



Sharing the Love of Christ

First United Presbyterian Church (PCUSA)

PO Box 37

1000 Douglas Avenue

Las Vegas New Mexico 87701

DECEMBER 2020

PASTOR'S PONDERINGS

I admit that, as I ponder the Advent season this year, I'm struck by a kind of irony. Advent is a time of waiting, of being patient, of looking forward. The advent of COVID in our lives, it seems to me, has made the last eight or nine months a time of waiting and being patient, of looking forward to a return to a sense of normalcy. So, is our liturgical season of Advent just more of the same? Certainly, with the pandemic surging, we will not experience what we might be used to at this time of year. No big parties. No super-crowded stores. For many of us, no traditional family get-togethers. It is simply too dangerous for us, our families, and others for those things to happen. In COVID time, we continue the waiting game until "the numbers" fall into a safer zone and, ultimately, until we have a safe, reliable vaccine for COVID-19.

But our spiritual waiting, patience, and looking forward, though they too will be different this year, are not the same, for they bring us to a different plane of reality—what I've heard called the "really real." They bring us into the God-dimension, if you will, when the wait is more than carrying on as normally as possible. In the God-dimension, the wait is not idle, or normal, but expansive and re-defining. We await the coming of something that will reshape who we are, that will give us new eyes to see in new ways. Its culmination is the birth of something life-giving and life-saving: God among us, inviting us to in turn birth a new understanding and a new way of being in our own lives.

Liturgically, we observe this season in a number of ways. We give generously—to friends and family, yes, but also to those in need. We introduce some seasonal rituals into our lives. For instance, I encourage you to observe the ritual of lighting candles in an Advent wreath each day and taking time as you do so to say a prayer and sit in quiet contemplation for a few minutes. Set aside time for an Advent devotional each day. You will find daily devotionals in our weekly bulletins or you might prefer to purchase an Advent devotional book or find Advent devotionals online.

Remember that we don't observe rituals just to get through them. When we do, they are likely to be empty. But when we delve into them with intentions to learn and to grow, they can be filling. Lighting an Advent candle and calling it "hope" during the first week of Advent is one thing. Lighting that candle of hope and then sitting in deep introspection or discussing with a friend or family member how (or how not) hope is alive in your soul is another thing altogether.

When our daughters were growing up, we observed many seasonal rituals; Advent was probably the most ritualistic for our family. There was the ritual of the Advent wreath at dinner each evening, accompanied by a devotional or some talk about what each candle represented. But there were also rituals of time. On the first Sunday afternoon of Advent, we went to the mall and each girl chose an angel from the angel tree there. On each angel were the name of a child in need and a Christmas gift wish. That week, we would shop for the gifts, wrap them, and deliver them back to the mall. On the second Sunday afternoon of Advent, D.R. and the girls would choose a Christmas tree and we would decorate it. And so it went throughout the season, with a special event each Sunday until Christmas Eve when we would have an early supper at Grandma's house followed by music rehearsals before the Christmas Eve service, which in turn was followed by the hanging of our stockings on the mantle.

I'm not sure how those ritualistic traditions came to be, but I know they were about more than the events. We learned together that gift-giving extended to our community family. We learned that being together was important as we decorated the tree while we drank hot chocolate. Even now, with our daughters in their mid-30s, they reminisce every year about those rituals that filled them in a special way. And now, they are building memories of their own family rituals.

The same is true, I think, for those rituals we adults adopt as we wait to welcome Christ anew into our lives. So, go deep this Advent; do something each day to allow the Holy to refine God's image in you.

With thanks for all of you,
Pastor Katie





WORSHIP TIDBITS



We entered into the season of Advent on Sunday, Nov. 29. During this season, we will focus our attention on “Yielding to the Potter.” As we read in Isaiah 64:8, “...O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand.” This Advent season, we will open ourselves to being molded by our God, whose love for us will shape us if we allow it.

As we move through this time of waiting and preparing for the coming of the Christ child into the world, we will see how our Scriptures encourage us to allow God to shape us. For Daniel (Nov. 29), the shaping involved civil disobedience and evangelism. In Joel (Dec. 6), we are asked to repent and turn to God’s steadfast love and the grace of the Spirit. In Isaiah (Dec. 13), we will be reminded of God’s covenant with God’s people. And Luke (Dec. 20) will tell us about one of the most courageous stories of submission to God’s will as we hear Mary welcome a life that was different from anything she might have imagined.

Throughout the season, we will hear some members of our church family talk about some “God encounters” that have shaped them. I pray that our worship together will encourage us all to offer ourselves to be shaped by God’s steadfast, loving hands.

Thank you to all who do so much to support our community—for cooking those Samaritan House meals, for helping install new appliances, for providing meals and treats for those who are recovering from illness and surgery, for sending emails, cards, and letters to stay connected.



Our Daily Devotionals

I write this just a couple of days before Thanksgiving, which is appropriate because I want to again express my thanks for those people who faithfully record devotionals each week day to help us think deeply about our faith. If you’ve not yet watched the devotionals, I encourage you to take a look. Each “devotionalist” offers us something to ponder in her or his own way. One day you might be drawn into Scripture, another day you might find yourself in the forest or on a lake. You might hear a poem or a book excerpt or you might hear thoughtful musings about a hike or a cleaning adventure. You’ll find these short (usually under 10 minutes) devotionals on our FUPC Facebook page or through our website (lvpresbyterian.org). Many thanks to those listed below and to Karyl Lyne, who will substitute for me while I’m on vacation at the end of the month.

Monday – Pastor Katie

Tuesday – Beth Urech

Wednesday – Rod Billingsley

Thursday - Pat Halverson

Friday – Denise Spicer



PC(USA) 21-DAY RACIAL JUSTICE CHALLENGE

Many of us participated in the 21-Day Racial Justice Challenge and found it...well, challenging and meaningful. Our discussions were robust and thoughtful. If you did not participate in the challenge, it’s not too late! The link to the challenge activities will remain on our website. Click on “Latest News” and then on “Events.” Scroll down to find the link to the Challenge. A word of encouragement... the activity for the first day is a lengthy reading. Rest assured that the other reading activities are not so lengthy and several of the activities take you to insightful videos/documentaries.



ADVENT STUDY IS IN PROGRESS, SUNDAYS BEFORE WORSHIP

Advent is underway, with this year's study based on the book *Hidden Christmas: The surprising Truth Behind the Birth of Christ* by Timothy Keller (2016).

Discussions are on Zoom during the usual time allotted to the Sunday morning Bible-based class for Adults and youth – 9:15 to 10:00 a.m. and are being led by Richard Lindeborg.

Books are readily available. Fastest delivery would be a new paperback copy from Amazon Prime at \$13.95. Used hardbacks are at Alibris for as little as \$6 including shipping, Abe Books for \$8 and Amazon for \$10. Paper Trail may also be able to order copies. If you prefer, Richard can order a copy shipped directly to your home.

Keller was born and raised in Pennsylvania and educated at Bucknell University, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, and Westminster Theological Seminary. His first pastorate was in Hopewell, Virginia. In 1989 he started Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City with his wife, Kathy, and their three sons. Today, Redeemer has nearly six thousand regular Sunday attendees and has helped to start more than three hundred new churches around the world. Keller is the author of *Making Sense of God*, *The Songs of Jesus*, *Preaching*, *Prayer*, as well as *The Meaning of Marriage*, *The Prodigal God*, and *The Reason for God*, among others.

Keller has a way of putting a new light on old texts so that you see them with fresh eyes. This book covers the breadth of the Christmas story beginning with its roots in the Old Testament.

The chapter titled “The Mothers of Jesus” looks at the women mentioned in Matthew's genealogy of Jesus. The Chapter titled “The Fathers of Jesus” deals with the dual nature of Jesus as fully human and fully divine. In the last Advent Chapter, Keller reminds us of the amazing faith of Mary as shown in the story of the annunciation and Mary's response to it.

The group has already discussed the Introduction [secular vs sacred seasons] and Chapter 1 “A Light has Dawned” [Isaiah and beyond].

Reading assignments for the remaining Sundays in Advent:

Dec.6, Chapter 2 *The Mothers of Jesus* pp. 20-39 [Genealogy of Christ, Matthew and before]

Dec. 13, Chapter 3 *The Fathers of Jesus* pp.40-62 [Divinity and Humanity, Matthew and beyond]

Dec. 20, Chapter 5 *Mary's Faith* pp. 79-99 [Luke: annunciation and response]

Discussion of the book will continue after Christmas through Jan. 17, discussing chapters based on Christmas and its promise. Those chapters deal with “*The Shepherds' Faith*,” Jesus and his family at the Temple, and the meaning of Christmas as stated by John.



CONGRATULATIONS to Siobhan Croto, who was commissioned into ministry as a Commissioned Pastor to the congregation of First Presbyterian Church in Raton, NM, on November 29. Please hold Siobhan and her ministry in your prayers.



Our holiday celebrations will be different this year if we want to celebrate them safely. While researching this topic, I came across an article written by Christina Cicogna, MD, for the *Hackensack Meridian Health Organization*. She suggests the following recommendations to have safer holiday celebrations when you can't be together with your family and friends using Zoom or other computer applications.

- Have everyone place their laptops on the table, so that you can talk while eating a holiday meal.
- Share recipes ahead of time, so everyone can have the same food in different places.
- Honor your usual tradition if you can, like having each person say what they're thankful for.

An additional resource was available from the *Real Simple* newsletter (author unknown), and includes ideas such as:

- Sending kind, meaningful cards or gifts and opening them on Zoom with your friends or family.
- Seek out opportunities to volunteer or help with a food give away.
- Consider making holiday cards for nursing homes or hospitals.
- Develop the practice of weekly thoughtful gestures such as calls or writing a letter.

Additional recommendations included taking care of your own health from the inside out, which includes getting enough sleep, eating right, exercising, laughing and getting emotional support. Remind yourself that we can't control the pandemic, but we can grow emotionally stronger through this time.

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.

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). 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).



AN APPLE A DAY - THE UNITY ORCHARD WILL SAY...

What is the Unity Orchard?

A project dreamed up by FUPC's Anniversary Task Force to involve the whole community of Las Vegas in planting and tending a community orchard located along the Gallinas Riverwalk near the second footbridge, adjacent to West Las Vegas school property.

With an anniversary logo of "Seeds, Roots, Branches" it seemed only fitting that this symbol would "seed" the thought of planting trees within the town of Las Vegas. The idea found fertile ground within the Hermits Peak Watershed Alliance, which was spearheading the Riverwalk Project. The Watershed Alliance told us the planned Riverwalk expansion had space for a grove of trees along the river, and they were in fact looking for a community organization to help spearhead and fund such a grove.

Plentiful and faithful watering is a prerequisite for any trees planted in Las Vegas, NM, so when West Las Vegas School Superintendent Chris Gutierrez agreed to supply water for the grove of trees, the Watershed Alliance and our church task force were delighted. The caveat for the donation of the water was the request that the trees be fruit trees which could be the basis for many educational opportunities (think lessons about grafting, pollination, pest management, nutritional benefits, cooking classes, etc.). We all agreed to the request and the Unity Orchard name came into being.

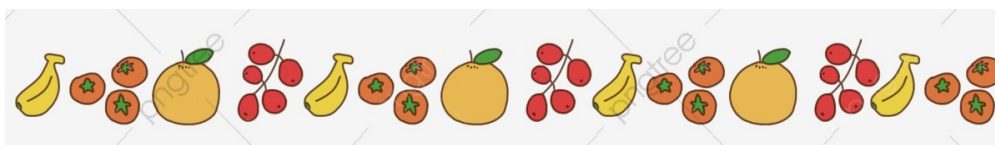
The FUPC committee met on the proposed site and envisioned what might go into this orchard. The landscape architect for the Riverwalk project listened, and drew up a blueprint for the Unity Orchard which included benches for quiet meditation along the river, a place for classroom interaction, shrubs for wildlife habitat, and locations for rose bushes, currants, elderberries and grapes as well as room for twenty semi dwarf fruit trees.

With the "roots" of the project in place, the Anniversary Task Force is now ready to "branch" out and get community participation from other churches, service groups, city and county officials, Highlands, United World College, Luna, as well as school children from within both East and West school districts.

It will be from this broader community group that working task forces will be formed to undertake the responsibilities of marketing, publicizing, fundraising, tree procurement, tree planting, scheduling tree maintenance, and planning educational opportunities.

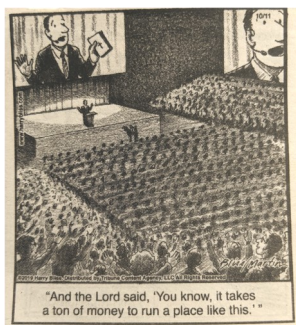
If you would like to be involved with any part of this effort, please tell a member of the FUPC Unity Orchard Task Force (Joyce Litherland, Carol Linder, D.R. Palmer, Juli and Jeff Salman, Jan Beurskens, Sharon Vander Meer, Murl Baker).

An apple a day keeps Las Vegas thriving!





TT&T – Planning for 2021



Attached to this month's newsletter is the 2021 Narrative Budget. We have a balanced budget! This is the second year we have prepared a narrative budget and we hope that it provides a snapshot of who we are and how we use your generous contributions to grow faith, seek justice, and build community. If you are interested in more details, all are welcome to join our annual budget meeting on Dec. 1, at 4:30 pm. We will be using the church Zoom link. Elders will approve the budget at the December Session meeting and the final budget will be presented during the February Congregational meeting and be part of the 2020 Annual Report.

Putting together this year's budget and presentation materials is indeed a team effort. Tremendous thanks to treasurer Mary Schipper (who worked with committee chairs), associate treasurer Denise Spicer, additional TT&T committee members (Pam Abreu, Richard Lindeborg, Van Swan, and Pastor Katie Palmer (*ex officio*)), and Linda Solyntjes.



As we approach Thanksgiving and the Advent Season, there are so many people and things in this church to be thankful for. The long-planned-for re-stuccoing of our Douglas Avenue building is completed and beautiful. The sidewalk replacement enhances the looks of the building and makes a smooth, safe approach to the front door. The Landscaping Task Force has transformed the space around the church to an intriguing, inviting and beautiful place. Thanks to Buildings & Grounds (B&G), the roof over the ramp on the west side of the building is completed. The addition of the Celtic Cross from Susan and Van Swan is lovely; and it's all set off by the colorful Little Free Library as an exclamation point!

In response to the loss of equipment and damage at the Old Town Mission Community Center (OTMCC), a Go-FundMe webpage has been created to help defray replacement and repair costs. Additionally, Buildings & Grounds is overseeing the installation of insulation, and upgrading of the heating system at OTM, as well as repairing the yard sign on Chavez Street. All the while, they are stripping, cleaning, repairing and polishing the floor in Perea Hall. The 2020 Task Force has submitted a grant proposal to the Las Vegas Community Foundation for the Unity Orchard Project on Las Vegas' Riverwalk.

The Adult Sunday School class attracts from 8-10 each Sunday to discuss an array of challenging and controversial topics chosen by Richard Lindeborg. The Session and others took on the 21-Day Anti-Racism Challenge Nov. 1-21, resulting in new insights and perceptions about ourselves, our church and our relationships with our community. FUPC has applied for and attained status with PCUSA (Presbyterian Church, USA) as a Matthew 25 Church, pledging to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick and imprisoned, and welcome the stranger. Meanwhile, Katie leads us in meaningful and thought-provoking worship each Sunday with 40-55 people in attendance. As we approach the end of the year, our Time, Talent & Treasure (TT&T) Committee is preparing the 2021 Budget and reports that we will end the year fiscally healthy. Gracious, thanks to each of you and thanks be to God!

—Karyl Lyne, Clerk of Session



CHRISTMAS JOY SPECIAL OFFERINGS

CHURCH LEADERS—PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

The Christmas Joy Offering 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.

Donations are received throughout December. If you give Online, you will find a listing there for the Christmas Joy offering.



If you are using our online giving process, please check the “end date” of your automatic payments. And thanks for giving so generously this year. Contact the church office if you have any questions.



If you are not on the email distribution list for our Sunday Online Worship bulletin and would like to be, please send an [email](#) to the church office requesting that your name/email be added. The bulletin is emailed on Thursday or Friday for the service along with a message from Pastor Katie.



Let's Get Together!

LET'S GET TOGETHER

Remember that we have three social gatherings via Zoom each week. Here's the schedule:

Sunday morning fellowship following worship. Hang around after the postlude and spend some time chatting with folks!

Coffee with Katie, Tuesday mornings at 9:00. We'll chat over coffee or whatever you're drinking at your house. (I'll probably have a nice cup of tea.) It's an opportunity to relax and visit together.

Thursday Teatime, Thursday afternoons at 3:30. Not a morning person? Want some more time to visit? Brew a cup of tea or grab a soda and settle in for a visit with members of your church family.



TO JOIN ANY FUPC EVENTS VIA ZOOM:



Open your web browser and go to <https://us04web.zoom.us/j/5739200081>

If you haven't been on Zoom before, you'll see instructions for downloading the Zoom app and allowing your camera (if you have one) and microphone to be used by Zoom, and then the meeting will open.

If you are new to Zoom, we recommend going to the link above sometime before the event so that you can get the Zoom app set up ahead of time. It takes a few minutes.

If you have the Zoom app, you can use the link above or you can just open the app, click Join, and enter the meeting id. **The meeting ID for all public church events is 573-920-0081.**

If you don't have a computer but want **to join by phone, call 312-626-7699** and enter the ID number when prompted. Please note this is a Chicago number, so if your phone plan does not have unlimited calls, you may incur long-distance charges.

First United Presbyterian Church

DECEMBER 2020

1000 Douglas Avenue
PO Box 37
Las Vegas NM 87701
505-425-7763



Website: www.lvpresbyterian.org

Facebook: Las Vegas First United Presbyterian (NM)

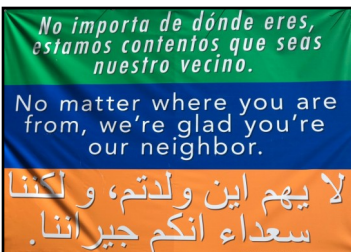
Email: fupc.nm@gmail.com

Sunday Schedule

9:30 a.m. - Bible Based Study via Zoom

10:30 a.m. - Sunday Worship via Zoom

Fellowship Hour following the worship service on Zoom



Samaritan House Food Donations

DECEMBER

Canned Meats, Fish, Chicken
Coffee and Tea are always appreciated



DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

3 rd	Peter Linder
4 th	Diego Trujillo
	Denice Spicer
5 th	Gay Veit
8 th	Renee Buchanan
10 th	Connie Trujillo
14 th	Gail Malley
17 th	Harper Geng
20 th	Douglas Baskett
	Betty Kretz
23 rd	Juli Salman
24 th	Richard Lindeborg
26 th	Corky Halverson
27 th	Wamoth Spicer