a financial position to completely support the ministry. Financial support must come from other sources. Many individuals support Front Porch (Thank you--you know who you are!) and that group has expanded over the past few years to include many parents of students, other churches in SLO, and alumni who have graduated

from both Cal Poly and Front Porch. Years ago, the Front Porch Board recognized the need to dramatically expand fundraising and the fundraising dinner concept was devised. While a late October time is near the end of the calendar year, it is near the beginning of the school year. It has been challenging to run a program with most of the financial support coming at the end of the year, and Presbytery has always made sure that staff are paid and kept the lights on.

Most donors believe in the importance of providing a place of love and support for young people at a challenging and often critical time in their lives, a place where their spiritual needs can be met, as well as their need for community. Front Porch is that place. Thanks for your continued support.

Susan Updegrove
Chair of the Front Porch Board

ENDOWMENT FUND CREATE A LASTING LEGACY

*GIVING TO THE FPC ENDOWMENT FUND
ALSO IS STEWARDSHIP*

The church is in our annual STEWARDSHIP season when we concentrate on outreach and extending our blessings beyond ourselves. That is the essence of stewardship. As we think about our abundance, we must also accept the responsibility to wisely use and share God's gifts to us. That is where the Endowment Fund can be of help.

You can extend your stewardship, and accomplish your hopes and goals for the Church during as well as beyond your lifetime with a gift to the FPC Endowment Fund. In the process you can create a lasting legacy. To make it simple just name the Church as a beneficiary in your will, or there are a variety of long term planned-giving options that can offer financial and tax-related advantages for your family. But in the long run, the joy of giving is not based on the mechanisms and amounts. Choosing to contribute to the Endowment Fund is simply about sharing from the God given bounty we have received and pooling our resources to achieve a common goal—carrying forward the mission of Christ in and through our Church for generations to come.

If you are currently doing tax or estate planning and/or 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 the Endowment Committee: Peggy Estes, Don Green, Jerry Kaml, Ray McKelvey, Diane Shervem, Bert Townsend, or Virginia Walter (Chair). If you haven't already done so, please consider inserting one simple statement in our wills: After all of my bills are paid, 10 percent of my estate will go to First Presbyterian Church of San Luis Obispo.

Even a modest gift will make a difference.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

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

Don Luenser – December 1
Richard Wiens – December 5 – turns 90 this year
Nancy McKelvey – December 15
Kathy Coull – December 20
Dorothy Truesdale – December 30

Happy Birthday to all others with December birthdays. Our church records may be incomplete. If we have overlooked someone, please contact the church office.

MISSION STUDY

In January, you will receive a survey from the Mission Study committee. We hope that we can move our congregation's future in the right direction with prayer, a bit of time, and the completed surveys.

The Mission Study Committee has spent all most five months researching, discussing, and wrestling with creating the survey and working on our 2022 Mission Study Report. Your participation is VITAL and GRATEFULLY received. THANK YOU!

BOOK BROWSERS

Book Browsers will continue to meet on the first Tuesday of each month at 7:00 via ZOOM.

Dec. 7 [Born a Crime](#) by Trevor Noah
Jan. 4 [Why Fish Don't Exist](#) by Lulu Miller
Feb. 1 [When We Were Young and Brave](#) by Hazel Gaynor
Mar. 1 [Brigid of Kildare](#) by Heather Terrell
Apr. 5 [Last Boart out of Shanghai](#) by Helen Zia
May 3 [The Nature of Fragile Things](#) by Susan Meisner

CONGREGATIONAL CARE CORNER

Please pray for our church family, especially for the following:

For **Pastor John D'Elia** as he leads our congregation in this Advent Season;

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

For the members of our various church committees as they help us find new ways for our church family to have fellowship together in the new year;

For the **Mission Study Committee** members as they help us move forward;

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

For **Jen Rabenaldt** and others as they work with our children and youth;

For **Scott Glysson, Sarah Jane Scott**, and the wonderful musicians in our church;

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

For our church's seniors, especially those who are alone in their homes or care centers, and for their caregivers;

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

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

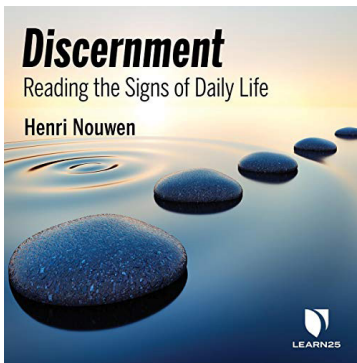
For all of us as we serve God wherever He calls us.

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

LIBRARY REVIEW

Discernment by Henri Nouwen with M. Christendom and R. Laird is a book that has been added to the library and is available for borrowing. In a world where our minds are distracted by constant stimuli, it is easy to lose our connection to God. Henri Nouwen was known for his keen ability to find spiritual clarity amid the chatter. In this book, he emphasizes listening to the Word of God—in our hearts, in the Bible, in the community of faith, and in the voice of the poor as a way to discern God’s plan. Although the late Henri J. M. Nouwen counseled many people during his lifetime, his principles of discernment were never collected into a single volume. Now, in association with the Nouwen Legacy Trust, Michael Christensen—one of Nouwen’s longtime students—and Rebecca Laird have taken his coursework, journals, and unpublished writings to create this book in which Nouwen teaches us how to read the "signs of the times" in daily life in order to make decisions that are ultimately guided by God. (Review from Amazon)



CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Session voted to call a Congregational Meeting, Sunday December 12 following the 10am worship service for the purpose of electing new elders, deacons and members of the nominating committee. Those wishing to vote need to attend the service in person.

CHRISTMAS FLOWERS HELP BEAUTIFY OUR SANCTUARY DURING ADVENT :

DEDICATE CHRISTMAS FLOWERS IN HONOR
OR MEMORY OF LOVED ONES

Each Christmas season, for many years, members of our church family have generously supported the Deacons’

flower ministry by dedicating Christmas plants in honor or in memory of loved ones. These plants beautify our sanctuary during Advent and then are delivered to homebound, ill, bereaved and new members to let them know we hold them in our hearts. Each loving dedication can be made for a suggested \$10 donation per dedication to the Deacons’ Christmas flower fund. Your donations to this fund will help beautify our sanctuary for in-person and taped services, and help the Deacons give flowers to those in need.

This year Deacons will be able to accept in-person donations and dedications after Sunday services December 5 and 12. Please bring a check or cash (\$10 per dedication). We prefer the exact amount as we won’t have change. We will also be sending a flyer by mail, since not all members are attending in-person services.

To send by check: First Presbyterian Church, P.O. Box 591, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406. Notation on check: Deacon Christmas flower fund. Please include a note about your dedication: “in honor of” (name or organization) or “in memory of” (name.)

To donate on-line: Donation via church website: Go to www.fpcslo.org click on Donate, Give Now, e-giving other. Be sure to log in. After you enter payment information in the NOTES section, write: Deacon Christmas Flower fund; “in honor of” (name) or “in memory of” (name).

If you prefer you can call or email Kathy Wolff with your questions and dedication information. Phone: 805 782-9790 or dkwolff@charter.net.

DEADLINE FOR DEDICATIONS IS DECEMBER 17, 2021.

All dedications are printed in the church bulletin for Christmas Eve.

Whichever donation method you use, please make sure to note that your donation is for Christmas flowers, and indicate whom you are honoring or memorializing. You might even want to consider honoring an organization or group of first responders or others you feel deserve a special thank-you. This is your opportunity to express your love and appreciation for blessings received and witnessed.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT OF THIS
IMPORTANT DEACON OUTREACH PROGRAM.

JAZZ VESPERS

Christmas Jazz Vespers will return to the sanctuary on Sunday December 12 at 7 p.m. with the popular vocalist Inga Swearingen accompanied by the Marshall Otwell Quartet in a program of original arrangements of classic holiday songs and seasonal music. All donation proceeds will benefit the SLO Food Bank. Reverend John D'Elia will provide the meditation. To allow for distancing, attendance will be limited to 100 people. If you wish to attend, you will need to make a reservation with the church office by December 1. After that time, the event will be open to the community on a space-available basis. To attend, you must be vaccinated and wear a face mask throughout. Recommended donation is \$20 (although any amount is fine) and can be paid at the event.



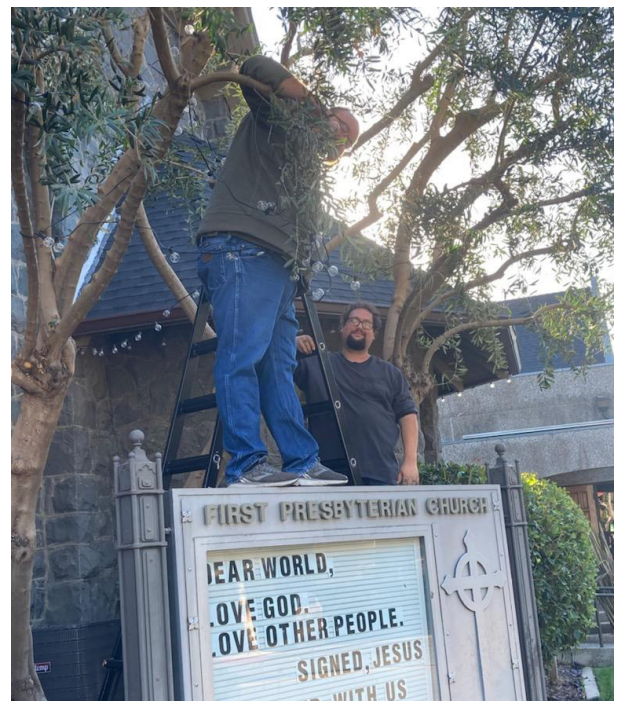
and a new one is expected to begin in early Spring. PLEASE, contact pastor John or our Stephen leader, Dr. Jim Seeber at (805-535-5613).

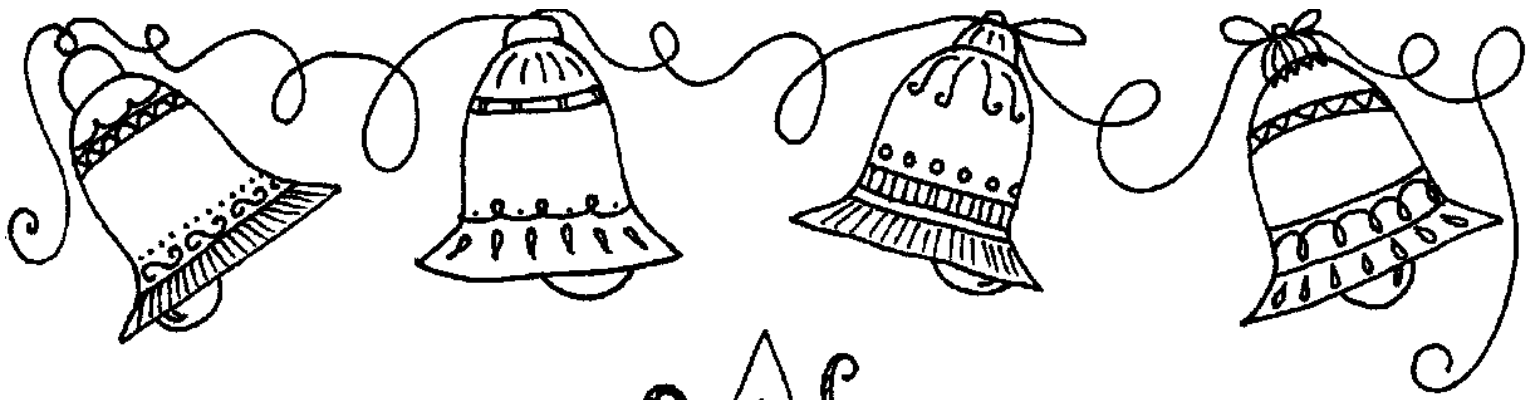
Merry Christmas
from the staff at
First Pres. SLO



STEPHEN MINISTRY HOW STEPHEN MINISTRY WORKS

The pastor or Stephen Minister leader recruits laypersons to serve as Stephen Ministers and they are provided with 50 hours of preparation in Christian Caregiving. Candidates are then commissioned by the congregation as care-givers and will normally work with one person at a time visiting them about once a week for a period of time when they help care-receivers work through the hard-place in life (grieving, depression, change in physical or mental health, etc.) which they are facing. SMs are NOT counselors; they are trained caregivers. SM is a supervised ministry with monthly supervision meetings where cases are anonymously reviewed. It is a confidential ministry in which names are not disclosed nor public discussion of cases allowed. In addition, there are monthly Continuing Education classes that SMs are encouraged to attend. Would you like to help someone going through some difficult time to meet the challenge? A training class is currently meeting





Arise, shine, for your light has come!



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

San Luis Obispo

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93406
tel: 805.543.5451
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web: fpcslo.org

IMPORTANT DATES:

**CONGREGATIONAL MEETING - DECEMBER 12
AFTER SERVICE**

JAZZ VESPERS- DECEMBER 12 AT 7 PM

CHRISTMAS FLOWER DEADLINE -DECEMBER 17

**CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES - DECEMBER 24 AT
5 PM AND 7 PM**