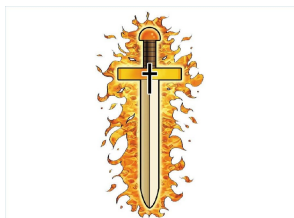


# Community Presbyterian Church

1100 College Avenue

## December 2022

### Pastor's Corner



This is a true story...

Yesterday I had a full day planned of getting through an extensive list of chores. At a little after 9 AM, we got a call that Shiloh (our granddaughter) wasn't feeling well. Claire (our younger daughter) went to pick her up, and as soon as they walked out the school door, Shiloh threw up. Claire had to go to class, so it fell to me to take care of Shiloh, who also had a fever. So much for getting chores done.

Later in the day, Shelly called to tell me that her mom, Marianne, was having a hard day. She was facing a move from the home that she had shared with Shelly's father, who died last year, to an assisted living apartment, and it was going to happen very fast... within a week. Shelly and her sister are facing a monumental challenge in making things happen that fast, and Marianne is understandably struggling to keep up with it all. Shortly after that call, I went to the Cancer Care Northwest clinic for a PET scan...the first step in determining the state of my cancer.

Then, today, after running errands to prepare for the Thanksgiving holiday, I got a frantic call from our older daughter, Shiloh's mom, telling me she had seriously cut her finger and didn't know what to do. As she described it to me, she started feeling dizzy, and fainted. I wasn't overly concerned—Courtney has a history of getting squeamish when she sees blood—but I knew Shiloh was there and I didn't want her to get scared. So I put her on the phone with Claire, grabbed my first aid kit, and headed over to their apartment. I bandaged up Courtney's finger, and comforted Shiloh, who still had a fever and was

worried about her Mama. Their dogs hadn't been outside all day, so I took them for a walk, and then tucked them in for the night.

Feeling a bit wrung out, I pulled out of the parking lot just as I heard a voice on the radio say, "It's only as I've gotten older that I've really started to understand the importance of gratitude..."

...  
...

Apparently, God speaks through the radio. Every one of us has had days like that. As much as we'd like to believe otherwise, faith does not inoculate us from feeling overwhelmed from time to time. But gratitude...making a conscious decision to be thankful, as hard as it may be at times...that is the response of faith.

Scientific studies are demonstrating that an attitude of gratitude adds to life expectancy and quality of life, which perhaps can encourage those of us who tend toward skepticism.

Life is unpredictable and hard, at times. And God is good, all the time.

Gratitude orients us toward the God who sustains us, even when life challenges us. Of all the things I am thankful for this year, you are at the top of my list.

Life goes on. And God is good. All the time.

Thanks be to God.

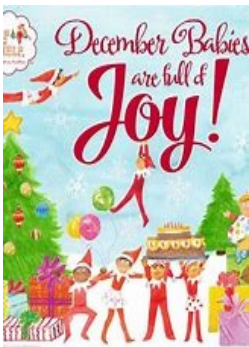
— Pastor John

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**41<sup>st</sup> ANNUAL CHRISTMAS BAZAAR**

**DECEMBER 2<sup>ND</sup>  
10 a.m. to 3 p.m.**

**RAFFLE DRAWING 3 p.m.**



Kay Cowin	12/01
Lexie Barbour	12/04
Koreena Stowell	12/05
Linda Weinman	12/08
Caden Fitzgerald	12/12
Tim Schueller	12/13
Neil Smith	12/14
Jim Thornes	12/15
TeiAnna Osborn	12/20
Emma DeBoer	12/28

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“Advent” means “coming” or “arrival.” During the season of Advent, we celebrate Christ’s coming into the world and watch with expectant hope for his coming again. In its historical origins, the season of Advent was patterned after the season of Lent, a six-week period of penitence and preparation for Easter. Similarly, the four weeks of Advent present an opportunity for communal discernment and personal examination, as the church prepares to celebrate the Nativity of the Lord and looks with hope for Christ’s return.



Advent

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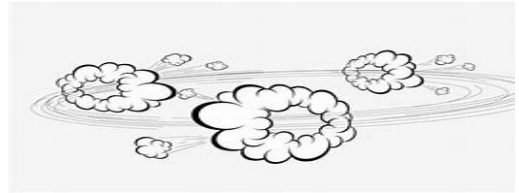
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FLECHER

“The Pastor keeps referring to ‘this morning’s text’ ... but which one?”

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## Dust If You Must By Rose Milligan



Dust if you must, but wouldn’t it be better  
To paint a picture, or write a letter,  
Bake a cake, or plant a seed;  
Ponder the difference between want and need?

Dust if you must, but there’s not much time,  
With rivers to swim, and mountains to climb;  
Music to hear, and books to read;  
Friends to cherish, and life to lead.

Dust if you must, but the world’s out there  
With the sun in your eyes, and the wind in your hair;  
A flutter of snow, a shower of rain,  
This day will not come around again.

Dust if you must, but bear in mind,  
Old age will come and it’s not kind,  
And when you go (and go you must)  
You, yourself will make more dust.

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CANDLELIGHT SERVICE  
\*\*\* Christmas Eve \*\*\*

5:00 - 5:30 p.m.

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“Asked in an exam to give an account of the creation of man, a small girl wrote: “First God created Adam. He looked at him for a while and said, “I think if I tried again I could do better.’ ”

From a book about Louise Shattuck and contributed by Marjorie Martin



**OUR COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS DINNER** will be held Sunday, **December 25<sup>th</sup>** from **1 - 3:30 p.m.**

Please consider donating a side dish, rolls or a pie or two. We will be serving the inmates and staff at the jail this year as well.

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## **Are we expecting too much from our Christmas Eve worship services?**

From Presbyterians Today, December 24, 2018

## **Is worship just a bothersome step before getting to the gift-giving?**

During Advent, I often meditate on the holy family. There's Joseph, the adoptive father whose acceptance of Mary and Jesus is later mirrored in the adoption of the Gentiles into God's original chosen family. I give thanks for Joseph's love, grace and obedience when it came to putting together an unconventional family.

And there's Mary, the God-bearer, the woman who willingly submitted her body to participate in the Word becoming flesh. I'm grateful for her example of strength, as surely she had to endure a few sideways stares and judgmental comments about her unusual conception.

What high expectations these parents must have had for the birth of the God-given child they had been promised. They both knew that they were participating in something so much bigger than themselves. They had been chosen to bring Emmanuel — God with us — into the world.

I wonder what went on in their minds once they got over the shock and the angelic birth announcement. Did Mary daydream about the day her child would be born? Did she assume that such an important child would merit an important birth? Did Joseph imagine claps on the back and respect for his faithfulness? Did they ever anticipate that the Messiah child they'd been promised would be laid in a manger? As Mary panted and moaned through her labor, did she look around at the dirt and stones in disappointment and wonder if it was really supposed to be that way? Did Joseph question if that was really the way the Son of God was supposed to come into the world? I suspect that Mary and Joseph must have expected more from that night.

In many ways, I feel like Mary may have felt while she waited for that first Christmas. I ponder and pray as I plan the Christmas Eve service. I imagine the huge celebration and thanksgiving that God's incarnation deserves. In my expectant imagination, the sanctuary is full, the music is perfectly on pitch, there are no typos in the bulletin, the sermon is meaningful and there are smiles of joy and friendly claps on the back as we celebrate the birth of our savior.

And yet when Christmas Eve arrives, the worship service I've anticipated never meets my expectations. I sit down on the chancel and notice the empty seats in the pews. I see the bored faces of family members who are there only because worship precedes gift giving. I wince at the typos and I wonder, "Is this the way it's supposed to be?"

Is this the way that we are to celebrate the amazing news of God's great and forgiving love for the world? I feel guilty that in our small Pennsylvania town, the Christmas celebration isn't bigger and grander.

Then, as I settle in to hear volunteers read the familiar story, I'm reminded that yes, this is the way it is supposed to be. I hear about Mary and Joseph going to a small town and not a big city. I'm reminded that they were turned away from a place that could have offered them shelter and hospitality. As I let go of the imagined worship service and settle in to the one that is happening in front of me, I remember that this is exactly how God shows up in the world. God



comes to the churches with empty pews and typos in the bulletin. God comes to the churches that can't afford to hire musicians or pay for the repairs to their organs. God even comes to the minister who expects too much.

On that night so long ago, God did not come to meet our expectations, but to change our expectations. God came to show us what love, grace and power look like in the flesh. We gather to celebrate the dirt and the stones and the Word made flesh for our salvation.

Sue Washburn is the pastor of Reunion Presbyterian Church in Mount Pleasant, Pennsylvania, and a freelance writer.



Creator Credit: Man Martin at Man Overboard

### Blue Christmas

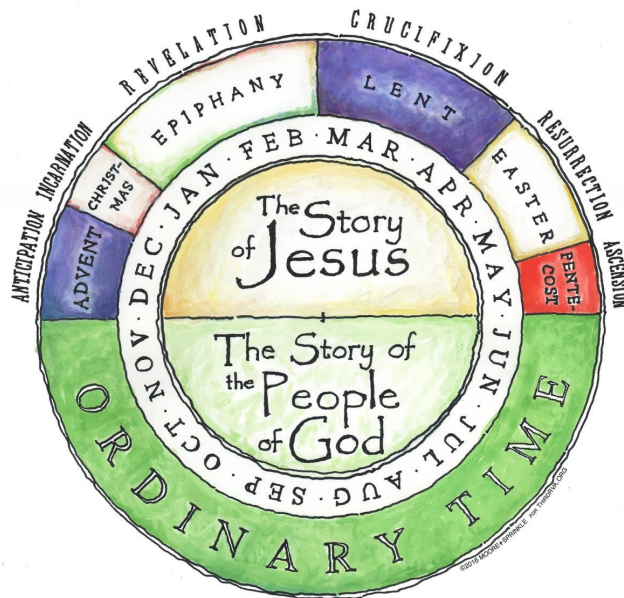
Blue Christmas (also called the Longest Night) in the Western Christian tradition, is a day in the Advent season marking the longest night of the year. On this day, some churches in Western Christian denominations hold a church service that honours people that have lost loved ones and are experiencing grief. These include parishes of Catholicism, Lutheranism, Methodism, Moravianism, and Reformed Christianity. The Holy Eucharist is traditionally a part of the service of worship on this day. This worship service is traditionally held on or around the longest night of the year, which falls on or about December 21, the Winter Solstice. There is an interesting convergence for this day as it is also the traditional feast day for Saint Thomas the Apostle. This linkage invites making some connections between Saint



Thomas's struggle to believe in Jesus' resurrection, the long nights just before Christmas, and the struggle with darkness and grief faced by those living with loss.

The Worship often includes opportunities for expression of grief, pain and heartbreak as well as an opportunity to focus on the promise of hope and loving a man of worthy. Candles, arranged as an Advent wreath, are lit at numerous occasions during the service; empty chairs are reserved as a way of commemorating those who have been lost during the previous year. The images of the winter solstice which include the longest night losing to the increasing longer day after midnight is a significant part of the imagery used in the elements of this particular worship event. Hunter Thompson shows that there are growing resources and popularity around this tradition due to the relevance for many who struggle to find joy and hope during festive seasons.

### THE LITURGICAL YEAR



A test of friendship: if you find you can't be with someone unless you're doing something together – skiing, going to a play, in other words, a third thing to which you both direct your attention – then that person may not be as good a friend as you think.

The real test of friendship is: can you literally do nothing with the other person? Can you enjoy together those moments of life that are utterly simple? They are the moments that people look back on at the end of life and number as their most sacred experiences.

– Eugene Kennedy



# CHRISTMAS WORD SEARCH



E N A C Y D N A C H T A E R W S S  
 T H I S S N O I T A R O C E D H Y  
 E G G N O G M E H E L H T E B E O  
 G I F T S F R U I T C A K E T P T  
 R E G N A M H F R I E N D S F H S  
 S L T R E E I E C S C S R R S E E  
 T S H N E G A S A A E A A A T R J  
 H A R A S E N N T L N N R A T D E  
 G I E G S E T I C L K D K O G S S  
 I T E G L A K I K I E S L O L T U  
 L T W O B E C A N C O T L E N S S  
 F E I B E I I C L G O D O E S N J  
 A S S O L L E R A F C T M E M O O  
 M N E T L N B N B N W A S Y A W S  
 I I M T S O G A B A N O R E R M E  
 L O E E J E O L T R G R N D Y A P  
 Y P N Y L L O H O S H L Y S S N H

ANGEL  
 BELLS  
 BETHLEHEM  
 CANDLES  
 CANDY CANE  
 CAROLS  
 DECORATIONS  
 EGGNOG  
 FAMILY  
 FRANKINCENSE  
 FRIENDS

FRUITCAKE  
 GABRIEL  
 GIFTS  
 GOLD  
 GREETING CARDS  
 HOLLY  
 ICICLES  
 JESUS  
 JOSEPH  
 LIGHTS


MANGER  
 MARY  
 MISTLETOE  
 MYRRH  
 ORNAMENTS  
 POINSETTIA  
 SANTA  
 SHEPHERDS  
 SKATES  
 SLEIGH

SNOWFLAKES  
 SNOWMAN  
 STABLE  
 STAR  
 STOCKING  
 THREE WISE MEN  
 TOBOGGAN  
 TOYS  
 TREE  
 WREATH

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# DECEMBER

Reverse Advent Calendar - each day add an item to the box. On Christmas Eve, donate items to a food bank.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 Box of cereal	2 Peanut Butter	3 Stuffing Mix
4 Boxed Potatoes	5 Macaroni & Cheese	6 Canned Fruit	7 Canned Tomatoes	8 Canned Tuna	9 Dessert Mix	10 Jar of Applesauce
11 Canned Sweet Potatoes	12 Cranberry Sauce	13 Canned Beans	14 Box of Crackers	15 Package of Rice	16 Package of Oatmeal	17 Package of Pasta
18 Spaghetti Sauce	19 Chicken Noodle Soup	20 Can of Tomato Soup	21 Can of Corn	22 Can of Mixed Vegetables	23 Can of Carrots	24 Christmas Eve Can of Green Beans
25 Christmas Day	26	27	28	29	30	31