



# The Presbyter

December 2021

The First Presbyterian Church of Clarks Summit

## Christmas Worship Services

*Three different worship services on Christmas Eve, all in-person and live-streamed*

**Family Service at 4:00 p.m.** We invite all the young-at-heart to the sanctuary for a spirited and joyful celebration of Jesus' birth. This will be a simple service to get to the heart of Christmas. We will sing favorite carols, hear a creative message for all ages, and light candles for "Silent Night."

**Lessons and Carols at 8:00 p.m.** This will be the "Singing Service," based on the famed Christmas Eve service at King's College Chapel, University of Cambridge. Tune up your vocal cords and join us as we sing nine carols to celebrate the birth of our Lord.

**Christmas Eve Jazz Communion at 11:00 p.m.** The Presbybop Christmas Eve Band will ignite the late night air with passion and joy. This informal communion service always has a touch of the unpredictable! And we have welcomed the dazed shepherds who wander in from the local fields, claiming they heard angels.

All services will be **live streamed** on our church YouTube page and available for later viewing online. **We require face masks** for our worshipers and will take temperatures at the door.. Reservations are not necessary.

**Want to sing more Christmas carols?** Join us for our 10:00 a.m. worship on Sunday, December 26.



## A BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE

**Tuesday, December 21** is the longest night of the year. This year, we offer a Blue Christmas service at 7:00 p.m. This meditative service offers an opportunity to pray and worship God in the face of our losses and difficulties.

For those unable to attend, the service will be streamed on our YouTube channel.

## Join Us to Decorate!

On Friday, December 3 at 12 noon, we will be decorating the church for Advent. Come join us for a light lunch of soup and bread, and a time of fellowship as we beautify the church for the season of Advent leading up to Christmas.



Please email Robin Pinches at [crpinches@gmail.com](mailto:crpinches@gmail.com) if you plan to attend (so we know how much soup to prepare). Hope to see you there!

## Table of Contents

- Page 2 - Session Report, Deacons, Financial
- Page 3 - From the Pastor
- Page 4 - Mission and Justice
- Page 5 - Mission and Justice
- Page 6 - Advent, The Arts, Angel Tree, Confirmation Class
- Page 7 - The Way, Music Notes, Flowers
- Page 8 - Joys, Sorrows, Lectionary
- Page 9 - Calendar
- Page 10 - Meeting Safely

## Notes from the Session Meeting November 8, 2021

1. Session is pleased to announce that Don Gross, a church member, has been hired for the Sexton Position, to start at his earliest convenience. Session would like to thank John Conklin for his years of service with us and wish him good health and good wishes in his future.
2. Presently we are looking for an Audio/Visual Technician which is a part-time position, (approximately 2 to 5 hours) a week. If anyone knows someone who is interested in this position please contact People in Ministry Co-chairs, Chris Norton or Craig Smith or the church office.
3. There will be a special Session Meeting (Zoom) on Tuesday, December 14, 2021 at 7 p.m. to finalize the 2022 budget.
4. **Session** wishes church members and friends a Blessed Holiday Season, one with God's love that lights your heart with **Hope**, renews your soul with **Wonder**, and Blesses every minute of your Christmas with **PEACE**.

Beverly Bright, Clerk of Session

## Board of Deacons

Care Team Ministry Coordinators are:

Deacon Meals	Erika Adams 570-878-2410
Time of Loss	Anne Rich 570-587-2802
Emergency Home Repairs and Maintenance	Joe Waters 570-351-5620
Deacon Driver	TBD

Please let the Board of Deacons Care Team Coordinators or the church office know if anyone is in need of care.

We're here to care for FPC members and friends and we count on all of you to let us know when help is needed. This is our ministry and our Christian privilege to care for you.

The Presbyterian deadline for  
the January 2022 issue is  
December 17

The Presbyter is a monthly newsletter of the First Presbyterian Church, 300 School Street, Clarks Summit, PA 18411.

All visitors are welcome to worship with us. **Worship services are held on Sunday mornings at 10:00 a.m.** Child care is available. Communion is observed the first Sunday of every month.

If you do not attend a church in this area, we invite you to any and all of the events, programs, and worship services described in this newsletter. Please call the church office to arrange child care. Our sanctuary and Fellowship Hall are both handicapped accessible.

Church Office	(570) 586-6306
Fax	(570) 587-3784
Web Page	www.fpccs.org
Pastor	William G. Carter
Administrative Assistant	Nancy Owens
Coordinator of Children & Youth	Jana Schillinger
Treasurer	Wayne Griffiths
Editor	Amanda Roberts
Clerk of Session	Beverly Bright
Director of Music	Frank Jones
Director of Bells	Richard Cochrane
Director of Chapel Choir	Kay Ten Eyck
Organist	Kay Ten Eyck
Sexton	John Conklin

FROM YOUR FINANCE COMMITTEE  
FOR THE MONTH ENDING  
October 31, 2021

### REVENUE

Budget	\$313,500
Actual Received	<u>298,546</u>
Difference	(\$ 14,954 )

### EXPENSES

Budget	\$322,051
Actual Expenses	<u>303,394</u>
Difference	\$ 18,657

Result of operations \$ 3,703

### PLEDGE

Budget	\$270,833
Actually received	<u>257,228</u>
	(\$ 13,605)

Per Capita received thus far in 2021 is \$3,639. 2021 Per Capita assessment is \$35. 2022 Per Capita assessment will remain \$35 per member.

## From the Pastor

December 2021

“How long, O Lord?” It’s a biblical phrase that appears only a handful of times in the Psalms and prophets, yet it is the quintessential Advent prayer.



Advent teaches us patience, a lesson we resist but cannot escape. Life is not something we can control. Sometimes we work hard for a blessing and are fortunate to receive it. More often we work for something that mostly eludes our grasp. Maybe that’s why a tinge of sadness even creeps into many Christmas mornings: after opening all the packages, we discover The Big Thing we hoped for cannot be wrapped and put under a tree.

We live under the illusion that material goods will fulfill us. Or that the next consumable relationship will satisfy. Or the next job opportunity will lift us higher. Or that if we push on a little harder, we will complete the race. If only that were true. Honest people pray, “How long, O Lord?”

We don’t like to wait for much. This year, the Christmas decorations in the neighborhood have gone up sooner than I remember. One big box store redefined Black Friday as the Friday before Thanksgiving. Even an Episcopalian cleric of notable reputation has written that “Advent really begins in early November, right after All Saints Day.”

What’s the rush?

While those around us light up their houses and shop for cheaper gifts, the church reignites a four-week sequence of singing minor-key hymns, praying the laments, and lighting candles. Why? Because Advent invites us to inhabit the reality of waiting. Patient or impatient, we cannot rush what God has not yet provided.

My friend Terry, also on the brink of Old Geezer status, groans when reminded that mere mortals cannot manipulate their futures. He takes a deep breath, then exhales a favorite line from theologian Karl Rahner:

In the torment of the insufficiency of everything attainable  
we come to understand that here, in this life, all symphonies remain unfinished.

Indeed. And there is so much that is unfinished. How long will the pandemic persist? How long will injustice continue? How long will the rich exploit the poor? How long will our leaders lie? How long?

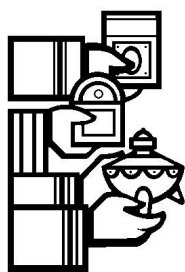
By naming our yearnings, we shake off the illusions. And our prayer begins to change. “How long, O Lord?” becomes “Come, Lord Jesus.”

He will be here soon. Just wait.

With you in the journey,

Rev. Bill Carter

Read our Advent devotional blog at <https://adventfpccs.blogspot.com>



## Give a Gift to a Stranger

From the Mission and Justice Committee

*I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me. Matthew 25:35*

For many years, the Mission and Justice Committee has organized a late-November alternative gift market in Fellowship Hall featuring free-trade gifts from SERRV International. SERRV has discontinued their consignment sales program, so for this Advent you will find displays in the Narthex highlighting a variety of ways you can include “a gift to a stranger” in your holiday giving. There you will find the traditional pajama tree, but also information, catalogs, and order forms for our own Presbyterian Giving Catalog and Heifer International, plus lists of specific items you can purchase for the Pygmy Ministry in Uganda or for Afghan and Congolese refugee families that have recently been resettled here in Lackawanna County. You will also be able to order candy in support of local work for the Appalachian Service Project. For all of these “gifts to strangers,” Christmas-themed cards will be available should you wish to make such a gift in honor or memory of family and friends and share that good news with them.

Building on the Presbyterian Giving Catalog’s theme of “Small Gifts—Big Impact,” we also urge that for each such gift you make this season to a stranger (be it through one of the above programs or some other organization of your own choosing), that you select a colorful paper strip from the basket in the narthex and place it into the slotted gift box to mark your giving. We will be fashioning those small symbols of your generosity into bigger, old-time paper garland chains and using them to further decorate the Narthex.

## Serving Refugee Families

From the Mission and Justice Committee



Our committee has become involved with the United Neighborhood Centers (UNC) in serving several of our area's refugee families. UNC took over the coordination of the refugee resettlement services in this area in 2019, and recently two Afghanistan couples and one 8-member Congolese family have resettled here in Scranton. Two more Afghanistan families are expected soon. Thus far, we have provided the families with both monetary and apparel support. We are still collecting items on their wish lists (i.e. rugs, clothes, etc.) and plan to collect Christmas gifts for them. Should you be interested in helping out, please look for us on Sunday November 28th at our "Give a Gift to a Stranger" event in the Narthex, that will continue to run several Sundays after that. Peace be with you and with our refugee friends.

World Refugee Day Prayer 2020 By Rev. Dr. Laurie Kraus, Director, PDA: "God of mercy, we can no longer pretend to be distant from the heartbreak afflicting your children who have fled their homes in fear of their lives, stopped at the borders of countries too overwhelmed to welcome, held in trains, awaiting a word of hope, huddled in camps and overcrowded shelters with nowhere to turn and no way to turn back. We can no longer pretend that the backpack in the desert, the small tennis shoe washed up on the beach, the small hands wrapped around the bars that cage them in, could not belong to one of our own. We know the truth: all of these children are our children; and their parents are our siblings. We owe them a room in the inn, a place of safety, a chance to live and thrive..."

## Our “Social Creed,” conclusion...

From the Mission and Justice Committee

Over the past two months, we have reminded (or introduced) you to the “Social Creed” of our Presbyterian Church (USA), an important document of applied Christian social ethics that can help us practice what we preach in our daily interactions with others and the physical world, our personal lifestyles, and even at the ballot box. Opening and closing paragraphs frame a Trinitarian framework that are essentially pledges of personal, communal, and global responsibility, and in affirming them, we are led by the Spirit who is both “above partisanship and beyond neutrality.”

If you are interested in learning more about the history of this statement of social faith, you can read online or download “Connecting to the Creed,” a booklet that provides Biblical, theological and historical background as well as current application ideas for each of the Social Creed affirmations. It also has questions for discussion and links to posters and other resources. Just do an internet search for “PC USA Social Creed” and click on the link for “Connecting to the Creed.”

The third section of the Creed calls us, “in hope sustained by the Holy Spirit,” to work for peace in the world and to practice good stewardship of God’s creation.

### A SOCIAL CREED FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY, part 3

*In hope sustained by the Holy Spirit, we pledge to be peacemakers in the world and stewards of God’s good creation, by working for:*

- Adoption of simpler lifestyles for those who have enough; grace over greed in economic life.
- Access for all to clean air and water and healthy food, through wise care of land and technology.
- Sustainable use of earth’s resources, promoting alternative energy sources and public transportation with binding covenants to reduce global warming and protect populations most affected.
- Equitable global trade and aid that protects local economies, cultures and livelihoods.
- Peacemaking through multilateral diplomacy rather than unilateral force, the abolition of torture, and a strengthening of the United Nations and the rule of international law.
- Nuclear disarmament and redirection of military spending to more peaceful and productive uses.
- Cooperation and dialogue for peace and environmental justice among the world’s religions.

The complete Social Creed concludes with the following statement:

*We—individual Christians and churches—commit ourselves to a culture of peace and freedom that embraces non-violence, nurtures character, treasures the environment, and builds community, rooted in a spirituality of inner growth with outward action. We make this commitment together—as members of Christ’s body, led by the one Spirit—trusting in the God who makes all things new.*

A glass case in the hallway outside the Sanctuary has also been devoted to this topic. Be sure to stop and look.

### Have you found our Advent devotional blog?

Read it online at <https://adventfpccs.blogspot.com> There will be postings each day for the season of Advent, prepared by members of our church family. And you can subscribe on that site to receive them as daily e-mails.

### Celebrating Advent: Prepare the Way of the Lord

The season of Advent is a time to reflect on our many blessings, remember God’s promises, practice patience (hopefully slowing down our busy-ness), and prepare our hearts to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

This year, there are two opportunities for you to experience Advent.

First, we welcome our families to pick up an **Advent Bag** filled with an Advent calendar, devotions, activity suggestions, supplies for a craft, and more. All ages and

everyone in the church is welcome and encouraged to participate, so bags will be available both for families with children and for those without. Advent bags will be available to **pick up at the church beginning the week before Advent (Nov. 21)** or contact Jana to make arrangements for safe drop off at your home.



Second, we encourage everyone to join us for an **Advent Event on Sunday, December 5**, following worship. Enjoy food and fellowship as we celebrate the season with learning and fun for all ages.



### SAVE THE DATE!

On Sunday, January 16 at 4 p.m., two talented artists will warm our winter air. Nathaniel Worrell, a student at Valley View High School, will offer a dazzling program of classical piano music. Nathaniel, who also sings in our adult choir, has displayed his piano virtuosity at the church occasionally when Kay Ten Eyck had a Sunday off. He has a bright future in music, and we look forward to hearing him in recital.

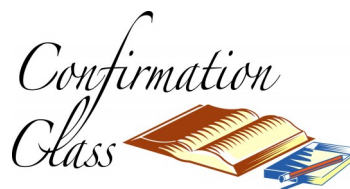
Mike Carbone will offer a set of chamber music for soprano saxophone, accompanied by pianist Bill Carter. Carbone joined the Binghamton University music faculty in 1997 and continues to serve as the Director of the Jazz Studies Program and the Director of the Harpur Jazz Ensemble. He is a regular member of the Presbybop Quartet, and appeared with them in October in our first Arts Series concert.

The concert is open to the public free of charge, but a free-will offering will be taken to help defray the costs of the event. For more information, call the church office at 570-586-6306. The Arts at First Presbyterian series is supported by county and state grants and private contributions.



### HOLIDAY ANGEL TREE

Please have all pajamas returned to the Narthex by December 13. The gift should be wrapped and have the gift tag from the tree attached on the outside that identifies which Head Start location and child.



Confirmation Class has begun for 6 of our youth. As they learn more about the church, our beliefs, and God’s plan for them, please pray that they continue to grow in faith and be sure to encourage them on their journey!

- |              |                 |
|--------------|-----------------|
| Liam Farrell | Diann Lyons     |
| Gavin Kareha | Sadie O’Brien   |
| Austin Lyons | Rebekah Naehner |

Christian Education



It's for life!

## THE W.A.Y.

The Wednesday Addults and Youth Christian Education

“I am the WAY, the TRUTH, and the LIFE”

**Children and Youth classes will not be offered during December.**

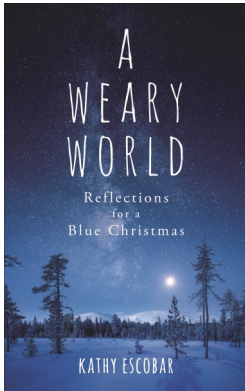
**Grace & Faith (4 years old - Grade 5)** We encourage our families with young children to pick up an Advent bag from the church. It is filled with resources, information, and ideas for a faith-filled Advent season at home. WAY classes will NOT be offered at this time.

**We Believe (Grades 6 and up):** Youth are encouraged to explore the Advent season through our Advent bags available to all families for pick up at the church. WAY classes will NOT be offered at this time.

**Adult WAY continues in December with in-person classes beginning at 6:00pm. (Note the earlier time.)**

**We hope to see you there!**

### Our Adult series:



## A Weary World: Reflections for a Blue Christmas

*Based on the book by Kathy Escobar*

6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. on Wednesdays in Advent (December 1, 8, 15, and 22)

Live in Room 206 AND Live on Zoom (link available on our website and weekly e-mail)

For so many of us during the holidays, the magnitude of our weary world weighs on our hearts and minds. We gather in person and online to explore four themes of the Advent walk of faith: honoring reality, practicing honesty, embracing paradox, and borrowing hope. Through film clips of the author, conversation, and spiritual practices, we will draw on Christian resources to strengthen us during these dark days.

A limited number of books are available in the church office for \$10. They also can be ordered from Amazon as a book or for Kindle.

**WAY classes will NOT be held on Wednesday, December 29 — Merry Christmas!**



## Music At First Presbyterian

**Adult Choir - Wednesdays - 7:15-8:15:** Students in 9th Grade to adults are welcome! We rehearse in the sanctuary, currently with masks and socially distant.

**Bell Choir - Wednesday rehearsals are as needed - 8:30-9:15 p.m.** Those interested are asked to contact Richard Cochrane, director, for more information.

## Flower Sign Up

Start the new year by honoring loved ones, celebrations, and family events with a special floral arrangement to mark the occasion.

A sign-up sheet is posted on the bulletin board in the narthex.



## Joys

## Sorrows

## Prayers



- 1-Maggie Woolever
- 2-Debbie Shane
- 6-Gavin Kareha
- 7-Dylan Farrell
- 8-Ginny O'Brien
- 9-Betty Keen
- 14-Lucas Kareha
- 15-Lori Kareha
- 18-Kevin Shane
- 19-Aaron Cole
- 20-Brian Schillinger
- 22-Jeanne Comly  
Anne Deremer
- 23-Denise Reinhart
- 24-Joanie Garnecki
- 25-Marion Reese  
Carole LaCoe
- 28-Shirley McLaughlin  
Lou Kareha
- 30-Liam Farrell



Congratulations and best wishes to

Kristian Scheuer and Yasir Ali,  
who were united in marriage by  
Rev. Barbara Muntzel on September 25, 2021;  
and  
Rachel Scappatura and Gary Aniska,  
who were united in marriage by  
Rev. William Carter on October 31, 2021.



The sympathy of the  
congregation is extended  
to the family of  
Doris Owens  
who entered the  
Church Triumphant  
November 15, 2021.

## Lectionary Readings

### December 5

Malachi 3:1-4, Luke 1:68-79  
Philippians 1:3-11; Luke 3:1-6

### December 12

Zephaniah 3:14-20, Isaiah 12:2-6  
Philippians 4:4-7, Luke 3:7-18

### December 19

Micah 5:2-5a, Luke 1:47-55,  
Psalm 80:1-7, Hebrews 10:5-10  
Luke 1:39-45 (46-55)

### December 26

1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26, Psalm 148,  
Colossians 3:12-17, Luke 2:41-52



December 23-Bill and Jessie Davis



## *MARK YOUR CALENDAR*

*Worship every Sunday, 10 a.m., Sanctuary and on-line*

### Board and Committee Meetings

**Session Meeting**—Tuesday, December 14, 7 p.m., **Zoom**

**Building and Grounds**—Thursday, December 2, 7 p.m., Room 209

**Christian Education**—Thursday, December 2, 7 p.m., Room 206

**Mission and Justice**—Tuesday, December 7, 7 p.m., Room 206

**Worship, Music, Arts**—Thursday, December 2, 7 p.m., **Zoom**

### Service/Study/Fellowship Gatherings

**Lunch and Sanctuary Decorating Friday** - December 3, Noon (see page 1)

**Advent Event, December 5, following worship** - Fellowship Hall (see page 6)

**Return Angel Tree gifts** by December 13, Narthex

**Blue Christmas** - Tuesday, December 21, 7 p.m., Sanctuary (see page 1)

**Christmas Eve** - Friday, December 24, 4 p.m., 8 p.m. and 11 p.m. (see page 1)

### The Way meets each Wednesday

Classes begin at 6 p.m. on December 1, 8, 15, 22 (see page 7 for details)

Adult Choir—7:15 p.m., Sanctuary; Bell Choir—8:30 p.m. as needed, Sanctuary

**Confirmation**—each Sunday, 11:15 a.m., Room 206

**Men's Breakfast and Bible Study**—December 1 and 15, 8:30 a.m., Room 206

**My Brother's Keeper Quilters**—December 14, 10 a.m., Fellowship Hall

**Prayer and Share**—each Wednesday, 10:30 a.m., Room 209

**Women's Circle Bible Study and FPC Book Group** are **not meeting** at this time.

### Support Groups

Many of our support groups are resuming in-person meetings. The schedule is below.

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meets each morning at 7 AM in Room 206.

AlAnon meets on Wednesdays at 8 p.m. (Zoom) and Thursdays at 7 p.m., Fellowship Hall

Overeaters Anonymous (OA) meets in room 210: Sundays at 3 p.m., Tuesdays at 7 p.m., Thursdays at 9:30 a.m., Saturdays at 9:45 a.m.

**Next Presbyterian Deadline** is **December 17, 2021** for anticipated mailing on **January 5, 2022**.

**Church Office will be closed** at noon on both December 24 and 31, and all day December 27 and January 3.



**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

300 School Street  
Clarks Summit, PA 18411-1536

Nonprofit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
Permit No. 30  
**P A I D**  
Clarks Summit PA

**DATED MATERIAL**

**Return Service Requested**



Our Session requires masks for all worship services, meetings, and group events in the church building. Temperature checks will continue at church gatherings, and social distancing will be encouraged. We believe in the effectiveness of the covid-19 vaccinations and urge everybody to get vaccinated against covid-19.

If all of us can choose restraint and pursue public health, we have a better chance for stopping the spread of the virus and its variants. In the words of St. Paul -

*"Do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" (Galatians 5:13-14)*