



*CHRISTMAS IS COMING!
SPECIAL NEWSLETTER EDITION*

First United Presbyterian Church
PO Box 37
1000 Douglas Avenue
Las Vegas NM 87701

Dear FUPC Family and Friends,

Before we know it, we'll be in the Advent season. The first Sunday of Advent this year is November 29—only about four weeks from now.

The Advent and Christmas seasons won't be what we have come to think of as "normal," but we will proclaim Christ's coming into the world to bring light and salvation, even if our gatherings will be virtual ones and our celebrations more subdued. Indeed, as our world continues to deal with the pandemic, I think we have a particular opportunity to approach the Advent and Christmas seasons more thoughtfully and more theologically, if you will, than we often do.

Of course, 'tis the season of giving and, especially in our consumerist society, many of us put pressure on ourselves to "shop 'til we drop" for Christmas presents and to outdo last year's decorations. This year, I imagine shopping will look much different, with stores still needing to enforce COVID-19 restrictions. Many of us might do most of our shopping online, or opt for event gifts that might happen in the future. Many of us will face the reality of not being with family for Thanksgiving or Christmas.

I'd like to encourage us to look at this Christmas truly in light of the first one. No lights decorated that manger, except perhaps the light of a lantern and the stars, one especially brilliant. But the fields were full of angels announcing to the shepherds that a newborn baby would bring good news and joy to the world—to all the world. And we know, from reading about the man that baby grew to be, that this good news has nothing to do with decorations or expensive presents, but that it has everything to do with love and peace and unity and justice and abundance—with the good news of God's steadfast love and dream for God's children becoming a reality.

In the next couple of pages, you'll read about some projects you can undertake—starting now—to bring that good news of love to those for whom Jesus showed such special concern—the poor, the underserved, the marginalized, those who are in need. I encourage you to commit to one or more of these projects as a way of acknowledging that, more than 2000 years after the birth of the baby Jesus, many of God's people are still in need of basic items—food, adequate clothing, educational items, something to call their own given from another's sense of love for them.

In future newsletters and weekly bulletins you will also find devotionals for the season and suggestions for how to participate in First United Presbyterian's Advent worship theme: Yielding to the Potter. More about that later.

With thanks for the Good News of God and for all of you,
Pastor Katie



SAMARITANS PURSE CHRISTMAS SHOE BOX PROJECT



For nearly three decades, this project has been active to provide gifts to children around the world. “Each box is an opportunity to delight the heart of a child---and share the Good News of Christ with them and their families. In the midst of a worldwide pandemic, the needs are greater than ever before. So many children are scared, and their families are often afraid.”

The Shoe box project is a small way to help bring love and joy to thousands of girls and boys around the world with gifts of simple toys, hygiene items and school supplies. For many, these shoe boxes may contain the only holiday gifts a child will receive.

This year, Calvary Chapel here in Las Vegas is administering the project. Once you get a box, everything you need to know about the project and how the boxes are to be filled is explained inside the box.

We urge you to help with the project. The cost to fill the box is minimal. The imagined face of a child when opening the box in some far away land will not only put a smile on your lips but will grab your heartstrings as well.

If you would like to participate, contact Patrick Rucker (Rucker505@gmail.com; 505-454-9707), who has shoe boxes that he is willing to deliver to you. **BOXES NEED TO BE RETURNED TO CALVARY CHAPEL BY NOVEMBER 16.** Calvary Chapel is located at 2310 7th Street. It is behind Kocina de Raphael restaurant, 617 Legion.

In addition, you might want to talk with Mrs. Bentley, the organizer of this year’s shoe box project, to learn the process of tracking your box...where and to whom it is sent.



ANGEL TREE CHRISTMAS

Our Mission and Peacemaking Committee has registered to be an “Angel Tree Christmas” sponsor. This project provides gifts to children whose parent (s) is in prison. The parent must be involved with Prison Fellowship in some way. The parent must request that his/her child receive a gift.

Here’s how it works:

- * Watch for upcoming newsletters, Sunday bulletins, and pulpit announcements to hear more about Angel Tree Christmas and to receive instructions.
- * Contact our FUPC coordinator, Pat Halverson (505-239-4263), as soon as possible to let her know if you would like to participate.

In the past people “adopting” a child for Christmas would choose a child’s name, size, and ideas of what the child would like, and then receive the caregiver’s name and address. A committee from the church or organization would then deliver the gifts. This year, due to COVID-19, it seems wise to just do the Virtual Angel Tree Program working with the Prison Fellowship organization. With this option through Prison Fellowship each participant would purchase a \$22 or \$42 gift card and people from Prison Fellowship would deliver the gifts on behalf of the parent in prison.



REVERSE ADVENT CALENDAR

You may have Christmas memories of opening a numbered door on an Advent calendar and receiving a gift—a piece of chocolate or a hard candy. When our girls were growing up, we would put out a 3-D Victorian Advent calendar, which we had received as a gift. Each day at dinner time, one of our daughters would get to open that day's window or door to reveal another piece of the Victorian house scene that made up the calendar. On Christmas Eve, there was a special surprise of music when the final numbered door was opened.

A Reverse Advent Calendar gives you an opportunity not to open a calendar door to get a surprise, but to put a gift aside each day of Advent for someone in need. To participate, take a nice sized box and put it in a prominent place—near your dining room or kitchen table, or under your Christmas tree. You might choose to cover it in Christmas wrapping paper. Then, each day of Advent, place an item in the box (list below). I encourage you to not simply toss your item in the box, but to set aside a time each day when you and others in your household can do this together, remembering that this item will be a gift to someone who needs it.

Once you've placed the final item, deliver your box to Samaritan House (501 7th Street). Samaritan House offices will be open Christmas week, Monday-Thursday, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.

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| Nov. 29 – can of vegetables | Dec. 13 – package of pasta |
| Nov. 30 – can of fruit | Dec. 14 – jar of spaghetti sauce |
| Dec. 1 – box of cereal | Dec. 15 – can of chicken noodle soup |
| Dec. 2 – peanut butter | Dec. 16 – can of tomato soup |
| Dec. 3 – jelly | Dec. 17 - deodorant |
| Dec. 4 – box of mac and cheese | Dec. 18 – bar of soap |
| Dec. 5 – can of SpaghettiOs or Ravioli | Dec. 19 – bottle of shampoo |
| Dec. 6 – can of chicken | Dec. 20 – tube of toothpaste |
| Dec. 7 – can of tuna | Dec. 21 – toothbrush |
| Dec. 8 – jar of applesauce | Dec. 22 – comb or brush |
| Dec. 9 – can of beans | Dec. 23 – small personal gift item (e.g., hat, deck of cards, portable game, socks, candy treat, etc.) |
| Dec. 10 – box of crackers | Dec. 24 – personal note to go with Dec. 23 gift |
| Dec. 11 – package of rice | |
| Dec. 12 – package of oatmeal | |

If your holiday plans mean you need to deliver the box early, you can double up on a few days or leave a couple of items out of your box. Do try to include a personal gift and note; these can be especially precious to someone who has little to call their own.

Contact Pastor Katie if you have questions (pastorkatiepalmer@gmail.com, 303-775-7356).



As always, we will have the opportunity to give to the **CHRISTMAS JOY OFFERING**, which has been a cherished Presbyterian tradition since the 1930s. The Offering distributes gifts equally to the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions and to Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color. The Assistance Program provides critical financial support to church workers and their families. Presbyterian-related schools and colleges provide education and leadership development while nurturing racial and ethnic heritage. This has been a Presbyterian commitment for nearly 140 years.



MAKE YOUR OWN ADVENT WREATH

With the ongoing pandemic, the Christmas season is sure to be a little quieter this year and a little more stay-at-home. Having an Advent wreath to light each day as you say a prayer or commit to a daily devotional can be meaningful. Here are a couple of suggestions for making your own Advent wreath. Watch Sunday bulletins for devotional suggestions.

EASY ADVENT WREATH (adapted from joyfullydomestic.com)

You will need:

12" wire wreath frame	soft greenery garland	Advent candle set
purple (or other color) artificial poinsettias		4 candle holders
white Christmas ribbon	greenery ties	glue gun

1. Wrap garland around wire wreath until the wreath is completely covered. Use hot glue to hold in place.
2. Wrap ribbon around wreath to your desired placement; glue in place.
3. Space out candle holders evenly around wreath and secure with floral wire or greenery ties.
4. Fill empty areas of wreath with flowers.
5. Add candles to candle holders.

EASIER ADVENT WREATH

Take four apples of roughly the same size and carve holes in the tops to accommodate Advent candles. Place in a ring and wrap greenery or ribbon around them. (Apples might need to be replaced before the end of the season!)

EASIEST ADVENT WREATH

Put four candles in four candle holders. Arrange them however you want. (What's wrong with an Advent square or line?)

CHRISTMAS IS COMING and we want **YOUR PHOTOS** to help us make the Zoom Christmas Eve service special. Do you put up a nativity set for the holidays? If so, please send us a photo of it once you put it up this year. Do you have a special Christmas decoration that you look forward to displaying every year? Send us a photo! Or maybe you have a photo that depicts a favorite Christmas memory? Choose a couple of your photos and send them to D.R. Palmer at pathfarer@gmail.com.

