



The Presbyter

December 2023

The First Presbyterian Church of Clarks Summit

Advent and Christmas

Advent is here! The Music, Worship and Arts committee invites our church family to join in the fun of preparing the sanctuary for Christmas! **On Saturday, December 2, please come at 10:00 a.m.** to hang wreaths, decorate trees and windowsills, etc. We will have coffee, tea, and hot cocoa downstairs to get us all in the mood. All are welcome!

December 3 First Sunday of Advent

10 a.m. Worship, with an intergenerational meal and program following in Fellowship Hall.
Sermon: "Wake Up! The Beginning is Near"

December 10 Second Sunday of Advent

10 a.m. Worship. Sermon: "The Man with the Pointy Finger"

December 17 Third Sunday of Advent

10 a.m. Worship. Sermon: "Not Me, It's Him"

Monday, December 18

7:00 p.m. Blue Christmas service, featuring music from Taizé

Sunday, December 24 – Fourth Sunday of Advent / Christmas Eve

10:00 a.m. Christmas Pageant for the whole church family!

8:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Service of Lessons and Carols

11:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Jazz Communion

Sunday, December 31 – The Christmas story continues with more carols!

Holiday Angel Tree

It's time for our annual Pajama Drive for children in local Head Start programs! Look for more information on pages 6 and 7.



Give A Gift to a Stranger



For the third year, during Advent, Mission and Justice invites you to make a gift to a stranger. Look for us in the Narthex from Sunday, December 3, through Sunday December 17, for our tables with displays and information about the recipients of our gifts. For each gift, a paper star will be hung on the tree and elsewhere in the Narthex to create a visual of our giving.

You will have the opportunity to buy gifts for individual refugee family members (look for the paper angels and paper pine trees on the tree), support Appalachian Service Project by buying their chocolates, and, new this year, support the education of Haitian students. "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in." Matthew 25:35

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**The Presbyterian deadline for
the January 2024 issue is
December 15.**

Notes from the Session Meeting

November 14, 2023

1. Session is working on the 2024 budget and will finalize their work at a Zoom meeting on December 12. Jeff McLaughlin, Chair of Finance and David Naehar, chair of the Generosity Team, with their committees, have been working diligently on this budget. Many thanks to all who have made their commitment and hopefully we can announce the new budget soon.
2. Building & Grounds recommended Michael Lambert for the Sexton position. The Session is pleased that he has accepted the position. Many thanks to all who have helped the Building & Grounds committee the last few months. Much appreciation to everyone.
3. Evaluations of our staff have been completed. Session is very pleased at how strong the church is with their staff and volunteers that care in so many ways to follow Christ's example in serving our community and all people. Thank you to one and all for all you do for First Presbyterian Church of Clarks Summit.

Beverly Bright, Clerk of Session

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
Organist	Kay Ten Eyck
Sexton	Michael Lambert

FROM YOUR FINANCE COMMITTEE FOR THE MONTH ENDING OCTOBER 31, 2023

REVENUE

Budget	\$ 334,558
Actual Received	<u>322,508</u>
Difference	\$ (12,050)

EXPENSES

Budget	\$ 334,243
Actual Expenses	<u>335,938</u>
Difference	\$ (1,695)

Result of operations	\$ (13,430)
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PLEDGE

Budget	\$ 293,698
Actually received	<u>297,227</u>
	\$ 3,529

2023 Per Capita assessment is \$42 per member.

Board of Deacons

Care Team Ministry Coordinators are:

Moderator	Barbara Norton 570-878-8026
Deacon Meals	Erika Adams 570-878-2410
Ushers	John Conklin
Deacon Driver	Barbara Norton 570-878-8026

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.

From the Pastor

December 2023



Perhaps it is my advancing age, but this year I'm intrigued by Simeon. Remember him? He stands in the shadows on the edge of the Christmas story, appearing in the Gospel of Luke after the angels had returned into heaven. His story is often overlooked when we remember the birth of Jesus. We don't know much about him. Tradition tells us that he was getting up in years, a detail that is never actually stated in the text.

What we do know is that he was a person of faith, especially if faith is defined as "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1-2). The Holy Spirit has whispered to Simeon that God's people would be consoled by a Messiah, a legendary figure who would make all things right. This was an open promise to residents of an occupied country who carried centuries of unfulfilled guarantees. Foreign soldiers trampled their land. The old certainties were up for grabs. There was no objective evidence that life might ever improve. Yet Simeon trusted that holy whisper. He hoped for what he could not see and that was sufficient.

Somehow, Simeon heard a second whisper from the Spirit: he would see the Messiah before he died. Comforting? Yes, but troubling too. Like Moses in his final days, standing to overlook a Promised Land he would never enter, Simeon stood within that same Promised Land, and trusted he would see the beginning of God's salvation – but not the end of it.

Faith is wrapped in waiting, trusting, hoping. All of us would prefer to push ahead and see things conclude. Yet like Simeon and Moses, the saving work of the Lord will outlive us. We are graced when we see signs of it, when we hear the whispers, when we take part in it as we are able. Yet salvation – God's salvage operation – is a really big deal. Comprehensive. Enormous. All-inclusive. And the signs? Broken life restored. Desert wastes rejuvenated. Enemies reconciled. Unexpected joy.

Then God's Spirit whispered one more time to Simeon. "Now. Go into the temple right now." He saw the child wrapped in a blue blanket. He knew his whole life had prepared him for that moment. He perceived that, even though this weary old world is in a perpetual mess, God would keep working until all things turn out well. And somehow Simeon understood this infant Savior could not save all of us without going through a battle of his own.

"Mary, your son will expose people for what they are," said Simeon. "Some will oppose him, and this will pierce your soul." It was his oblique way of saying, "Welcome to the world that you made, little Jesus." It is a world where the crèche is never far from the cross. In both crèche and cross, God comes in vulnerability, revealing how far he will go to rescue his people. The Christ is born among those who overlook him. The Messiah gives himself to those who refuse him. In the mystery of grace, even his ultimate rejection on the cross begins the work of God's salvation.

Simeon's legacy is in his most remembered line: "Lord, you are dismissing me in peace, for I have seen your promised salvation." He has seen enough, just enough. So have we. We have seen enough of the Christ Child, heard enough of God's answered promises, and joined together in enough of the Spirit's ongoing mission, and we trust God will continue to restore and save until the day when the work is finished. This is our consolation.

In this hope, I look forward to sharing the days of Advent and Christmas with all of you!

See you in church,
Rev. Bill



We look forward to our 2024 Arts Series events. We recently added a visit by the Paragon Ragtime Orchestra on Friday, May 10, 2024 at 7 p.m. They will be touring a program called Meet Me At The Fair, featuring music from the Philadelphia, Chicago, Buffalo, and St. Louis

world's fairs of the early 1900s and video from these fairs. They are the world's only year-round, professional ensemble re-creating "America's Original Music" – the synco-pated sounds of early musical theater, silent cinema, and vintage dance. They've performed all over the place - at the Ravinia Festival, the Smithsonian Institution, Chautauqua, the Brucknerhaus (Austria), the New York 92nd Street Y, and the American Dance Festival. Check out their website at <https://paragonragtime.com>. Hope you can attend all our events!



Northeastern PA Chamber Music Society
Sunday, January 14, 2024 4:00 pm

Clarks Summit Festival of Ice
Winter weekend of art, music, and fun
January 27-28

Marywood Music Showcase
University faculty in recital
Sunday, March 3, 2024 4:00 pm

Spring Can Really Hang You Up
Jazz with the Presbybop Sextet
Sunday, April 21, 2024 4:00 pm

New Addition

Meet Me at the Fair
Paragon Ragtime Orchestra
Friday, May 10, 2024 7:00 pm

We've scheduled an ambitious year of concerts and it isn't too late to make a contribution to the series. Donations may be made payable to:

First Presbyterian Church
300 School Street
Clarks Summit, PA 18411

Please write "Arts Series" in the memo block. Thank you for your support!

Ice Festival Art Show At First Presbyterian

First Presbyterian is happy to once again host a juried photographic exhibit, as well as the fine artwork of its talented parishioners at the 2024 Clarks Summit Ice Festival. If you would like to be a part of the event, here's what you need to know.

Elaine Tweedy will coordinate the Art Show again in January. If you are interested in participating, you will need to let her know by **December 31st, 2023**. You can contact Elaine via her cell at 570-575-1705 or email: elainetweedy@gmail.com. **All participants must be registered by that date.** There will be no late entries accepted this year.

Drop off of artwork and photography will be Thursday, January 25th between 4:00 and 5:00 p.m. Pick up of your work will be Sunday, January 28th between Noon and 1:30 p.m. Photography work will be juried, with first, second and best of show awards. On the artist side of the event, there will be a People's Choice Award as part of the show! For more information and a schedule of the event, contact Elaine.



Art Show

December Volunteer Corner

Many of us come into the sanctuary on a Sunday morning and take for granted that everything will be in place. We never give it a second thought. We assume that the choir will fill the front chairs, that the ushers will be in the back handing out the bulletins, that there will be a liturgist sitting next to the pastor, that there will be beautiful flowers at the pulpit.

Ever wonder how some of these things happen? Yes....it's the dedicated "behind the scenes" volunteers. We'll be highlighting some of these volunteers in the coming months.

JoAnn Hall is the person "behind" the liturgists. A member of FPC since 2003, JoAnn took over the job of lining up liturgists in November 2022. (Grace Farrell was her predecessor and JoAnn says the transition was easy because Grace had everything perfectly organized!) JoAnn makes sure there is someone handling the liturgist duties each Sunday, but on special days this may require many more phone calls as she often needs to recruit multiple readers.

Margie Reese, a member of FPC since the mid 1960's, has been the flower coordinator since 2014. She's the link between the donator, the florist, and the church office. She is in touch with all three for each Sunday – she often orders the flowers based on the person's preference and makes sure the memorial is correctly worded in the bulletin.

Both Margie and JoAnn noted that they get something in return – they have the privilege of interacting with old acquaintances and meeting newer members. They both enjoy this perk of volunteering!

There are lots of ways to get involved at FPC. We'd love to have you utilize your interests and skills to strengthen our church and its programs....and you, too may "meet" new friends and catch up with old ones in the process.

Nancy Post



Thank You From The Mission & Justice Committee

Thanks to the so many who helped make our recent Hickory Street Community Lunch and Grocery Give-Away a great success. On Saturday, October 28th we served a record-high 187 meals while giving away 35 bags of groceries. Your generosity also allowed us to take an additional 10 bags of groceries to fill the food pantry shelves at the Gathering Place here in Clarks Summit. Our next Hickory Street date is Saturday, March 23, 2024; we hope you'll again be able to contribute in some way.

Thanks as well to all who helped during the past year with our four highway cleanups. We completed our last cleanup of 2023 on Saturday, November 11th. Add the new re-surfacing, and our stretch of the Morgan Highway is looking good!

thank you

Christian Education: Growing in Faith and Love

Bible Time: An opportunity for our **young children** (age 4 to approx. grade 4) to hear Bible stories told in a fun and engaging way, weekly **Bible Time** will happen during worship, for about 20 minutes. Children will be invited to attend after the anthem and will return for prayers and the end of the service.



December stories will tell the Nativity story, from Mary encountering the angel through the arrival of the Wise Men. Come hear how love came down and dwelt among us!



We Worship Together series: Have you ever wondered about our church traditions?

Answering questions about the way we worship, our new series for children will last about 30 minutes and will be held after worship; parents will be invited to sign up (so we know to expect your child), and each family will receive a book to take home related to the topic discussed. Our next program will be held on

Sunday, January 14 to learn about the sacrament of **Baptism**. After that, join

us on **Sunday, March 3 & Sunday, March 10** on the topic of **the Lord's Prayer**. The series will conclude with a lesson on **Sunday, May 12** to hear about **Pentecost**, but will return in the fall.

SIGN UP
HERE:



Celebrating Advent: O Come, Immanuel



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.

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. 26)**.

Holiday Angel Tree

It's time for our annual Pajama Drive for children in local Head Start programs!

Look for tags and more information on the Christmas tree set up in the Narthex this month.



LIFT: Living In Faith Together

Join us after worship on **Sunday, December 3** for a meal and intergenerational program. Families with children as well as congregants of all ages are invited. Enjoy a meal, Bible reading and discussion, and activity as we welcome and celebrate the season of **Advent**. It's a great opportunity to share fellowship and faith with our friends and family.

Also, please save the date for our next **LIFT** program:
Sunday, February 18 — Lent (held after worship)



Wednesday Evening Opportunities

Adult Education meets on Wednesdays at 6:00 p.m. In December, our series is titled "Advent Us!"

Adult Choir rehearses at 7:00 p.m. in the sanctuary.

Bell Choir rehearses at 8:00 p.m. in fellowship hall.

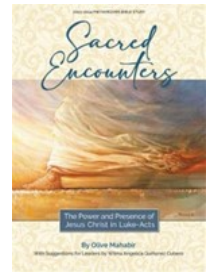
Additional Adult Education Opportunities

2023-24 Presbyterian Women Bible Study December 19, 2023.

Women's Bible Study Lesson 4—Sacred Encounters: Mary and Martha Encounter Jesus

Overview: In this lesson's sacred encounter, Martha asserts to Jesus that Mary is not helping with her "many tasks" and Jesus responds by praising Mary who has "chosen the better part." We are challenged to read this story with imagination and fresh eyes.

The group, including Rev. Carter (leader), gathers on the third Tuesday of each month at 10 a.m. in Fellowship Hall. All women are welcome!



Men's Breakfast and Bible Study meets for donuts and Bible study on the first and third Thursday of every month. They gather for conversation at 8:30 a.m. in the Session Room (206) and have their study from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. They often discuss the scripture text for the following Sunday's sermon.

Holiday Angel Tree Pajamas

All PJ's must be returned to the Church by December 11th either wrapped or in a gift bag along with an attached gift tag that identifies which Head Start Center. Please do not include anything extra as in some of the centers, they open their gift upon delivery, put them on and have story time with Santa. Any questions, please don't hesitate in calling me - 570-563-1887.



Thanking everyone for your generosity in one of many of our church's holiday projects.

Janet Dobson

Calling All Church Keys!

If you have a church key and are not in a position to be using it on a regular basis for meetings and activities, please turn it in to the office. We are running short, and I'm sure there are a few getting dusty on a dresser or weighing down a handbag.

Thank you for your help.



All Committee chairpersons are asked to submit a report of committee activities for 2023, and give plans of upcoming activities for 2024. Please submit it to the church office (office@fpccs.org) by January 21.

The Annual Meeting of the Congregation and Corporation of First Presbyterian Church of Clarks Summit has been set for February 4, 2024.



Joys

Sorrows

Thank-you notes



- 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
- 23 Denise Reinhart
- 24 Joanie Garnecki
- 26 Marion Reese
Carole LaCoe
- 28 Lou Kareha
- 30 Liam Farrell



- 23 Bill & Jessie Davis

As many of you know, we Deckers incurred much damage to our home and property due to the September 9th storm. While it has caused much emotional and financial burden, we have been uplifted by the support of our friends at the First Presbyterian Church.

Thank you so very much to the deacons for the yummy dinners for several weeks, to parishioners for your gift cards and financial help, and to the church for your financial support! Most importantly, we appreciate your love and friendship. You have been our angels through a difficult time, and we are thankful!

Barb and Tom Decker



The sympathy of the congregation is extended to Bill Taylor and his family on the recent passing of his wife, Janet. A funeral service was held on October 30.

Sympathies are also extended to Jeanne DeVirgilis upon the passing of her brother, Rick, on October 23.

At press time, we learned of the passing of Judy Keiser, Hoyt's wife of 57 years. Please keep him and his family in your prayers.

Lectionary Readings

December 3 First Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 64:1-9; Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19;
1 Corinthians 1:3-9; Mark 13:24-37

December 10 Second Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 40:1-11; Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13;
2 Peter 3:8-15a; Mark 1:1-8

December 17 Third Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11; Psalm 126, Luke 1:46b-55;
1 Thessalonians 5:16-24
John 1:6-8, 19-28

December 24 Fourth Sunday of Advent

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16; Luke 1:46b-55,
Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26; Romans 16:25-27;
Luke 1:26-38

Christmas Eve

Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96; Titus 2:11-14;
Luke 2:1-14 (15-20)

December 31 First Sunday of Christmas

Isaiah 61:10-62:3; Psalm 148; Galatians 4:4-7;
Luke 2:22-40

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

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

Board and Committee Meetings

Session Meeting—Tuesday, December 12, 7 p.m., Room 206

Deacons—Tuesday, December 26, 7 p.m., Room 206

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

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

Mission and Justice—Tuesday, December 5, 7 p.m., Room 206

Worship, Music and Arts - Thursday, December 14, 5 p.m., Room 206

Service/Study/Fellowship Gatherings

LIFT Living In Faith Together—Sunday, December 3, after Worship

Men's Breakfast and Bible Study – Thursday, December 7 and 21, 8:30 a.m., Room 206

MBK Quilters—Tuesday, December 12, 10 a.m., Fellowship Hall

Presbyterian Women Bible study—Tuesday, December 19, 10:00 a.m.

Prayer and Share - Each Wednesday, 10:30 a.m., Room 209

Adult Education—Each Wednesday, 6:00 p.m., Room 206

Adult Choir—Each Wednesday, 7 p.m., Choir Loft

Bell Choir—Each Wednesday, 8 p.m., Fellowship Hall

Support Groups

We welcome members of the following support groups to our building on a regular basis, as scheduled:

- Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meets each morning at 7 AM in Room 206.
- AlAnon meets on Wednesdays at 7:30 p.m. in room 206 and Thursdays at 7 p.m. in Fellowship Hall
- Overeaters Anonymous (OA) meets in room 210: Sundays at 3 p.m., Tuesdays at 6 p.m., Thursdays at 9:30 a.m., Saturdays at 9:45 a.m.

The Church Office will be closed on December 25for the Christmas holiday.

Deadline for January 2024 Presbyterian is December 15. It will be mailed the first week of the new year.



The Nursery, located in room 208 on the sanctuary level of the building, is open Sunday mornings from 9:40—11:10 a.m. for children ages 3 and younger.

**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

300 School Street

Clarks Summit, PA 18411-1536

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
Permit No. 30
PAID
Clarks Summit PA

DATED MATERIAL**Return Service Requested**

Interested in a Presbyterian trip to Scotland?

We are planning a Presbyterian Heritage Tour of Scotland for the early fall of 2024. Our Session has endorsed the project, and we have enlisted Witte Travel, a noted group travel agency, to develop plans.

They have identified September 5-14, 2024 as the dates for the journey, which will take our travelers to Edinburgh, Glasgow, St. Andrews, and the mystical island of Iona.

A brochure with registration form is being prepared while this newsletter goes to print. Watch for it to appear in the Narthex very soon.

Please let our office know if you are interested. We would like to set up an information session for those who are interested - but we need to know if you might be among them.

