



**FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH**
San Luis Obispo

The Kirk
December, 2017



As the Christmas season approaches, we tend to get caught up in the merriment and excitement of the season. It certainly goes without saying that there is much to be joyous about. Christmas celebrates the birth of our Lord and Savior. Through the use of symbols such as manger scenes, wonderfully decorated Christmas trees that are on display at nurseries and houses, the giving of gifts, and the little baby Jesus in a stable, the Children's Musical. The visitation of the wise men honoring Jesus with precious gifts.

How wonderful this season is for us. But was the first Christmas such a carefree celebration? Without going into too much detail let me share some of the things that happened on that first Christmas. For instance, the conception (Matt. 1:18; Lk. 1:26-38). A virgin getting pregnant by the Holy Spirit? Yeah, right! What do you think her reaction must have been?

According to the latest People's magazine, 53% of high school kids are involved in active sex with 9% becoming pregnant and 8% having abortions. How would she explain this to her family and friends? To Joseph, her betrothed? The statistics weren't quite that high then, at least not for the Jews. Where would your faith lead you if you were her friend?

Or how about the trip to Bethlehem (Lk.2:1-6)? Taxes were very high at the time of Christ's birth. Not only did they have local taxes to pay, they had to travel a long distance (about 75 miles) to pay a head tax. Except this travel wasn't by air or car, but on the back of a donkey while Mary was in the last week of her pregnancy! Where did they sleep along the way? What do you think they packed in their suitcases? I wonder how the roads were?

Or how about the birth of Jesus (Lk. 2:7)? Public accommodations were all filled up. Mary and Joseph were foreigners in a strange city and Mary's labor begins. Talk about poor planning on Joe's part! Not only did he not secure reservations ahead of time, he didn't have a doctor's appointment or hospital plans. I know we see the manger scene as a charming depiction at Christmas time, but undoubtedly it was a dark cave that wasn't too sanitary, nor fragrancd with air freshener.

And how about one more observation. After the birth came the reaction of some wise men who proclaimed him the King of the Jews (Matt. 2: 4-12) and then proceeded to warn Joseph and Mary to avoid Herod if they wanted to live. So they had to flee to Egypt instead of going home to show family and friends their first "special" child. Have you ever tried to picture yourself in such a situation?

Do you remember the book "The Pilgrim at Tinker Creek" (Bantam, 1975)? Annie Dillard repeats an unforgettable story about an Eskimo hunter who asked the village priest, "If I did not know about God and sin, would I go to hell?" "No," said the priest, "not if you did not know." "Then why," asked the Eskimo, "did you tell me?"

That story has troubled me ever since I first heard it. I think it troubles me because it reflects the common, but rarely admitted, feeling that knowing God has brought with it some things we don't really want. In truth, I'm not sure we really want to find out about God if finding out about Him brings pain or sadness or giving up activities or possessions we cherish.

CHILDREN'S ED NEWS

The Children's Ed Committee and the children have been busy preparing for the Advent Season. Mark your calendars and join us for the following:

ADVENT NIGHT

December 3 | 5:00 pm | Wilson Hall

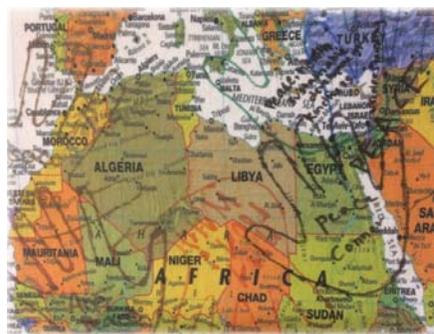
We will be making crafts centered around **hope, peace, joy, and love**. This is a family-friendly all generation event. Everyone is welcome- it's a perfect time to invite friends and neighbors. There will be crafts, food, carol singing, fellowship and fun. Please bring a finger food to share if you can. We are also asking for fresh greens to adorn our Advent wreaths. Evergreens, holly, or whatever you may have would be great.

CHILDREN'S MUSICAL & BAKE SALE

December 10 | 10:00 am | Wilson Hall

Please join us as the kids present their Christmas Musical. Immediately following the musical the Bake Sale will begin. All proceeds go directly into the Children's Benefit Fund which supports scholarships and programs. Please bring goods for us to sell. Items can be dropped off in the office during the week before or brought in the morning of. Cookies, breads, jams/jellies, peanut brittle, cupcakes, cakes, candies, nuts... all are welcome.

We had a great time at the private screening of, "The Star" - we gathered at the church and walked over to the movie theater to enjoy this holiday movie. It was really fun - we hope to be able to do this again sometime next year.



You should journey to the second floor to see the prayer flags and prayer map we created at Fall Frolic. You can still add to both if you would like.

If you ordered a First Pres shirt they will be available the first part of December. We will let you know when they are ready to pick up. Thank you for supporting us by purchasing a Shirt.



Children's Ed would like to thank you for your continued support and for joining us for our programs and activities. We love our volunteers and staff and are blessed by each and everyone of them. We wish you a holiday season full of HOPE, PEACE, JOY and LOVE!

Your Children's Ed Committee

Jen Rabenaldt, MaryEl Hansen, Teri Cueto, Diane Shervem, Becky Falasco, Bonnie Kraemer and Becky Moseley

CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS

**SIGN UPS BEGIN DECEMBER 3RD
\$10 DONATION**



Once again, beautiful Christmas poinsettias will grace the sanctuary. When you make a donation for a poinsettia plant, your gift is used in four ways. You add to the beauty

of the sanctuary; honor or remember your loved one; bring joy to the homebound, ill or bereaved who receive the plant; and contribute to the Deacons' ongoing flower ministry.

Deacons will be taking poinsettia dedication sign-ups before and after services on December 3, 10 and 17.

For questions or additional sign-ups, please contact Peggy Estes (596-0210 or peggy.estes@outlook.com) or Mike Suddarth (543-3070).

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

CHRISTMAS BRUNCH

All women are invited to the Presbyterian Women's Brunch on December 7 at 9:30 am. The brunch is provided by the Presbyterian Women's board members (no charge). We will be having discussions on Lesson 3 of this year's study on "The Living Word."

As women continue to study the Book of Hebrews, in December we discover that God's Living Word is our challenge to use words that support our relationships, strengthen, encourage and give hope to others. The discussions will be based on the study book so bring your book and your Bible.

We will continue to move forward to Lesson Four which takes us on a tour of angelic messengers in the Bible and reminds us that we never know when an encounter may bring us God's message of love and support. We always grow in God's love when we study together, so join us.

Watch for meeting times of the study groups in the bulletin or look back in the October Kirk for meeting times and who to contact. Call Dorothy at 541-6779 for more info.

LIBRARY REVIEW

The book *While We Wait: Living the Questions of Advent* by Mary Lou Redding has been added to the Church Library this year and is on the book cart.

Sometimes we struggle to believe we'll experience anything new as Advent comes around. What could we possibly learn that we haven't seen or heard before? If you're looking for an Advent study of a different slant, *While We Wait: Living the Questions of Advent* offers new ways of connecting the story with your own questions of faith and approaches an all-too-familiar narrative from perspectives we may have missed.

You'll read about biblical figures mentioned in passing in the "original" Advent. Somewhat surprisingly,

KAYENTA MISSION

The gifts for the children and members of the Navajo community in a Kayenta Arizona will be to collect travel size lotions, tooth paste, toothbrushes, shampoo, conditioner, gloves, new socks for men and women, teenagers, and young children. Other ideas for gifts will also be appreciated. In years past gifts were generously given in an overwhelming amounts and greatly appreciated by them to make the birth of Jesus a true celebration. This is the only group that supports that church community. The Presbyterian Board also sends a monetary gift to support their Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners. The Pastor of that church is a Navajo woman who also serves as Moderator of 6 other Navajo churches for the Grand Canyon Presbytery.



PW THANK OFFERING

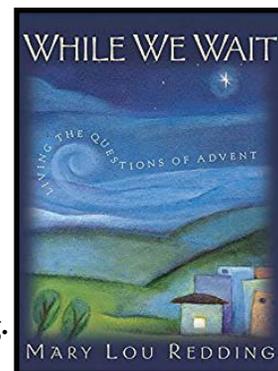
By the time this reaches you the PW Thank Offering has been taken and we want to thank everyone for supporting this mission. We are hoping that the local "Shower the People" program will be selected for a grant to help get the project underway.

-Dorothy Truesdale, Moderator

Tamar, Ruth, Mary, Zechariah, Elizabeth, and the Magi ask questions that resonate with contemporary Christians.

"I hope *While We Wait* will help people who don't want to gloss over their questions about the Christmas story," writes Redding. "This book examines Advent as a journey in which God seeks us at many levels of our understanding and spiritual willingness. It allows for real-life struggles and questions as a part of Advent's spiritual exploration."

What are the questions you bring to God this season? (Review by Upper Room Books)



MUSIC NEWS

In every good speech, sermon, presentation of any type, there has to be a plan or an outline as a guideline for the big picture, to communicate the point. Our denomination has laid out an outline for Worship to help cover all the aspects of our Reformed Faith. Our Book of Order states: “In setting an order for worship on the Lord’s Day, the pastor with the concurrence of the session shall provide opportunity for the people from youngest to oldest to participate in a worthy offering of praise to God and for them to hear and to respond to God’s Word.” The following is our progression for Worship, which is rooted in the Old and New Testaments, and reflects the tradition of our heritage.

1. Gathering around the Word
 - a. Call to worship
 - b. A prayer or hymn of adoration and praise
 - c. Prayer of Confessions (to admit the reality of sin in personal and common life)
 - d. Declaration of Pardon (the gospel is proclaimed and forgiveness is declared in the name of Jesus Christ)
 - e. Give glory – (share signs of reconciliation and the peace of Christ).
2. Proclaiming the Word
 - a. Prayer seeking the understanding of the Holy Spirit
 - b. Scriptures suitable for the day are read
 - c. Psalms or anthems and other musical forms that proclaim the Scriptures may be included.
 - d. The word is interpreted in a Sermon
3. Responding to the Word
 - a. The response is expressed in an affirmation of faith and commitment. This may be offered as a hymn or other musical response, or the saying of a creed of the church.
 - b. This is also a time where the Sacrament of Baptism may be observed, Christian Marriage, and commissioning for service
 - c. Communion is served or Prayers of Thanksgiving and the Lord’s Prayer
 - d. Tithes and Offerings
4. Sending the Word Into the World
 - a. Hymn or Praise of response
 - b. Charge and Blessing

It seems to me that if we understand the four basic categories of gathering, proclaiming, responding to the Word as we take it with us into the World, we get more out of Worship, knowing the purpose and how it all fits together. I look forward to Worshipping with you as we prepare for Advent and the celebration of the birth of our Savior.

Next month we will explore how we move forward in Worship for 2018. If you have any questions about Worship, I would be happy to research them and include that in the January article.

Don’t forget to put the Feast of Lights Concert on your schedule and join us for dinner as well on Saturday, December 16th at 5 pm: Carols Around The World with musicians from the Chancel Choir and Praise Singers as well as the Children’s Choir, directed by Scott Glysson.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Becky Falasco

Director of Music

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2017

One Sunday morning service at 10:00 am

Family Christmas Eve Service

5:30 pm in Wilson Hall

Candlelight Christmas Eve Services

7:30 and 11 pm in the Sanctuary

PLEASE NOTE

In observation of Christmas and the New Year, the Church Office will close Monday, December 25, and reopen Tuesday, January 2.

CONGREGATIONAL CARE CORNER

UPCOMING EVENTS

PLEASE PRAY FOR OUR CHURCH FAMILY, ESPECIALLY:

For the Rev. Dennis Falasco as he shepherds our congregation,
For our elders and deacons as they lead and guide us,
For Jen Rabenaldt and our Children's Ministry,
For all those involved in our Youth Ministry, especially leaders Ryan Joslin, Sarah Dirk, and Jake Wolfe,
For Joel Drenckpohl and the Front Porch Campus Ministry,

For those who are undergoing treatments for various health issues,
For our church's elderly, especially those confined to their homes or care centers, like Cathy Anderson, Charles Blair, Gladys Brannum, George Daniel, Jean Honeyman, Jeanne Hoyt, Lorna Hudson, Stella & Starr Jenkins, Marie Kammenzind, Hulda Nickel, Ralph Nunley, Joy Reed, Idabelle Shields, Dottie Jean & John Stechman, Ernest Triebel, Carol West, and Richard & Lou Wiens,
For the family and friends of Sue Carpine who passed away in November,
For the women and men who do so much to support the countless ministries, missions, and activities of our church,
For the local and global missions our church supports,

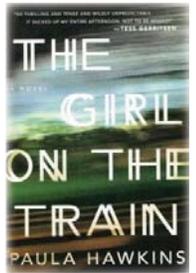
For members and friends serving in the military:
Drew Descary (stationed at Los Angeles)
Laura Kraemer (attending Navy Medical School in MD)
Jim Shelton (deployed on an aircraft carrier)
Michael Poe (stationed in Florida)
Joseph Sall (son of Anne Ramirez; stationed in Carlisle, PA)
Travis Hatakeyama (grandson of the Luensers; stationed in Germany)
Brendan Humphrey (grandson of Leila & Bob; on Navy Aircraft Carrier)

For all of us as we celebrate Christ's birth and serve God wherever He calls us.

BROWN BAG CONCERT Hear the *Sage Harp Ensemble*, a glorious sound of a dozen harps playing holiday, classical, and folk favorites with a few special sparkles added for zest! Friday, December 1 at 12:00 pm in Wilson Hall.



BOOK BROWERS will meet on Tuesday, December 5 at 7:00 pm in the Library to discuss *The Girl on the Train* by Paula Hawkins. Our book discussion in January will be *My Wish List* by Gregoire Delacourt. Questions? Contact Diane Shervem at 543-1473 or dshervem@charter.net.



ALTERNATIVE GIFT FAIR The Holidays are here and the Alternative Gift Fair will take place on December 3rd from 9:30 am-1:00 pm. Come to Wilson hall and celebrate the gift of Jesus Christ. Buy Fair Trade and Humankind gifts and donate to local, national and international charities. We have 14 charities participating this year.



CHRISTMAS ADULT ED Adult Education meets once this month. Join us for "A Christmas Bible Study: the Testimonies of Simeon and Anna in Luke 2" led by Kate Murray on December 17. Bring your Bible.

ENDOWMENT

CREATE A LASTING LEGACY

Irma Powell had an idea: create a memorial to her late husband Alan and find a way to use an 83-year-old cash value life insurance policy. Irma has gifted that policy to our Endowment Fund. The proceeds of that cashed-in policy, are being added to the McQuaid Choir Fund to help endow our music program.

Irma and Alan Powell have been servants to our church since 1990. Alan is no longer among us, but while a member he served as an Elder and on the Property Committee and Retrofit Committee during the Sanctuary upgrade.

Irma has been Deacon's Moderator serving on that Board for six years. In addition she's been singing with the Praise Choir, is a member of the Life Team and the Concert Series Committee. Her gift will continue to support our church indefinitely.

If you'd like to consider a gift of any type, please talk with a member of our church's Endowment Committee: John Eichler, Jerry Kaml, Jane Maxwell, Diane Shervem, Bert Townsend, Dorothy Trusedale, Roger Verity, & Virginia Walter.

Even a modest gift will make a difference.

SLO BOAT

SAVE THE DATE!

SLO Boat, a congregational social group, is having an Epiphany Dinner and Planning Meeting on Friday, January 5 at 6:00 pm in Wilson Hall. Please RSVP to Pam Rodewald if you are coming- (805)215-2396 or psrmony@mac.com. Hope you can join us for a delicious dinner planned by Evelyn Ruehr and Dave Bauer.

BUDGET &

FINANCE

MESSAGE TO CONGREGATION REGARDING 2017 ANNUAL BUDGET

As most of you know, in January 2017, your Session adopted the 2017 Annual Budget with the ambitious thought that giving would rise above the pledges made. The budget was balanced using both unspecified Endowment income and Reserve funds.

This month we are spending those Endowment funds to meet current expenditures and starting to spend Church Reserves. A long standing policy of the church is to maintain 10% of the annual budget in reserve. The Session voted to reduce the Reserves below 10% in order to balance the 2017 budget.

Many of you are aware of this financial concern and have increased your contributions to the church well above your 2017 pledged amount. I have.

The Budget and Finance Committee requests, if at all possible, that each of you increase your contribution above your pledged amount. Spending funds held in reserve to very low levels limits our church's ability to handle crisis-based needs, such as the termite infestation of the Hart Building several years ago.

Please contribute as generously as possible over the next few weeks in order to minimize the erosion of our Reserve funds. Thank you.

Virginia R. Walter

Chair, Budget and Finance Committee

FRONT PORCH

November has been a month of celebrations at Front Porch. On the 4th there was a Volunteer Breakfast to honor and thank the more than 100 students who commit time each week at the coffee shop. They are the face of Front Porch, welcoming new and returning students, in addition to being the hands that teach others how to use the coffee machine, keep a steady supply of clean cups available and clean up. Front Porch could not be open from early morning to late night without their steady presence. Garrett Parker, assisted by Tad Miller and Susan Updegrave, provided a delicious breakfast to the more than 40 students who were able to attend. Ryan Joslin organized Minute to Win It games. Catch Sarah Dirk trying to move a cookie from her forehead to her mouth without using her hands. She did it!

A Thanksgiving dinner with all the trimmings was provided to students on the 15th, coordinated and cooked by Evelyn Ruehr. Jackie and Ben Parker provided cooked carrots and cranberry sauce; the Mullens provided mashed potatoes and Diane Shervem provided rolls. She had many assistants: Dave Bauer, Judy Springer, Debbie Jorgensen, Gloria DeKleine, Susan Updegrave, Pam Rodewald and Kay Emmons helped prep. Valerie Evans, Nellie Beecher and Catherine Petty helped serve. Celebrating a time of thankfulness with their Front Porch family is especially important for those students who cannot go home for the holiday.

On November 19th Dom Groll, assistant director, married Barrett Floyd, previous intern at Front Porch. We wish this young couple the best for a loving and fulfilling marriage and all of God's many blessings.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

To the following seniors (over 85) who have birthdays in November:

Don Luenser: December 1 (85 this year)

Barbara Rehborg: December 3 (90 this year)

Richard Wiens: December 5

Ben McRee: December 11

Kathy Coull: December 20

Rod Keif: December 22

Lois Morgan: December 24

Frank Martinez: December 28

To everyone else who has a December birthday!

If we have overlooked anyone, please contact the Church Office at 543-5451.

Pastor's Note, continued:

I have learned much in these past few years after leaving Idaho. I have spent time chatting about my understanding of my relationship with God and His call upon my life to various members here. In one conversation with Dave Bauer I told him I suspect we'd almost rather not know about God. And his response to me struck a real cord of insight when he said, "I'm thankful that the scripture teaches that God searches for and finds us. We know him because of His initiative not because of ours." Isn't that the truth! The good shepherd goes in search of the sheep; not the sheep in search of the shepherd.

Even when we glamorize this season with lights and tinsel we can't take away the facts. Our Lord understands the glitter and presents of the season and how it's glamorized and sanitized. But it still doesn't change the facts, and to answer the Eskimo differently I would have hope to have said what Dave did: "I'm thankful that the scripture teaches that God searches for and finds us. We know him because of His initiative not because of ours."

So enjoy this Advent no matter your circumstance because our Lord came to share His love with you. He took the initiative.

Merry Christmas!

Dennis



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WORSHIP SCHEDULE

FIRST SERVICE: 8:45 am

EDUCATION HOUR: 10 am

SECOND SERVICE: 11 am

Skilled Childcare Available