

This week's news...



December 10, 2020

Dear Friend,

A Very 2020 Christmas!

Remember all the back to March? Less than nine months ago when life was normal? We were told, at least in Delaware, that we had to shut down for a couple of weeks, maybe as many as four, just to break the cycle of this new strain of virus that was spreading through the country. Four turned into eight and then the summer and then the fall and now the winter and it looks like through next June at the earliest. Four weeks turned into sixteen months — and that's the best-case scenario!



Yesterday, the Episcopal Bishop of Delaware, in response to the governor's stay-at-home order, issued this directive:

*To this end, in-person **public worship in the Episcopal Church in Delaware is suspended immediately and until further notice.** Weddings and funerals already planned should be postponed. Online worship remains strongly and energetically encouraged, and ministers may gather in churches, following all public health protocols, for the purpose of recording and/or broadcasting services. I ask that teams be kept to the absolute minimum necessary to offer the service.*

It's a dramatic and drastic step and one that will be replicated by many denominations in Delaware and surrounding states, including New Jersey. The Stated Clerk of the PCUSA has also issued a plea for churches to continue virtual worship services and not gather in person.

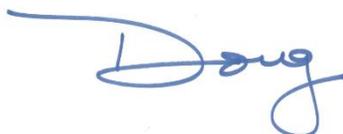
None of this leads to a very merry Christmas — at least not one of any memory. How can it be Christmas without the festooned, candlelit sanctuary with choirs and carols and children striving for their best behavior? What about *Silent Night*, *O Come All Ye Faithful*, *Once in Royal David's City*? Where's the *Joy to the World*?

Perhaps the great gift of a Christmas in the midst of a pandemic is that it does strip away the trappings and wrappings of the season and lays bare what the child born "this day in the city of David" really means? If Christmas is not about church and family gatherings, or exchanging gifts in person, or parties and eggnog — then what is it really about?

Here's an idea: Since the Christmas traditions derived from Luke and Matthew's gospels seem to be temporarily set aside (and Mark totally ignores the birth of Jesus), open up the first eighteen verses of John, known as "The Prologue," and contemplate what the author is trying to tell the reader about who Jesus is and why we should care. (*Here's a hint: Most scholars consider verses 12 and 13 as the pinnacle of John's convictions.*)

Friends, we may not be able to gather together this Christmas, but never forget, together, we are the children of God — and nothing, no nothing, can ever separate us from God's love in Jesus Christ!

Be well, stay safe, and God bless,



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 13

10 a.m. Online Worship

~11 a.m. Zoom Congregational Meeting

~11:15 a.m. Consecration of Pledges - Church drive-through

5 p.m. Advent Candlelight Service

Details below

CONSECRATION SUNDAY DECEMBER 13!

Pledges will be consecrated during the drive-through offering after the Congregational Meeting. Look for balloons and a sweet thank-you. Once again, we run the Stewardship Committee's message below, with updated pledge numbers. Please submit pledges via this [Google form](#) or by printing out and mailing or dropping off this [PDF form](#). Pledge forms gladly accepted during the drive-through! (There will be some blank forms available.)



Dear Family of Faith:

It goes without saying that 2020 has greatly impacted all aspects of our lives including how we engage with and continue the work of the church. The resilience and perseverance that have been exhibited in continuing to fulfill the church's mission have been extraordinary. For this reason, Run with Perseverance is the theme of the stewardship campaign. Thanks to all the members and staff who have provided their unique messages related to our church family during the campaign. It was not only great to see your faces but also hear the stories and their relevance to the collective financial support of the congregation.

As we move to the pledging phase of this year's stewardship campaign, we feel it is appropriate to clearly articulate the overall goals.

The Goal: In articulating the goal, it is important for the congregation to understand what may be a little-known fact. For each year from 2015 through 2020, the number of pledging units and total dollars pledged has declined as shown in the table below.

	<i>Units Pledging</i>	<i>Amount Pledged</i>
2015	256	\$698,844
2016	231	663,513
2017	210	606,051
2018	188	564,217
2019	165	488,058
2020 so far	66	229,713 updated 12/9

The goal for this campaign is to build back and achieve 2015 levels of giving in terms of number of pledges and total dollars. While the goal may not be achieved this year, we need this year to be the year we as a congregation reverse the trend of decline and work toward achieving the 2015 levels.

The Challenge: Here's what you can do to help. Below is a three-prong challenge for you to consider for increasing your pledge and contributing to achieving the goal. We are asking you to consider an increase in your pledge applying the formula below (1, 2 or 3) that would result in the greatest increase.

- 1. Increase your pledge to the church average of \$3,150 for the coming year;*
- 2. Increase your pledge by 1% of your gross income; or*
- 3. Increase your pledge by \$500 for the year.*

We certainly know these times are incredibly difficult and you simply may not be able to meet this challenge at any level. But if you are able, we would greatly appreciate it if you would prayerfully consider increasing your financial support, if not at the greatest level outlined above, at a level with which you have comfort.

To those members who consistently support the church financially but choose not to pledge, please know that your contribution is vital to life of the church and we would ask those members to consider the challenge above whether or not it includes a formal pledge.

We will be providing the congregation with weekly updates on the number of pledges and total amount versus the stated goals.

Your time and attention to all of the information provided through the email newsletters, bulletins and services are very much appreciated and we certainly welcome any feedback on any aspect of the campaign. Any questions or feedback can be sent via email to Gene Spinelli genespin@comcast.net.

God Bless You All,

The Stewardship Committee

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING DECEMBER 13

Immediately following worship on December 13 (so around 11 a.m.), there will be a meeting of the Congregation on Zoom for the purpose of electing officers (Elders and Deacons) for 2021 and electing the nominating committee. Join in for this brief meeting before the Consecration drive through (see previous announcement). [Zoom link](#).

CONVERSATIONS ON RACE – Sunday morning discussions continue from 9-9:45 a.m. on Zoom at [this link](#). On December 13, the discussion will focus on a video called [A Conversation with the Police - Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man](#). Each week's resources are linked in the weekly email newsletter and on the [Adult Ed](#) page of the website. Questions? Email Becky Bryan, rebeccabryan@me.com.

2020 Advent Candlelight Service December 13 @ 5 p.m.

First Presbyterian's traditional service of Lessons and Carols has moved online this year. Many thanks to Betsy Westermaier and Mark Cole for honoring this decades-long practice in a new form. The Candlelight Service will be live streamed using the usual live streaming connection on haddonfieldpres.org/watchlive and on Facebook.



ADVENT FESTIVAL UPDATE: Please continue to send in pictures of your Advent Creations! We are loving seeing the finished products and can't wait to decorate our Community Tree. Please bring in your family ornaments so we can decorate the tree! Ring the bell on the outer door to deliver them to the church office.

ADVENT - GIVING BACK

Missing the **Caring Hearts stockings** this year? We have an even easier way for you to give to this wonderful organization. This year we are hoping you will contribute financially through Realm. Caring Hearts will take your donations and purchase gift cards to fulfill Wish Lists for the 51 families that they are working to give a better Christmas to this year. Donating is simple through Onrealm.org! Simply select "Caring Hearts Gift Cards" in the drop down "Fund" menu. Realm not your thing? You can send a check to the church office with "Caring Hearts Gift Cards" written in the memo line. In the past FPCH has graciously filled 50 (!) Caring Hearts stockings during Advent and we are hoping to bring that same generosity this year. Please know that your donations are truly making another family's Christmas brighter, this year more than ever.

SERIES FOR AN UNPRECEDENTED ADVENT

How do we prepare for the Light to enter the world in 2020? Join these Zoom Workshops for an Unprecedented Advent from 6:30-7:30 p.m. [Click here](#) for details. [Zoom link here](#).

Wednesday, December 16, *The Power of Gratitude.*

Wednesday, December 23! *Prayers for Hope, Peace, Joy and Love*

MORE CHRISTMAS DETAILS

THE MISSION COMMITTEE IS COLLECTING COATS, HATS, MITTENS, AND SOCKS for the Camden Community Center. Bring them to the drive through or call ahead to the church office to arrange a drop off. *Please, no other clothing donations at this time.*

CHRISTMAS EVE LIVE STREAM – On December 24, you can watch a virtual service that will include the participation of choirs. Go to [Watch Live](#). Once it is live streamed at 4 p.m., the service will be available in the archive to view at any time.



A NOTE ON CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS – Since we are unable to attend church services this Christmas Season, our beloved display of Poinsettias will not take place. A nominal number of plants will adorn the Chancel and be seen in our “Virtual Services.” These poinsettias will lovingly represent our traditional "In Memory Of" and "In Honor Of" tributes to those who are held dearly by members of our congregation.

A NOTE ON CHURCH ACCESS

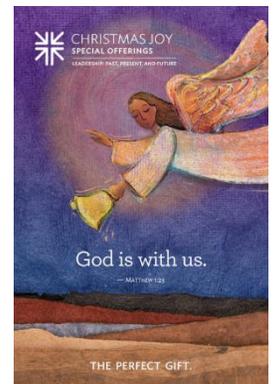
The building and offices remain closed for general use, including “just dropping something off.” Church staff—especially Travis Bogetti, Mark Hall, and Kris Bean—have worked hard to make space ready for the Preschool and 12-step support groups to use in a limited way. The COVID task force has set up a rigorous screening protocol for anyone entering the building. If you need to drop something off, please call the office to make arrangements first. Use the office side door only and ring the bell for assistance. The playground-side door is for Preschool use only. Thank you for your help in keeping our staff and the children safe.

Tuesday Morning Bible Study with Doug

Tuesdays at 8:00 a.m. on Zoom, Doug hosts an informal conversation about the scripture that will be the text for the following Sunday’s sermon. The text for **Tuesday, December 15** is Luke 1:26-38. Here’s the [Zoom link](#).

CHRISTMAS JOY OFFERING

CHRISTMAS JOY OFFERING – This offering goes to the PC(USA) to support the people who have dedicated their lives to the service of the church. God has blessed the church with incredible leadership in every time and place, but those leaders often need to be supported by their communities. This offering provides for leadership development for communities of color, and support for current and retired Presbyterian church workers in times of need. The Christmas Joy Offering will be collected throughout the month of December, online, mailed, or during the drive through.



YOUTH GROUP NEWS!

THIS WEEK IN YOUTH GROUP: We went on a Christmas-Themed Scavenger hunt in downtown Haddonfield this week. Teams of 2 and 3 took to Kings Highway to take pictures of Christmas-themed items. Congrats to our winning team, Ansley and Finn! Youth Groupers also took home gingerbread house kits to create for our Youth Group Gingerbread House competition. Youth Groupers will send in pics of their creations and an independent panel of judges will vote for the winner. There will be prizes! Any



Youth Grouper who would like to enter our contest, please contact Gab Heimerling to get a kit to you. Be creative - anything goes!

We are taking a week off this week for the Candlelight Service, but look for info for our next (Virtual!) gathering on 12/20/20.



SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

THIS WEEK IN SUNDAY SCHOOL: We lit the peace candle for the second Sunday in Advent this week. In our lessons we learned about John the Baptist, who was Jesus's cousin. He baptized a lot of people including Jesus and also tried to teach people about repentance. We also learned some fun facts about Advent (did you know that people used to fast during Advent?). We also had a really cool science-based Children's Message from the Preschool's Mr. John, the STEAM teacher.

ADVENT ANTHEM FROM THE HALL FAMILY

[click on photo](#)



Thank you, Allie, Matty, and Mikey, for helping us prepare!

Allie, Matty, and Mikey Hall are the children of Kim and Ryan Hall and grandchildren of Joyce and Bill Stout.

AN ADVENT GIFT FROM MARK

"Coventry Carol/What Child Is This," arr. Jay Rouse

[Listen here](#)

The Coventry Carol is an English Christmas carol dating from the 16th century. The carol was traditionally performed in Coventry England as part of a mystery play called The Pageant of the Shearmen and Tailors. Greensleeves is a traditional English folk song. The carol dates back to the 16th and 17th centuries.

*O sisters too,
how may we do
for to preserve this day
this poor youngling,
from whom we do sing
by by, lully lullaby?
Lully, lulla,
thou little tiny child,
by by, lully lullay.*

*What Child is this, who, laid to rest,
On Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet,
While shepherds watch are keeping?*

Pastor Nikki's Facebook Devotional

Part of Nikki's busy schedule includes connecting with folks near and far who have been finding First Presbyterian online and on social media. Rebecca Mannion does a great job sending all that information out into the world. Most weeks Nikki records a short devotional to share on Facebook. If you aren't on Facebook or missed it this week, here's what Nikki had to say on Wednesday. (Click on photo)



ST. WILFRID'S OPEN DOOR CLINIC

Report from the Open Door Clinic at St Wilfrid's December 5, 2020

This week marks the 38th straight week that the Open Door Clinic at St Wilfrid's has distributed food during the pandemic: 106 bags this week, 3,349 total. Over 83,000 pounds of food and dry goods, distributed by the all-volunteer, everything-donated, nobody-gets-paid Open Door Clinic!

Current needs are diapers, wipes, new socks for all ages, peanut butter, dried beans, winter jackets - kids and adults, sweatshirts all sizes, and blankets. A couple of ladies are knitting hats and mittens for all sizes—if anyone has leftover yarn or would like to donate yarn, it will be used!!! Help is needed weekly to pick up food at the food bank. For more information, contact Rose Guthrie at intrepidrose@hotmail.com. Any other questions, please call Jill Mascena at 856-428-7342. Or check the website www.opendoorcliniccamden.org

THE CHURCH TRIUMPHANT

We celebrate the lives and resurrections of three members of our church family. We will miss these friends and pray for all the families.

Eugene Holben, November 25, 2020
Blythe "Bunnie" Hurd, December 5, 2020
Charles Tourtellotte, December 6, 2020

WEEKLY CALENDAR

Dec. 13 - 9 a.m. Conversation on Race
Dec. 13 - 10 a.m. Worship - Third Sunday of Advent
Dec. 13 - 11 a.m. Congregational Meeting
Dec. 13 - 11:15 Consecration Drive Through
Dec. 13 - 5 p.m. Advent Candlelight Service
Dec. 15 - 8 a.m. Doug's Bible Study
Dec. 16 - No Children's Choirs
Dec. 16 - 6:30 p.m. Advent Series - The Power of Gratitude
Dec. 17 - 6:30 p.m. Moore Bells, No Chancel Choir
Dec. 20 - 9 a.m. Conversation on Race
Dec. 20 - 10 a.m. Worship - Fourth Sunday of Advent

