



PASTOR'S POINT OF VIEW



Michael P. Rucker
Pastor

A PASTOR'S ADVENT REFLECTION

We all have them, don't we? Memories of Christmas past. I would bet most of us cherish those memories. The car drive to pick up the Christmas tree. Decorating the tree. (Maybe not so many memories to cherish there; my family of seven always managed to argue over the stringing of the lights, whether the tree was straight or not, and rediscovered how patient we managed not to be when putting the dreaded icicles, one-by-one, on the piney branches.) But when Mom emerged from the kitchen full of happy aromas clad in her flour covered apron with the first batch of Christmas cookies and placed the first album of Christmas carols on the spinning disk of our hi-fi stereo, laughter and peace returned.

Christmas draws sentimentality out of the most hard-hearted among us. There is nothing wrong with

sentimentality. I doubt we can avoid it. The Hallmark Christmas specials make sure of that. But the meaning of Christmas – God in the flesh among us – demands more than sentimental reflection. Consider these words from Christian author and retreat leader, Richard Rohr:

"...I feel the need on this earth for adult Christianity and the actual message of Jesus to be so urgent that we cannot allow this great feast of Christmas, and its preparation in Advent, to be watered down in any way... We often settle for the sweet coming of a baby who asks little of us in terms of surrender, encounter, sacrifice, the study of Scripture, or the actual teaching of the Son of God. Sentimentality, defined as trumped up emotions, can be an avoidance of and substitute for an actual relationship with God or with one another." ("Preparing for Christmas, pg. xiv)

Take a step back this year. Reconsider the heart of our celebration. The Christmas story describes the controversial decision of God to enter our world through the womb of an un-wed teenager living among oppressed people in a dangerous and cruel time. Jesus' birth is joy to the world and at the same time led to the piercing of Mary's heart and the death of other Jewish males born on that silent night in the little town of Bethlehem. Christmas joy has a high price tag attached to it.

WORSHIP SCHEDULE FOR DECEMBER

DECEMBER 2

A meditative and quiet worship service drawn from the Taize and Iona communities will lead us into the season of Advent. We will take bread, eat, and remember Emmanuel, God-with-us, as we share the Lord's Supper together.

DECEMBER 9

The daunting and brave John the Baptist makes his annual appearance on the second Sunday of Advent. See Luke 3. This is the Sunday that we take time to remember that this merry, sometimes overly loud season is lined with sadness and grief for some of us. There is a hole where loved ones used to reside. A Blue Christmas liturgy and song will be part of the service to comfort saddened hearts.

DECEMBER 16

Shaun Cloonan, our Minister of Music, teaches and directs choirs at North Hills High School. The North Hills Singers, with their young and talented voices, will sing the songs that lift our spirits. Scripture passages and a brief homily that buttress our Christmas hopes will be at the heart of our third Sunday of Advent worship service. (cont'd. p. 2)

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News from the Edge is the monthly newsletter of the First Presbyterian Church of Edgewood. If you have information you would like to include in the next issue, email Judy Mysels at office@fpcedgewood.org by the 15th of the prior month. Sponsorship is available for \$40 per month.

Pastor's Point of View (cont'd.)

Sacrificial and transforming love, a love that broke God's heart, a love meant to break open our hearts; a love tucked into the soft, swarthy skin of a new-born babe - that is the love God snuck into our midst on that first Christmas morning so many, many centuries ago.

Pastor Michael

Worship Schedule for December (cont'd.)

DECEMBER 23

On this fourth Sunday of Advent, the timeless words of the prophets of the Old Testament and the gospel writers of the New Testament will provide the backbone of this meaningful Service of Lessons and Carols.

DECEMBER 24 – CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE AT 7:00 PM

O the wonder and mystery of a baby boy born somewhere in the Palestinian hills that surround Bethlehem. The Holy Communion with the Son of Man whose birth, death, resurrection changed the world. The celebration of the One who is the light of the world will be passed person to person. Christmas Eve. Bring your family and friends to this beautiful Christmas Eve worship service.

DECEMBER 30

After the advent and Christmas eve service have come to an end. After the gifts have been opened. After the holiday meals and desserts have been consumed. It is time to relax and chill. Our informal and child-friendly morning worship service will take place in the Gathering Place. Join us for the stories, sharing, and singing.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION FOR ADULTS

ADVENT AND THE "WORD" THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

"The Word became flesh and lived among us...full of grace and truth." (John 1: 14)

Can we hear that? The Word of God is full of grace and truth, not judgment or guilt or fake news – the Word of God is full of grace and truth. GRACE = Free and unmerited acceptance of God. TRUTH = Actuality. Transcendent reality.

Who does not need to understand more of grace and truth?

Pastor Michael is planning to teach two series of classes per week during the season of Advent. IN THE LOUNGE :

SUNDAY MORNINGS AT 9:45 AM (12/2,9,16,23)

WEDNESDAY EVENINGS AT 7:00 PM (12/5,12,19)

No preparation will be needed for either class. The material will be provided for each session.

OUR CHURCH COMMUNITY



A **CONGREGATIONAL MEETING** will be held immediately after worship on **Sunday, December 2**, to receive the first presentation of the budget for 2019.

THE FPCE YEAR OF MISSION WITH WILKINSBURG COMMUNITY MINISTRY

FPCE has maintained a steadfast and faithful relationship with the Wilkesburg Community Ministry, Director, Ruth Kittner, Ph.D. During this season of thanksgiving and advent expectation the ministry writes:

This year, as we give thanks for our blessings, please remember those who are not as fortunate. For 50 years, Wilkesburg Community Ministry has served the hungry, the homeless, and the underserved....we provided over 19,800 meals to children and youth in our neighborhood nutrition program. We also provided meals to the Wilkesburg senior center meetings. During the year our food pantry served close to 1900 families, including providing emergency food to 700 families...your donations play a part in this mission. Pennsylvania supports a portion of our efforts to feed kids, but this amounts to only 22% of our income, the rest is generated through individual and congregational gifts, our catering program, and donations from businesses, organizations, and foundations...we thank you for your on-going generosity.

One of our mission focuses this past year was to participate more fully in the WCM mission. Thanks to the tireless efforts of Elder Rhonda Apepos, Nancy Ernst, Lorraine Douthett, and Tom Ochs we have cooperated in this community ministry.

Please remember WCM during these holy season days! You may send a check made out to Wilkesburg Community Ministry at 702 Wood Street, Wilkesburg, PA 15221.

SEEKING COATS FOR THE WINTER

We are still asking for donations of new or gently used coats for all ages, infants to adults. Talk to Rhonda.

From the Nominating Committee

Your Church needs you. If you have any interest in serving as a future deacon or elder, please let us know. Nomination inserts will be included in the bulletin.

SESSION NOTES

At the November meeting, Session approved the allocation of \$5,000 to be used for a chairlift. Approved the use of the lounge by WCM on January 12, 2019.



- **Thank you** to all who stayed after worship on November 25 to decorate the sanctuary so beautifully for the Advent and Christmas season.
- **During this holiday** season, please remember the people from your families, our church family, and our community who are feeling lonely and distant from the joy and laughter of the season.
- **We offer our prayers of sympathy and support to the family of Ruth Carnegie.** Ruth was an active member of our congregation earlier in her life. Ruth died on the morning of November 23. Funeral services were conducted at the Holy Angels Roman Catholic Church in Munhall.

F.R.O.G.S.
AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM
FRIENDS, READING, & OTHER GREAT STUFF



November was a short, but busy month for FROGS. Some of the things we did this month included: made a Thanksgiving craft to be included in Deacon baskets, made butter from heavy cream and salt, sorted the food that Shadyside Academy brought for the Deacon Food Pantry and decorated the Sanctuary Christmas Tree while listening to Christmas song accompanied by our own Sunny Sakai. We will reconvene after the holiday to meet again in December for another short month, meeting only 6 times. We have a great army, chorus or colony (actual name of a group of frogs) of FROGS and VERY SPECIAL VOLUNTEERS!

Huge thanks for the donations of snacks and drinks from the wonderful FPCE family.

Drinks are still needed: Capri Sun, juice, etc.

Judy Mysels, Director

MORE COMMUNITY NEWS AND DOINGS

PROJECT MANGER TREE

The Board of Deacons will be working with Mars Home for Youth this year. Please select a tag from the tree (located in the Lounge) and buy an age-appropriate gift. Money can also be donated to buy wrapping paper, gift bags and ribbon. See any Deacon for more information about the project, for help in selecting a manger tree tag, and for gift ideas. Please sponsor one of God's children. We would like your UNWRAPPED gifts along with the tag returned to the church **by Dec 9**. Thank you for your support of this project.

Reilly Ochs was the 2018 Recipient of the Melfard Douglass Award. Congratulations to her!

God Bless,
*Mary Ann Hartman, Moderator,
The Board of Deacons*

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The Christian Education Committee is meeting in the lounge on 12/16/18 immediately following worship. The agenda will include a proposed Women's Bible study; Youth Sunday; VBS; and Youth Sunday School.

SHADYSIDE ACADEMY brought in approximately 4,000 canned goods to replenish our Food Pantry and other pantries in the area.



Our **FROGS** kids sorted the pantry goods that were brought in from the Shadyside Academy annual food drive.

CALL FOR 2018 REPORTS

On Sunday, **January 27** immediately following worship, the Annual Meeting of the Congregation will be held to receive the approved 2019 budget and ministry team reports.

If you are the staff member, chair or secretary of a ministry team or organization within the church, please have your narrative report into the church office by **January 21**. It can be given in hard copy or e-mailed to Judy at office@fpcedgewood.org.

ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS – THE PERFECT TIME TO BRING A FRIEND TO CHURCH

During the season of Advent and Christmas the hearts of people who are among the “seekers” or “nones” in our community may be open to wonder of the Advent and Christmas seasons. We will have a special “Invite a Friend to Church” service in the future, but why wait until then? The Worship committee has planned four special worship sessions in December where members of FPCE are encouraged to bring friends and neighbors to join us for worship.

Perhaps one or more of the services below will appeal to those not yet part of our church family:

December 2: a meditative service drawing from the Taize tradition.

December 9: will include a Blue Christmas liturgy, a time for families to remember those who are no longer with us.

December 16: the North Hill High School Singers will help lead worship and bless us with a mini-concert at the conclusion of the service.

December 23: our annual Service of Lessons and Carols.

December 24 at 7:00 p.m. the Celebration of the Lord's Supper and the moving Candlelighting ceremony will awaken our spirits to the holiness of Christmas.

Can you think of anyone in your family or neighborhood who would be open to one of these services? Why not invite them to be with us? They will be warmly welcomed, I'm sure.

EDGEWOOD SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Bring the family and share your holiday season with us! The Edgewood Symphony and Renaissance City Choir invite you to experience this festive concert of seasonal favorites on **SATURDAY, DECEMBER 1, AT 7:30PM**.

As they have done in recent years, the ESO collaborates with the Renaissance City Choir. This year's program includes John Rutter's *Gloria*, Randol Bass's *The Night Before Christmas*, and more. Details at edgewoodsymphony.org.



ADVENT ADVENTURES AND VENTURES

Everyone likes to start out on an adventure, and Advent becomes an adventure when a worshiping community is willing to venture something, to take risks. Risk taking in worship means letting to praise the God who takes incredible risks on our behalf. To praise this God we will take seriously the first Christmas greeting of the angels: *“Do not be afraid!”* Do not be afraid of the newness of God’s promises. Do not be afraid to speak God’s word of justice to a society that “tramples on the needy.” Do not be afraid to proclaim the One who brings light and life even in places where death is expected and life treated carelessly.

The story can be fully told only when we know it and love it with all our hearts, and if we are willing to live it as a community.



A UNIQUE BLESSING FOR THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST AT ADVENT:

MAY GOD BLESS YOU WITH DISCOMFORT ...

AT EASY ANSWERS, HALF-TRUTHS AND SUPERFICIAL RELATIONSHIPS, SO THAT YOU MAY LIVE DEEP WITHIN YOUR HEART.

MAY GOD BLESS YOU WITH ANGER ...

AT INJUSTICE, OPPRESSION AND EXPLOITATION OF PEOPLE, SO THAT YOU MAY WORK FOR JUSTICE, FREEDOM AND PEACE.

MAY GOD BLESS YOU WITH TEARS ...

TO SHED FOR THOSE WHO SUFFER FROM PAIN, REJECTION, STARVATION AND WAR, SO THAT YOU MAY REACH OUR YOUR HAND TO COMFORT THEM AND TO TURN THEIR PAIN INTO JOY.

AND MAY GOD BLESS YOU WITH ENOUGH FOOLISHNESS ...

TO BELIEVE THAT YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THIS WORLD, SO THAT YOU CAN DO WHAT OTHERS CLAIM CANNOT BE DONE. AMEN.

STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

The Kingdom of Heaven and Giving

Jesus preached much about the Kingdom of Heaven. He associated the Kingdom with a mustard seed that becomes the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree. In another parable, He said that the Kingdom is like a treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again and, in his joy, sold all he had and bought the field. For us, the Kingdom of Heaven is near. However, the representation of the Kingdom on earth, our church, is in crisis. Membership is down due to those brothers and sisters who passed on to our Father, are physically unable to join us, or have moved to other congregations. Consequently, giving (donation from the congregation) is down as Elder Tom Ochs has described. The church finances are running over budget. By our estimate, FPCE will run a \$25,000 to \$30,000 deficit by the end of this year (2018). Most likely, we will run a similar deficit in 2019 which is not sustainable. How can we solve this problem? Our Session has met and has been discussing this matter. The crisis is not insurmountable. There are solutions to this problem.

1. Invite a friend and increase membership.
2. Increase our own giving. If each of the 70 giving units of our church was to increase the giving by \$20 per week or \$3 per day, we can conquer this deficit.
3. The finance subcommittee of the session will look at the 2020 budget at midterm and will plan to make proposals for a balanced budget.
4. Communicate with other churches in the area and discuss the sharing of resources. (cont'd. p.6)

Stewardship Update (cont'd.)

Finally, let us remember the Parable of the Sower. Some seeds fell along the path and were taken by birds. Some fell on rocky places and others fell among thorns. The question is – can we become the seeds that fall on good soil and multiply 30, 60, or 100 fold?

Stewardship is a Spiritual Matter and a Matter of our Life Priorities. Stewardship is Worship.

Paul Otori, Chair of Stewardship

N.B. The General Fund (for Tithes and Offerings) is separate from the Renovation Fund.

A REMARKABLE THANKS-GIVING from a former member

In late November we received a thank you letter from a former active member of what is now called the First Presbyterian Church of Edgewood. Does anyone remember a Bill Birdsall or the Birdsall family? Bill Birdsall and his wife, Barbie, live in Leesburg, Florida. Bill an interim pastor serving the Graceway Church in Leesburg, Florida. Pastor Michael has the letter on his desk, but in part the letter reads:

This Thanksgiving I'm reviewing my life and I realize, again, your gift to me back in the '50's and '60's. I'm a child of Edgewood Presbyterian Church and thankful to God for you who provided a spiritual home and training ground where God's Spirit began the work of faith in me....I want you to know that the effective power back in those days is still active and passionate in my soul today. God is good! ... You have not run the race in vain, Edgewood Presbyterian Family. You were the vehicles God chose to speak to my heart and cause a thirst in me to live in Christ's spirit sharing the call to eternal Life he has for us. No, you were not perfect, but you were His and His instrument to me. I'm grateful forever! Bill Birdsall.

CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS

Poinsettia plants may be contributed by anyone to help decorate the sanctuary for the Advent season. Please fill out the order blank below and place it in the offering plate or mail it to the Church Office. **Deadline is December 9, 2018.**

I wish to contribute _____ Poinsettia(s) for the beautification of the Church Sanctuary for Christmas.

I would like choice of color: _____red _____white _____marble

Please attach a check or money to this order form. Make all checks payable to First Presbyterian Church of Edgewood. **The cost is \$7.50 per plant.**

The wording: _____In honor of: _____In loving memory of:

By: _____

_____I wish to take my plant after the Christmas Eve candlelight service.





DECEMBER



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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
2 9:30 Choir Reh. 9:45 C.E. 11:00 Worship 12:15 Fellowship Cong. Mtg.	3 7:00 Scouts (ScR)	4 10:00 Book Club 3:45 FROGS 7:00 AA (SR)	5 7:00 Advent Class (L)	6 3:45 FROGS	7 8:00 AA (SR)	8 8:30 AA (SR)
9 9:30 Choir Reh. 9:45 C.E. 11:00 Worship 12:15 Fellowship	10 7:00 Scouts (ScR)	11 10:00 Book Club 3:45 FROGS 7:00 Session Mtg. 7:00 AA (SR)	12 7:00 Advent Class (L)	13 3:45 FROGS	14 8:00 AA (SR)	15 8:30 AA (SR)
16 9:30 Choir Reh. 9:45 C.E. 11:00 Worship/ North Hills Choir 12:15 Fellowship C.E. Mtg.	17 7:00 Scouts (ScR)	18 10:00 Book Club 3:45 FROGS 7:00 AA (SR)	19 7:00 Advent Class (L)	20 3:45 FROGS	21 8:00 AA (SR)	22 8:30 AA (SR)
23 9:30 Choir Reh. 9:45 C.E. 11:00 Worship 12:15 Fellowship	24 7:00 Christmas Eve Candlelight Service	25 CHRISTMAS DAY	26 	27 NO FROGS	28 8:00 AA (SR)	29 8:30 AA (SR)
30 9:30 Choir Reh. 9:45 C.E. 11:00 Worship 12:15 Fellowship	31 					



First Presbyterian Church of
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The Community Church

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