



# FIRST PRES. PRESS

DECEMBER/JANUARY 2014/2015

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## CHRISTMAS EVE OFFERING

The special offering received on Christmas Eve this year will be used to help build a church in Kenya. Although a regular team from FPC will not be going to Kenya in February, we will fulfill our commitment to the congregation that has already purchased the land and laid the foundation for their church



(any additional funds raised will be designated toward the school we also help build when in Kenya). The offering last Christmas Eve was designated for water purification systems. Two systems were taken to India by the FPC team last spring. Enough money remains to provide systems for two orphanages in Kenya. Doug Kerr and Stu Ross will attend WaterStep training in January to learn how to install and maintain the systems.

## IT'S A FAMILY CHRISTMAS!

Be sure to join us for worship on December 28 at our 10:00am service. It will be the 4th day of Christmas, and we'll be continuing to celebrate the birth of our Savior with story and song. There will even be an appearance by the Wise Men! Following the service we'll share a meal together in the dining room. Feel free to bring cookies to pass. Don't miss gathering with your church family for this joyous time together.

## SMALL GROUP TESTIMONY -ANONYMOUS

"I feel so blessed to be part of my small group. Every week I keep thinking about how I would describe what it feels like to be part of my small group, and I come up with things like loved, accepted, supported and hopeful. These are some of the most peaceful times of my week, being with my group and studying God's word. I think of all the years I wasn't actively trying to understand God and sometimes wish I had those years back. But, I wasn't really ready to hear God's word the same way years ago. Now it is becoming more and more clear to me that this is the life I've always wanted."

## OVER 80 BIRTHDAYS

December 7  
Wayne Hunsinger

December 23  
Lillian Stanko

January 13  
Lans Jones

**PASTORS' PAGE**

**- JAN AND TIM DEVINE, CO-PASTORS**

Every Tuesday evening, volunteers prepare, serve, and clean up after the Samaritan Supper. A hot and filling meal is provided for as many as 110 neighbors in our community— old and young, families and singles. The meal is one answered prayer for our guests.



*"This dinner was amazing. My first home cooked meal since I left New York a week ago. I ask God to allow me to eat well as much as possible."*

But the prayer requests that people offer at the supper reveal many other deep needs — needs that can only be met by a Savior, shared by people who know the Savior. ***'For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.'*** (Isaiah 9:60)



*"Please pray for me as I am in a lot of trouble and will be broke and homeless soon."*



*"I need to get my family back together. I just want us to be ok."*

**WONDERFUL COUNSELOR !**

**EVERLASTING FATHER !**



*"Please pray for me— I have made so many mistakes. It's been mistake after mistake after mistake. Thank you."*



With whom are you going to share this GOOD NEWS as we approach Christmas?

When you open up gifts on Christmas morning, will you have told someone else about the greatest gift we can receive?

**PRINCE OF PEACE !**

**Share Faith**

## WHAT'S NEW AMONG OUR PEOPLE?

– NATHAN JACOBS

I know that as I child, I always wanted Christmas to come faster. Christmas traditions were the best experiences of the year—the sounds of bells and four-part carols; the hearty aroma of fresh bread filling the house; the comfortable glow of lights on our tree; family all together; and of course, presents for everyone. I have realized as an adult that not much has changed; I still can't wait for Christmas to come. I still love all those Christmas traditions, some even more so as family time throughout the year gets scarce from all our day-to-day business. And yet, **everything has changed**. Because of a single baby boy, because the King of Heaven chose to leave His glory and come in humility to be with His people in the flesh, everything has changed. As I grew up and matured in my relationship with God, the realization of the truth and wonder of that 2000-year-old gift gave me a new reason to wait with bated breath. The annual celebration of the greatest gift ever given fills me with both excitement and anticipation. My prayer is that you too would know the truth and power of a baby born in stable, and

share my excitement and anticipation. My hope is that we would use this intentional season of anticipation to reflect, in prayer and thanksgiving, on the hope that was given that holy night.

As we pray through advent, Christmas, and epiphany, please keep our congregation here at FPC in those prayers, especially those who have been brought to our attention this last month:

- Jessica Glajch, who began a new job in a law firm in Fairfax, VA.
- Jen and Josh Luce, who welcomed Brendan Mark Luce to the world on Nov. 17.
- Rick Darling, Norma Santacrose's brother, who was found safe in Tennessee.
- Christian Huebner, who began a new pastorate at Brownsville Community Church.
- Sharon Early, for 10 years of selfless service as unpaid staff here at FPC.
- Jon Yerger, who came home from rehab.
- Erin Flannagan, who passed her Boards and began a new job as a Physician's Assistant in Wayne, NJ.
- Mary Ann Scott, who had successful surgery for cancer.

- The family of Alice Loudon, as they mourn her passing on Oct. 27.
- Leah Roberson's sister, Kay, as she battles the return of cancer.
- Jeremy Yerger and his family in Seattle.
- Fran Ebbers and her family.
- The Mitchell Family.
- Bev Conklin's daughter-in-law, as she continues to battle cancer.
- Gerry Wilcox, who had hip replacement surgery and moved to Oxford Veteran's Home for rehab.
- Erin Shrader's step-mother, who was hospitalized with serious health concerns.
- Vince Earley, former pastor of FPC, who was hospitalized with pneumonia.
- Those who are facing the Ebola crisis personally.
- Hemant Tandi, who had a heart catheterization.
- Sheila Beblavy, who sprained her knee and ankle.
- Reuben Marvin, as he faces the unexpected death of his sister, Rebecca Reel.
- Dick Campbell, who was hospitalized with several health concerns.

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. —John 1:1-4, 9, 14*

FPC Youth News

December 2014

# FPC Youth News

## FPC Youth Events

CHOOSE FROM MANY OPPORTUNITIES  
TO CONNECT

### REGULAR EVENTS:

#### Sunday School

Sundays  
10:45-11:45am  
@ Monroe House

#### FPC Youth Nights

Sundays  
6:00-8:00pm  
Locations TBA

#### Ignite Bikes

Saturdays  
10:00am-12:30pm  
Meet @ The Warehouse

### SPECIAL EVENTS:

#### Loving Hands

Sunday, December 7  
4:00-7:30pm  
Give back this Christmas!  
Event for all ages

#### FPC Youth Christmas Party

Sunday, December 14  
6:00-8:00pm  
@ The Monroe House

#### FPC Youth Scrap Metal Roundup

Sunday, December 21 →

#### NO FPC YOUTH

Sunday, December 28

#### NO FPC YOUTH

Sunday, January 4

#### FPC Youth - Nerf Gun War

Sunday, January 11  
6:00-8:00pm  
@ The Warehouse



## Scrap Metal Roundup

Do you have any scrap metal lurking around your house/property? We would love to help you clean up.

Please contact me by Sunday, December 14 if you have any scrap metal that you would like to donate.

### Scrap Metal Fundraiser Sunday, December 21

**PICKUP WILL BE  
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21  
2:00pm - 6:00pm**

FPC Youth is looking to raise funds before the end of 2014. It has been an exciting year and we are hoping for one more 'hurrah' before 2015 falls upon us.

#### CONTACT:

Jeremy Finn  
607-743.4511  
jmfinn@firstpresendicott.org



### IGNITE BIKES

Saturdays - Rain or Shine  
Meet at FPC - 10:00am  
Return to FPC - 12:30pm



### SMALL GROUP

FPC Youth Small Groups  
will be relaunching soon.  
Contact Jeremy for more information.



### WINTER WEEKEND 2015

The Loft Camp - Great Bend, PA  
March 13-15  
Lock it in and stay tuned for details!



**LOVING HANDS****DECEMBER 7****4:00PM****DON'T MISS OUT!****CHRISTMAS EVE****BLACKLIGHT  
PERFORMANCE****4:30PM Service****TRUTH**  
KNOW IT · LIVE IT · SPEAK IT**FPC LEADER'S CONFERENCE****Saturday, January 17, 2015****8:00am - 2:00pm**

Even though Memory Verse Mania has wrapped up, we want you to continue learning Bible verses! If you'd like additional resources, check out what's available at the Registration Station in the church basement. We also hope that you will pick up Advent and Christmas materials and make it a priority to teach your kids the incredible stories that the Bible contains! The world is a confusing place so be the ones to authentically bring God's truth into your home. Become so in love with the Savior of the world that you simply cannot help but serve Him alone.

**HERE is the Lesson Schedule for our Winter Season!**

December 7 - Christmas Lesson - Mary and Joseph & LOVING HANDS EVENT @ 4pm

December 14 - Christmas Lesson - Traveling to Bethlehem

December 21 - Christmas Play & Christmas Lesson - What's it all about!?

**December 28 - Merry Christmas! - NO Sunday Morning Children's Ministry**

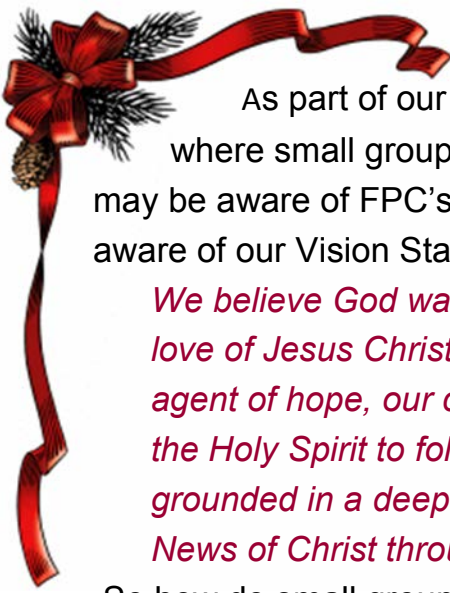
**January 4 - Happy New Year! - NO Sunday Morning Children's Ministry**

January 11 - To The Depths Lesson 1 - The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-35)

January 18 - To The Depths Lesson 2 - Paul and Silas in Prison (Acts 16:16-40)

January 25 - To The Depths Lesson 3 - Ruth and Naomi (Ruth 1-2)

## CONNECTING THOUGHTS FOR DECEMBER — SHARON EARLY



As part of our small group ministry, I continually try to understand where small groups fit in the big picture of our local church. Many of us may be aware of FPC's Mission and Purpose Statements but are we equally aware of our Vision Statement (What God wants to do)?

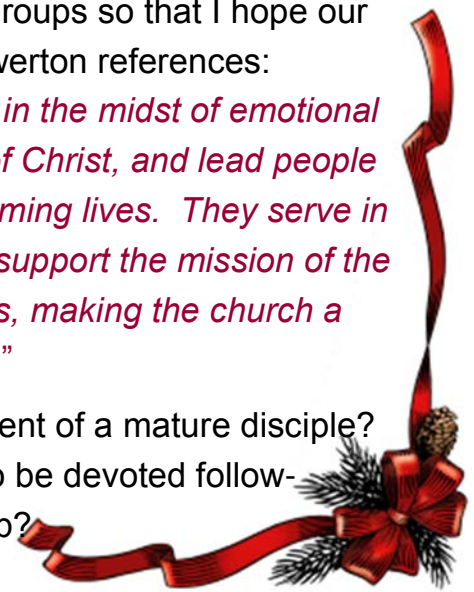
*We believe God wants to transform our community through the saving love of Jesus Christ and calls us to share that hope with the world. To be an agent of hope, our congregation must work together and rely on the power of the Holy Spirit to follow Christ, whatever the cost. This commitment, which is grounded in a deep love of God and neighbor, sends us out to share the Good News of Christ through our words and our actions.*

So how do small groups help us live into our Vision Statement? Are we transforming our community? Are we relying on the power of the Holy Spirit no matter the cost? Are we sharing the Good News of Christ? I recently read an article "*Where Are the Mature Believers? The disconnect between small groups and discipleship*" by Rick Howerton that had me questioning some of the above. One quote that particularly impacted me was "*Why are my Christian brothers and sisters around the world willing to die for Christ when the people I lead aren't even willing to live for him?*" Are we, the members of the FPC community, willing to live for Christ? Are our small groups pushing each of its members to become fully devoted followers of Christ? Do our lives look any different than those in the secular world?

These are the questions that continue to propel us forward in training events, church-wide studies and continue to look at how to form new groups so that I hope our church would create the following type of mature disciples Howerton references:

*"Ones that not only evangelize, but also stand for Christ in the midst of emotional and physical persecution, live lives that depict the love of Christ, and lead people to believe that Jesus is real and truly capable of transforming lives. They serve in ways that take the burden off the church staff, and they support the mission of the church. They live in peace and unity with other believers, making the church a magnet for those longing for a loving, caring community."*

So the question is, how does your life reflect the above statement of a mature disciple? If you are struggling as many of us are to transform our lives to be devoted followers of Christ, then are you investing of yourself in a small group?





During the Christmas season, many of our groups may not Page 7

meet regularly; however, many do choose to share our hope of Christ with our community by adopting families, participating in church-wide events (*Loving Hands* or the Deacon's Angel Tree) along with many other ways they choose to spread God's love to a hurting world at a time of the year many feel disconnected from.

Once January arrives, groups will become more active with new studies, training for our leaders at the conference day on January 17 and looking ahead to our Lenten study. So my call out from this article is on many levels:

**Those not members of groups** — let me know you are interested. Some groups have space for new members or we work on starting new groups.

**Existing small group members** — how is your group doing on discipling mature believers? Every member of the group is responsible for helping their group live into the vision of the church and growing in their faith. Are you actively participating?

**New leaders** — For those feeling the tug to help grow the small group ministry and be open to starting a new group, you won't want to miss the conference day on January 17!

So now that I have mentioned it several times, *what is our Conference Day?!* It is a training day provided for leadership from the Small Group Ministry and Children's Ministry areas of FPC. The theme this year is:



The last few years we have been able to provide outside speakers and once again this year, we are excited to be bringing in Chad Miller along with a couple of his associates from the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, plus we will be Skyping with Beth Guckenberger.

**Chad Miller** was ordained in 2000 as a non-denominational pastor and is currently serving as director of *Dare to Be a Daniel*, a BGEA youth evangelism training project, and as an associate pastor for West Cabarrus Church in Concord, N.C.

**Beth Guckenberger** is co-executive director along with her husband, Todd, of Back2Back Ministries which ministers to orphans and vulnerable children in Mexico, Nigeria, India and Haiti. Many from our congregation were impacted by her testimony two years ago and we are excited to hear from her again!

We will also be introducing our Lenten study to the leaders that day so mark your calendars and plan to join us for a great day of training and inspiration!

## COMMUNITY

### Thank You

First Pres. was an important part of the life of Alice Loudon for the 20+ years that she was a member here. In recent months, we were reminded why she loved this church as you continued to show your friendship and support by means of your cards and expressions of caring that we relayed to her. We, her family, thank you for being part of the celebration of her life on November 3 and for your cards and memorial gifts. Special thanks to those who took part in the service, to those who prepared (and cleaned up after) the delicious lunch and especially to Jan and Tim for their many visits and their constant reminders of God's love through their words and deeds.

Love and Gratitude,

Harry & Janet Frederick on behalf of Alice's family

### Fellowship Luncheon

The Fellowship Group will gather at Good Shepherd Village at Endwell on Friday, December 12, at noon for their annual Christmas Party. We will celebrate "An Old Fashioned Christmas." Members are encouraged to think of their favorite Christmas memories and come prepared to share a story, picture, decoration, or song. If you have something you want projected on the screen or played through the speaker system, please contact Bob Dealaman in advance. All are welcome to join. Reservations may be made by contacting Maxine Waughtel.

### A Touch of Christmas Brass CD

BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND

What better way to enjoy the spirit of Christmas than to share some of the season's most beautiful sounds with family and friends? Because of the overwhelming success of the sales and distribution of our new Christmas CD last year and in response to requests for additional copies, *A Touch Of Brass* quintet will, again, be selling their "A Touch Of Christmas Brass" CDs at church. They will be available after church in the gathering area starting November 30. The price will remain at \$15.00 per copy. In appreciation of your support, *A Touch Of Brass* will donate \$1.00 of each CD to First Presbyterian Church. May God bless each of you this Christmas season. -*A Touch of Brass*

### Our Community Thanks You

The Deacons would like to thank everyone who was able to donate food items to the Succoth booth. Many families were blessed by the generosity of the congregation and nursery school. Thank you!!

### Angel Tree

The Deacons are sponsoring the Angel Tree again this Christmas season. The tree will be up starting December 7. Please stop in the Gathering Area to sign up and get an angel from the tree. Make the holidays special for a Nursery School child by purchasing a gift. Guidelines for gifts are on each angel. All gifts should be returned to church by Friday, Dec. 19, wrapped and with the angel affixed to the package for identification.

### Stewardship Pledge

Stewardship dedication was November 23. If you did not receive a pledge card or have misplaced yours and wish to give a pledge for 2015, there are extra cards and envelopes available in the back of sanctuary. If you are unable to physically come to the church and need a card, please contact the office and we will mail one to you. Thank you for your support.



**COMMUNITY CONT.**

**Samaritan Supper Update**

Thank you for all your generous donations of clothing to the Samaritan Supper. It has been a wonderful blessing to be able to provide clothing to people; however, at this time we will no longer be accepting donations. This fall, Samaritan Supper has been regularly serving a meal to over 100 people on Tuesday evenings. That fills our dining room space and necessitates that we focus on the meal. We have been blessed with many volunteers to support this increase in numbers and want to thank all who regularly show their love of Christ in this tangible way to our community!

**Livestreaming**

Thanks to the work and feedback of many people, we are now livestreaming our services! This new video ministry has already been a blessing to several families that were involved in our testing process and we expect it to continue to be a great connecting resource for those who are unable to physically make it to church on Sunday morning. If you are homebound or are expecting to be away and would like to be able to view the broadcast, please contact Nathan in the office and we will coordinate someone to help you set up a viewer account.

**Hearing Assistance**

We have updated our hearing assistance devices in the sanctuary. There are small wireless devices with a single discrete earbud available to amplify the service for you. If you would find one of these useful, please see a tech team member (usually found in the back of the sanctuary) or an usher.

**WOULD YOUR HOLIDAY BREAK REALLY BE COMPLETE WITHOUT THE COLLEGE/YOUNG ADULTS CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION??**

**Be our guest and join us on MONDAY, DECEMBER 22!**

Same “traditions” - New places . . .

**DINNER and CONVERSATION -**

**Great Chinese Buffet**

6:00pm- 560 Harry L. Drive



**BOWLING- Laurel Bowl**

7:45pm- 137 Laurel Ave, Binghamton, NY 13905

**UGLY SWEATER CONTEST-**

**Swallow your pride!**



UGLY SWEATER PARTY

**FELLOWSHIP, LAUGHTER, CATCHING UP, AND SEEING WHERE GOD HAS BEEN AT WORK IN OUR LIVES**

**SESSION UPDATE****-JANET FREDERICK, CLERK OF SESSION**

On November 5 Session met with the Deacons (in our annual joint meeting) and also church staff members as we continued our discerning process and education via a Skype presentation by Jeff Wildrick, Executive Presbyterian of the Northeast Presbytery of ECO: A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians (see the Discernment Process Update in this newsletter for more details).

Following his presentation, Elders moved into their business meeting and heard from Emrys Tyler, a Susquehanna Valley Presbytery representative, and saw the draft of the policy being proposed for those seeking dismissal from this presbytery. All agreed that we would like a Discernment Team appointed by the Presbytery to work with us through the Discernment Period, thus continuing what has been a spirit of cooperation between First Pres. and the Presbytery in this process.

Then it was on to business as usual, and from the Clerk we learned of 3 people who have asked to be removed from the Active Membership Roll: Tom Decker, who has returned to Union Presbyterian Church; Eileen Slofkosky, who has joined a church closer to her home because of issues she has with driving any distance; and Maynard Koplin, who has joined a Lutheran Church near where he moved to in PA this past summer.

Discussion then moved on to whether the plans should proceed for a trip to Kenya in 2015. Although it was decided that the trip itself should be postponed, ways to support the mission in Kenya were proposed:

- 1) Money from the 2013 Christmas Eve offering will be used to install water purification systems for two orphanages in Kenya and to train two people through WaterStep.
- 2) \$7,000 will hopefully be raised to fund building the church that our mission team would have finished if they had gone, with those funds coming from the proceeds of: the Mystery Dinner Theater; the 2014 Christmas Eve offering; and other donations. Session supported the co-pastors' desire to seek alternative ways to serve in international missions in 2015.

Mission and Stewardship brought their recommendation to Session for the use of undesignated local, national and international mission funds that need to be used before the end of the year. We also approved a request from Brian and Angela Flannagan to lead a mission trip to the Dominican Republic for college-age students and young adults and their families in early 2015.

**AN INVITATION TO PRAY AND FAST**

Session members have committed to a 24-hour period of prayer and fasting prior to each monthly Session meeting during the discernment process. We invite all of you to also engage in an intentional time of prayer, Bible study and fasting – this month from Tuesday, December 2, after dinner to Wednesday, December 3, at dinnertime.

## **DISCERNMENT UPDATE**

### **-JANET FREDERICK, CLERK OF SESSION**

We are well into our discernment process, and we hope that you are finding the resources we've been providing helpful. Some of you have invited us to speak at your small group gatherings, and others have asked to speak to us individually. We have a schedule of educational/informational sessions scheduled for the next few months and hope you will take advantage of each of them since each is on a different topic.

On November 5 Session members, Deacons and Staff members were invited to a presentation by Jeff Wildrick, Executive Presbyter of the Northeast Presbytery of ECO: A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians. We were able to hear (and see) him via Skype, which was the next best thing to being able to speak with him personally. Then on Sunday, November 16, following each of the worship services, the congregation was invited to see and hear a video recording of major portions of his talk, review a comparison of several different Presbyterian denominations, and were then given the opportunity to ask questions of Session members.

### ***Completed Educational/Informational Sessions***

#### **November 16: *ECO: A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians***

If you missed the opportunity to attend either of the two sessions on ECO held on Nov. 16, you may view a recording of one of these sessions by contacting the office ([office@firstpresendicott.org](mailto:office@firstpresendicott.org)) to obtain either a weblink to view on your computer or a DVD to view on your television. Hard copies of materials distributed at the sessions are available in the office.

### ***Future Educational/Informational Sessions***

**Future training sessions for the congregation will be presented twice on the Sunday mornings listed: Session 1 from 10:50 – 11:45 and Session 2 from 12:10 – 1:00. Light refreshments are served prior to Session 2.**

#### **December 14: *Why we believe what we believe about Scripture***

Ed Fiaschi and Jan Devine will lead this study about how we understand and interpret Scripture.

#### **January 11: *Why we believe what we believe about human sexuality***

Alisha and Jeremy Finn will help us understand the biblical practice of our sexuality.

**Note: The last two dates may need to be changed; please watch the bulletins and newsletters for the revised schedule.**

#### **January 18: *Why we believe what we believe about women in leadership***

Co-pastors Jan and Tim Devine will examine scripture with us on this topic.

#### **February 22: *The Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley***

If a dismissal policy is in place by this date, the elders and our attorney, Steve Atkinson, will be present to review it with the congregation.

**ALL FOR ONE**  
**- RONNE SISCO, DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION**

On Saturday November 8th, our Nursery School families of the present and past brought their friends and relatives in support of one special little girl. Gabriella Laubisch is currently challenged with leukemia and we want her family to know they are not fighting this alone. Gabby's mother Gretchen is a former E.F.P.N.S. teacher and continues to serve our nursery school as the Advisory Board's Parent Representative. "Hair 'n' Care Salon Saturday" was a big success raising \$1288.75! The Laubisch family has requested that all proceeds be donated to the Childhood Cancer Foundation.



Kailyn Harvey helps decorate a cheer poster for Gabby.



Gretchen Laubisch enjoys a minute with a salon customer. "It was a lot of fun and very heart-warming to see the support from so many people that I don't even know."



Hair designers Erin & Jeannine from GLOSS Hair Studio in Vestal pampered salon goes to a buffet of colored hair extensions, tinsel, braiding & feathers while Cayden and company got their nails polished!



Guess who visited Miss Tess's face painting station?!

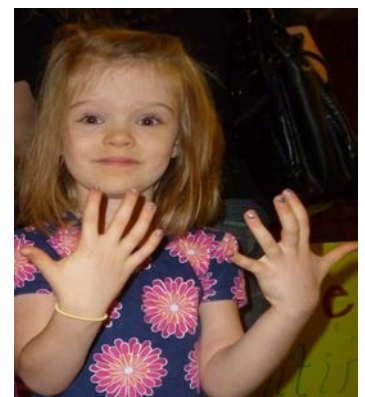


One of many raffle basket winners!



Our heartfelt gratitude to FPC for supporting us coming together in honor of Gabby and children's cancer research. And THANK YOU to GLOSS Hair Studio owner and mother of two First Pres. attendees Erin Cacala, Rob Cacala, Wendy Schermerhorn, Jeannine Harvey, Traci Johnson, Patricia Hatch, Jeff Hatch, Danielle Evan, Tess Dzuba, Lori Sprague, Marsha Lanza, Vanessa Cross, Nabisco and Rossi's pizza.

***Your generosity has made a difference.***

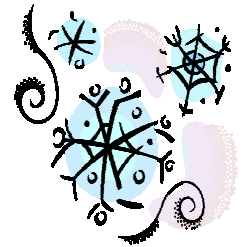






The Nursery School continues to embrace and support the needs of our students' families. This time of year, we are able to do this in three ways. Our wonderful Parent Council again partnered with FPC to orchestrate a school-wide collection of food items for Thanksgiving baskets. These baskets treated many who are facing challenges this holiday season.

"Loving Hands" on Sunday Dec. 7 will afford us another opportunity to do so with a caroling caravan of goodies delivered right to the doors of particular pre-school families all in the spirit of being a light to them. And FPC's Deacons' "Angel Tree" will be of support in yet another way, by asking those down on their luck to accept assistance with gift giving for our students and their siblings. We are grateful for these FPC missions and the invitations to share in this season of giving.



## 2014 Poinsettia Order Form

Please PRINT clearly! This information will be used in the bulletin. The deadline for orders is *Sunday, December 15*, and must be accompanied by payment. No phone orders please!

This poinsettia is donated by:

---

(Check one)  in honor of  in memory of

---

Amount enclosed (please specify!): \_\_\_\_\_ cash \_\_\_\_\_ check

Price per plant is \$13.00. Please make checks payable to First Presbyterian Church of Endicott.

## WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR? -THE WORSHIP MINISTRY TEAM

Christmas in America kicks off around Halloween and concludes at midnight on December 25. On December 26, people start packing Christmas away. It's over.

But for the Christian Church, Christmas doesn't truly begin until December 25. It's actually a season in the church year, and it ends 12 days later on January 5 (Twelfth Night). While the rest of the world is doing Christmas, Christians are in the season of Advent- a time of waiting and preparation.

One of the activities we do during Advent is light the Advent Wreath. We do this at the beginning of our worship services, but families can also do this at home during family worship. There are 5 candles in the wreath, and we light one on each of the 4 Sundays prior to Christmas. There are many resources available for this act of worship. The resource we will be using this year uses the candles to represent hope- for those who *wait*, for those who are *weary*, for those who are *watching*, and for those who are *wounded*. The 5<sup>th</sup> candle, a white one, is the Christ candle, and it is lit on Christmas Eve. The candles serve as a reminder that Jesus is the light of our world: his light shines in our darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it. (John 1:4-5)



Purple is the color of Advent, for the royalty of the King of Kings, whose birth we are celebrating and whose second coming we are awaiting. We use 3 purple candles and 1 rose-colored candle (which represents joy) in our Advent wreath.

It is no accident that we celebrate the birth of Christ in the darkest days of December. The shortest day of the year (or the longest hours of darkness) falls on December 21, the winter solstice. Pagans celebrated this time rejoicing that the light would be steadily returning until the longest day of the year--June 21, the summer equinox. Our early Christian forbearers understood this yearning for the light and realized the true light our hearts were yearning for is Jesus.

Early Christmas trees were evergreens decorated only with candles, a testimony to the "ever green" or eternal life and the unchanging love of God and his Son, who is the light of the world who drives out the darkness. We place "Chrismons" (Christ monograms) on our tree in the sanctuary, which are symbols that direct our thoughts toward Jesus. The white is for purity and the gold is for the majesty of God. The white lights remind us that Jesus is the one true light who banishes the darkness and leads us to a life of hope and joy.

While the rest of the world is singing Christmas songs, we begin with songs of Advent- songs of longing and preparation for the arrival of the Holy One, the Son of God. Joyous when he appears, we celebrate for 12 days, singing songs about Christ's first and second coming, as we marvel at God's greatest gift of all, the gift of his Son, Jesus the Christ. Hallelujah, Christ is born!

# FPP Calendar

# December 2014

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	<b>1</b> 2:30 pm Homework Café 6:00 pm Membership Team Meeting 7:00 pm Relevant Ministries	<b>2</b> 5:30 pm Samaritan Supper 7:00 pm Deacons	<b>3</b> 6:00 am Men's Group 2:30 pm Homework Café 7:00 pm Session 7:00 pm Worship Team Rehearsal	<b>4</b> 2:30 pm Homework Café 6:00 pm Mary-El Ringers 7:00 pm Chancel Choir	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>7</b> <b>2nd Sunday of Advent Communion</b> 9:09 am Worship Service 10:45 am Worship Service 4:00 pm Loving Hands	<b>8</b> 2:30 pm Homework Café 7:00 pm Relevant Ministries	<b>9</b> 10:40 am NS/Staff Luncheon 12:45 pm Staff Meeting 5:30 pm Samaritan Supper 5:30 pm Nursery School Board Meeting (Tent.)	<b>10</b> 6:00 am Men's Group 2:30 pm Homework Café 7:00 pm Worship Team Rehearsal	<b>11</b> 2:30 pm Homework Café 6:00 pm Mary-El Ringers 7:00 pm Chancel Choir	<b>12</b> 12:00 pm Fellowship Luncheon	<b>13</b>
<b>14</b> <b>3rd Sunday of Advent</b> 9:09 am Worship Service 10:45 am Worship Service 10:50 am Discernment Presentation 12:10 pm Discernment Presentation 6:00 pm FPC Youth Christmas Party	<b>15</b> 2:30 pm Homework Café 7:00 pm Relevant Ministries	<b>16</b> 5:30 pm Samaritan Supper	<b>17</b> 6:00 am Men's Group 1:30 pm Women's Circle III 2:30 pm Homework Café 6:00 pm Worship Team Rehearsal	<b>18</b> 2:30 pm Homework Café 6:00 pm Mary-El Ringers 7:00 pm Chancel Choir	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>21</b> <b>4th Sunday of Advent</b> 9:09 am Worship Service 10:45 am Worship Service 6:00 pm FPC Youth	<b>22</b> 2:30 pm Homework Café 6:00 pm College and Young Adult Christmas Gathering	<b>23</b> 5:30 pm Samaritan Supper	<b>24</b> <b>Christmas Eve</b> 6:00 am Men's Group 4:30 pm Worship Service 7:30 pm Worship Service	<b>25</b> <b>Christmas</b> All Day     Office Closed	<b>26</b> All Day     Office Closed	<b>27</b>
<b>28</b> <b>No Children's Ministry</b> 10:00 am United Worship Service 11:15 am Congregational Luncheon	<b>29</b> 7:00 pm Relevant Ministries	<b>30</b> 5:30 pm Samaritan Supper	<b>31</b> <b>New Year's Eve</b> 6:00 am Men's Group			

# FPP Calendar

# January 2015

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				<b>1</b> New Year's Day Office Closed	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>4</b> <b>Ed Fiaschi Preaching</b> 9:09 am Worship Service 10:45 am Worship Service 6:00 pm FPC Youth	<b>5</b> 2:30 pm Homework Café 6:00 pm Membership Team Meeting 7:00 pm Relevant Ministries	<b>6</b> 5:30 pm Samaritan Supper 7:00 pm Deacons	<b>7</b> 6:00 am Men's Group 2:30 pm Homework Café 7:00 pm Worship Team Rehearsal	<b>8</b> 2:30 pm Homework Café 6:00 pm Mary-El Ringers 7:00 pm Chancel Choir	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>11</b> <b>Communion Practice of Sexuality Education Session</b> 9:09 am Worship Service 10:45 am Worship Service 6:00 pm FPC Youth	<b>12</b> 2:30 pm Homework Café 7:00 pm Relevant Ministries	<b>13</b> 12:30 pm Staff Meeting 5:30 pm Samaritan Supper	<b>14</b> 6:00 am Men's Group 2:30 pm Homework Café 7:00 pm Session 7:00 pm Worship Team Rehearsal	<b>15</b> 2:30 pm Homework Café 6:00 pm Mary-El Ringers 7:00 pm Chancel Choir	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b> <b>Children's Ministry/Small Group Leaders' Conference Day</b>
<b>18</b> <b>Women in Leadership Education Session</b> 9:09 am Worship Service 10:45 am Worship Service 6:00 pm FPC Youth	<b>19</b> 1:00 pm Women's Club Board Meeting 2:30 pm Homework Café 7:00 pm Relevant Ministries	<b>20</b> 5:30 pm Samaritan Supper 5:30 pm Nursery School Board Meeting	<b>21</b> 6:00 am Men's Group 1:30 pm Women's Circle III 2:30 pm Homework Café 7:00 pm Worship Team Rehearsal	<b>22</b> 2:30 pm Homework Café 5:30 pm Worship Ministry Team 6:00 pm Mary-El Ringers 7:00 pm Chancel Choir	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>25</b> <b>Annual Meeting</b> 10:00 am United Worship Service 11:15 am Annual Meeting 12:30 pm Luncheon	<b>26</b> 1:00 pm Women's Club Board Meeting 2:30 pm Homework Café 6:30 pm Parent Council Meeting 7:00 pm Relevant Ministries	<b>27</b> 12:30 pm Staff Meeting 5:30 pm Samaritan Supper	<b>28</b> 6:00 am Men's Ministry 2:30 pm Homework Café 7:00 pm Worship Team Rehearsal	<b>29</b> 2:30 pm Homework Café 6:00 pm Mary-El Ringers 7:00 pm Chancel Choir	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>



## VISION STATEMENT

### (What God wants to do)

We believe God wants to transform our community through the saving love of Jesus Christ and calls us to share that hope with the world. To be an agent of hope, our congregation must work together and rely on the power of the Holy Spirit to follow Christ, whatever the cost.<sup>1</sup> This commitment, which is grounded in a deep love of God and neighbor,<sup>2</sup> sends us out to share the Good News of Christ through our words<sup>3</sup> and our actions.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Great Commitment*, Matthew 16:24-26

<sup>2</sup> *The Great Commandment*, Luke 10:27

<sup>3</sup> *The Great Commission*, Matthew 28:18-20

<sup>4</sup> *The Great Compassion*, Matthew 25:31-40

## MISSION STATEMENT

### (What God wants us to do)

We believe God wants us to share the life-changing power and love of Jesus Christ in such compelling ways that more people become fully devoted followers of Christ.

## PURPOSE STATEMENT

### (The reason we exist)

To reach more people and together grow in Christ.



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